



The Holy See

JOHN PAUL II

Homily at Mass

Saturday, 12 June 1999, Sandomierz

1. *“His mother said to him, ‘Son, why have you treated us so? Behold, you father and I have been looking for you anxiously’” (Lk 2:48).*

Today the Church’s Liturgy commemorates the Immaculate Heart of the Blessed Virgin Mary. We consider Mary, filled with anxiety and concern, as she looks for Jesus, lost during the pilgrimage to Jerusalem. As devout children of Israel, Mary and Joseph went to Jerusalem each year for the Feast of Passover. When Jesus was twelve, he went with them for the first time. There the event which we contemplate in the fifth glorious mystery of the Rosary took place, the mystery of the finding in the Temple. Saint Luke describes it touchingly, on the basis of information we may suppose he received from the Mother of Jesus: “Son, why have you treated us so? . . . We have been looking for you anxiously”. Mary, who had carried Jesus beneath her heart and had protected him from Herod by fleeing to Egypt, acknowledges in a very human way her great worry about her Son. She knows that she needs to be present on his journey. She knows that through love and sacrifice she will cooperate with him in the work of Redemption. In this way we enter into the mystery of Mary’s great love for Jesus, that love which embraces with her Immaculate Heart the ineffable Love, the Word of the Eternal Father.

The Church reminds us of this mystery here, in Sandomierz, in this ancient city which has been the scene of the history of the Church and of Poland for over a thousand years. I greet the whole Church in Sandomierz and its Pastor, Bishop Wacław, together with his Auxiliary Bishops, the priests and the consecrated men and women. I greet all of you, dear Brothers and Sisters, who are taking part in this Holy Sacrifice. I greet the Military Bishop of the Polish Army and, together with him, the soldiers, non-commissioned officers, officers and generals. I also greet the representatives of the Polish Episcopate and the State and local authorities present today.

I offer a respectful greeting to ancient Sandomierz, which is so dear to me. In my heart I embrace the other cities and industrial centres, particularly Stalowa Wola, a city which symbolizes the great faith of the workers, who with impressive generosity and courage built their church in spite of difficulties and the threats of the Communist authorities of the time. I had the joy of blessing this church. How often have I visited this land of Sandomierz; I have often had an opportunity to get to know the history of your city and to learn here the history of our nation's culture. For in this very city is concealed a wonderful power, whose ultimate source is the Christian tradition. Sandomierz is in fact a great book of the faith of our ancestors. Many of its pages were written by Saints and Blessed. I would mention first the city's Patron, Blessed Wincenty Kadlubek, who was Provost of Sandomierz Cathedral and Bishop of Kraków, and who later became a poor monk in the Cistercian Order. He was the first Pole to write the nation's history, in his "Polish Chronicle".

In the thirteenth century this land was made fruitful by the blood of the Blessed Martyrs of Sandomierz, clergy and lay people, who died in great numbers for the faith at the hands of the Tartars, and together with them Blessed Sadok and forty-eight Dominican Fathers from the friary next to the Romanesque Church of Saint James. In the churches of Sandomierz Saint Hyacinth, Blessed Czeslaw and Saint Andrew Bobola preached the Gospel. Here the Dominican Fathers fervently spread veneration of the Blessed Virgin Mary. At the Gostomianum College, the Jesuits taught and trained young people. At the Church of the Holy Spirit the Religious of the Congregation of the Holy Spirit ran a hospital for the sick, a shelter for the poor and nurseries for small children. This city evokes memories of Jan Dlugosz and Queen Saint Hedwig, whose six hundredth anniversary we are celebrating this year.

In recent times too this land has borne fruits of holiness. The boast of the Church of Sandomierz is its laity and clergy, who by their lives witnessed to love of God, the homeland and their fellow men. I wish to recall in particular the Servant of God Bishop Piotr Golebiowski, who with discretion and meekness guarded the flock entrusted to him. As we know, the process of beatification is now under way for this good shepherd of the Diocese of Sandomierz. I would also mention the Servant of God Professor Father Wincenty Granat, an outstanding theologian and Rector of the Catholic University of Lublin, whom I often met on various occasions. I also wish to recall with gratitude Franciszek Jop, the Auxiliary Bishop of this Diocese, later named Administrator and Bishop of Opole. The Archdiocese of Kraków, of which he was the Administrator in the difficult period of the 1950s, owes much to him. Bishop Jop was also one of my consecrating Bishops.

Today in Sandomierz, together with all of you gathered here, I praise God for this great spiritual heritage which, at the time of the partitions, the German occupation and the totalitarian domination by the Communist system, made it possible for the people of this land to preserve their national and Christian identity. With immense sensitivity, we must stop and listen to this voice from the past, in order to carry over the threshold of the Year 2000 faith and love for the Church and our country and hand them on to future generations. Here we can easily appreciate how the time of individuals, the time of communities and the time of nations is permeated by the presence of God

and his saving activity.

2. On my pilgrimage across Poland I am accompanied by the Gospel of the Eight Beatitudes preached by Christ in the Sermon on the Mount. Here in Sandomierz Christ says to us: "Blessed are the pure of heart, for they shall see God" (*Mt* 5:8). These words bring us to the heart of the Gospel truth about man. Those who seek Jesus will find him, as did Mary and Joseph. This fact sheds light on that great tension present in the life of every human being, namely, the search for God. Yes, man does indeed seek God; he seeks him with his mind, his heart and all his being. Saint Augustine says: "our heart is restless, until it finds its rest in God" (cf. *Confessions*, I). This restlessness is a creative restlessness. Man seeks God because in him, and only in him, can he find his own fulfilment, the fulfilment of his aspirations to truth, goodness and beauty. "You would not seek me, if you did not already possess me", wrote Blaise Pascal (*Pensées*, Sect. VII, No. 555). This means that God himself takes part in this search, wishes us to seek him and creates within us the necessary conditions to be able to find him. Moreover, God himself draws near to us, speaks to us of himself and enables us to know him. Sacred Scripture is a great lesson on the subject of this process of seeking and finding God. It offers us many magnificent images of people who seek God and find him. At the same time, it teaches us how we should draw near to God, what conditions we need to fulfil in order to encounter this God, to know him and to be united with him.

