



The Holy See

***DISCORSO DI GIOVANNI PAOLO II
A S.E. IL SIGNOR HENRYK KUPISZEWSKI,
NUOVO AMBASCIATORE DI POLONIA PRESSO LA SANTA SEDE****

Sabato, 16 giugno 1990

Your Excellency, Distinguished Mr. Ambassador,

With great emotion and joy I receive the Letters of Credence by which you are accredited as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Polish Republic to the Holy See.

By virtue of this act you begin your noble mission of representing Poland, maintaining and improving relations between Poland, so dear to the Pope's heart, and the Holy See.

I sincerely thank you for the words you addressed to me, and especially for the greeting in the name of the President, General Wojciech Jaruzelski; at the same time I ask you to offer him my best wishes for successful activity on behalf of the entire Polish nation.

Several months ago diplomatic relations were resumed between the Holy See and the Polish Republic; as has been stated on another occasion, it is a fact of great historical importance because it is the fruit of changes for the better which are taking place in the homeland. Poland has returned to the path of political pluralism, religious freedom and the democratization of society. A great process of rebirth has begun on the spiritual, moral, economic and cultural level for our people, who have suffered so greatly during the course of history. This people is currently the object and the witness and, at the same time, the architect of these changes. A great part of the positive development of this process, from which there is no turning back, depends on everyone's mutual collaboration and solidarity.

We know the road the people have taken to regain their subjectivity.

We also know the history of the normalization of relations between the Holy See and Poland, the difficult history which progressed through various stages of mutual rapprochement and ended up in the drafting of a formula of permanent bilateral contacts.

Poland is a Christian country which, from its beginnings, always had close contacts, diplomatic ones as well, with Rome, first through papal legates sent by the Holy See on the more important occasions and later, from the mid-nineteenth century, through the nuncio. That is the way it was until 1939, when war-time activity interrupted the official relations with the Holy See. In 1945 the accords which had been in effect for centuries were unilaterally broken.

Post-war Polish history therefore contains the sad and humiliating period of the persecution of the Church and attempts to abolish the Holy See's authority. It is a period marked by violent confrontation. We must recall these facts to do justice to history.

In your speech you recalled that new times are opening up for Poland, that we are faced with many very difficult, complex tasks, and that we must now work quickly on the more important problems for us today.

Truly, with great effort a new page of history has been opened up for Poland. Now we must write it and shape it to create a new history for Poland at the threshold of the third millennium. The situation is radically changed. My compatriots need new light, new wisdom, new ways of acting and new solidarity. The Polish people must write this new page of history while remaining internally united, strong in the unity and solidarity which spring from the Christian spirit, from deep patriotism and a sense of responsibility before God and history.

The Poland of the future is the land of justice and true freedom, where all citizens are united for the common good.

Many difficulties are emerging in the writing of this new page of the history of the Polish nation. I therefore want to assure you that the Church and the Holy See want to work with the Polish Nation and those who govern it, just as the Government and the Nation want to cooperate with the Church. This was clearly expressed by the Polish Prime Minister, Tadeusz Mazowiecki, in his inaugural speech on 12 September 1989. The nature of this collaboration is clearly defined in the Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et Spes* on the Church in the Modern World: «The political community and the Church... are devoted to the personal vocation of man, though under different titles. This service will redound the more effectively to the welfare of all insofar as both institutions practise better cooperation according to the local and prevailing situation» (n. 76).

These ways of cooperating will hasten that healthy collaboration which grows out of trust, goodwill and mutual respect for the rights of both parties. The human person in his or her existential and

transcendental dimensions is the meeting place for the Church and the political community.

The Polish government can count not only on the Church's collaboration, but also on her help. Poland needs this help especially in the area of formation and the restoration of the moral values which have been so greatly weakened. The moral development of the human person is the basis of the entire Nation's prosperity. I- am referring to conscience formation, an individual and collective sense of responsibility, family renewal, the new «ethos» regarding work, behaviour fostering the common good, unity in social and political activity, and restoring to people a sense of personal dignity.

The Church not only follows with interest and approves the current foreign policy of the Polish government, but also sustains this policy according to her own means and specific mission. The government's contribution to the construction of the new international order in Europe and the world deserves to be emphasized.

A problem of great importance for the future of a free and democratic Poland within the framework of the European peoples and Nations is the definitive recognition of its Western borders. Aid given in solidarity by the rich and economically developed nations also has a fundamental significance in the process of Poland's setting out on a new road.

There must be no lack of goodwill regarding awareness of and efforts to resolve the sad problem of the external debt at this critical time. In resolving these difficult problems, it is not enough to think merely in economic terms, but we must courageously take into consideration as well the moral and historical motivation of the Polish nation, its fidelity to the Christian and human ideals and defence of them, even at the cost of enormous sacrifice. Inspiration for this behaviour is found in the well-known motto: «for our freedom and yours».

The Church, aware of her mission in regard to people and nations. does not want to meddle in socio-political life but rather desires, within the area of her mission, to show the motivations that come from the Gospel and faith. They help to unite hearts and minds in building a healthy, strong and tolerant society, one capable of resolving conflicts on the road of dialogue, in a society which is open to the human person, and in international relations open to Europe and the world. The Church wants to support every effort and initiative which has as its goal the common good of all.

I hope that the Polish nation, to which I am joined by blood ties, may journey towards a new future strengthened by the experience of the past, tranquil because of the wisdom it has gained during recent years and secure that with the unified cooperation of all its citizens it will achieve the goal it desires.

May God bless the Government of the Polish Republic, and you personally, Mr. Ambassador, your family and friends, and your co-workers in the mission entrusted to you.

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