One of these conditions is purity of heart. What does this mean? At this point we touch upon the very essence of man who, by virtue of the grace of the redemption accomplished by Christ, has regained the inner harmony lost in Paradise because of sin. Having a pure heart means being a new person, restored to life in communion with God and with all creation by the redemptive love of Christ, brought back to that communion which is our original destiny.

Purity is first and foremost a gift of God. Christ, by giving himself to man in the Church's sacraments, comes to dwell in our hearts and enlightens them with the "splendour of truth". Only the truth which is Jesus Christ is capable of enlightening the reason, purifying the heart and shaping human freedom. Without understanding and free acceptance, faith withers. Man loses sight of the meaning of things and events, and his heart seeks satisfaction where it cannot be found. Purity of heart is thus, above all, purity of faith.

Purity of heart prepares us for the vision of God face to face in the realm of eternal happiness. This is so because already during their earthly life the pure of heart are capable of glimpsing in all creation what comes from God. They are capable in a sense of recognizing the divine value, the divine dimension, the divine beauty of all creation. The Beatitude of the Sermon on the Mount, in a certain way, shows us all the richness and all the beauty of creation, and exhorts us to discover in all things that which has its origin in God and that which leads to him. Consequently the carnal and sensual man must draw back, he must give way to the spiritual man, the spiritualized man. This is a profound process, which involves interior struggle. Sustained by God's grace, it bears

marvellous fruits.

Purity of heart is thus given to man as a task. He must constantly struggle to oppose the forces of evil, those which press upon him from without and those at work within him, and which would distract him from God. And thus there takes place in man's heart a constant battle for truth and happiness. In order to gain victory in this battle, man must turn to Christ. He is able to win only if he is strengthened by Christ's power, the power of his Cross and Resurrection. "Create in me a clean heart, O God", exclaims the Psalmist, conscious of his own weakness, for he knows that to be righteous in God's eyes human effort alone is not enough.

3. Dear Brothers and Sisters, today this message about purity of heart is very timely. The culture of death wants to destroy purity of heart. One of its strategies is deliberately to create doubt about the value of the human attitude which we call the virtue of chastity. This is something particularly dangerous when the attack is aimed at the sensitive consciences of children and young people. A culture which in this way impairs or even destroys a correct relationship between individuals, is a culture of death, for man cannot live without true love.

I speak these words to all of you taking part in today's Eucharistic Sacrifice, but in a special way I address them to the many young people present, to the conscript soldiers and to the scouts. Proclaim before the world "the Good News" of purity of heart, and by the example of your lives pass on the message of the *civilization of love*. I know how sensitive you are to truth and beauty. Today the culture of death sets before you, among other things, so-called "free love". In this sort of disfigurement of love we reach the profanation of one of the most cherished and sacred values, for promiscuity is neither love nor freedom. Saint Paul admonishes us: "Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you may prove what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect" (*Rom 12:2*). Do not be afraid to live in a way contrary to fashionable opinions and ways of life in conflict with God's law. The courage of faith is costly, but you cannot lose love! Do not let anyone enslave you! Do not let yourselves be seduced by illusions of happiness for which you will have to pay a price that is too high, the price of often incurable wounds or even of a life destroyed! I want to repeat to you now what I said to young people on another occasion: "Only a pure heart can love God fully! Only a pure heart can bring to fulfilment that great commitment of love which is marriage! Only a pure heart can fully serve others. Do not allow your future to be destroyed. Do not let yourselves be robbed of the richness of love. Strengthen your fidelity, by which your future families will be formed in the love of Christ" (Asunción, 18 May 1988).

I address these words also to our Polish families, to you, fathers and mothers. Families need to take a firm stance in safeguarding the threshold of their homes, in defending the dignity of each person. Guard your families against pornography, which nowadays under various forms affects people's minds, especially those of children and young people. Defend the purity of morals in your homes and in society. Education in purity is one of the great challenges of the evangelization now

before us. The purer families are, the healthier the nation will be. And we want to remain a nation worthy of its name and its Christian vocation.

“Blessed are the pure of heart, for they shall see God” (*Mt 5:8*).

4. Let us turn our gaze to the Immaculate Virgin of Nazareth, Mother of Fair Love, who accompanies people of all times on their “pilgrimage of faith” to the house of the Father. We are reminded of her not only by today’s liturgical memorial, but also by the magnificent Cathedral Basilica which rises above this city. It bears her name: an eloquent coincidence of time and place. Even the Mother of Jesus, to whom the mystery of Christ’s divine sonship was most fully revealed, had to learn gradually the mystery of the Cross. “Son, why have you treated us so?”, today’s Gospel reports her as saying, “Behold, your father and I have been looking for you anxiously”. And Jesus replies, “How is it that you sought me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father’s house?” “But they did not understand the saying which he spoke to them” (*Lk 2:48-50*). For Jesus was speaking to them of his messianic mission.

Before understanding it, man learns “by pain of heart” the meaning of crucified Love. But if, like Mary, “he keeps all these things in his heart” (cf. *Lk 2:51*) — all that Christ says — and is faithful to God’s call, he will understand at the foot of the Cross the most important thing, namely, that the only true love is love which is united to God, who is Love.