

Pope John Paul II brings message of inspiration to his native Poland

From May 31 to June 10, His Holiness Pope John Paul II visited his native Poland. Millions of people, especially young people, followed him in his pilgrimage through some of the major historic Polish towns, including Wroclaw, Legnica, Gniezo, Poznan, Jasna Gora, and Krakow. The impact of his message has been deeply felt, not only in Poland, but everywhere in the world. John Paul II addressed some of the most profound aspects of human life today. On several occasions, he made clear how true politics is not separate from, but is congruent with, true religion. The following are excerpts from some of his speeches.

On social justice and human labor

Homily at a mass in Legnica, June 2:

Many times I have dealt with social questions in my talks, and above all in my Encyclicals: *Laborem Exercens*, *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, *Centesimus Annus*. Yet, as long as there is an injustice in the world, no matter how small, we must return to these themes. Otherwise the Church would not be faithful to the mission entrusted to her by Christ—the mission of justice. Times in fact do change, circumstances change, but there are always in our midst those who need the voice of the Church and that of the Pope, to give expression to their anxiety, pain, and misery. They must not be disappointed. They must know that the Church was and is with them, that the Pope is with them; that he embraces with his heart and with his prayer all who are affected by suffering. The Pope will speak out—and he cannot fail to speak out—on social problems, because here man is involved, concrete individuals.

I speak about this in Poland too, because I know that my nation needs this message about justice. Today, in fact, in these times of the building of a democratic state, in these times of dynamic economic development, we see with particular clarity all the shortcomings in the social life of our country. Every day we become aware of how many families are suffering from poverty, especially large families. How many single mothers are struggling to take care of their children! How many old people there are who are abandoned and without means to live! In institutions for orphans and abandoned children, there is no lack of those without enough food and clothing. How can we fail to mention the sick who cannot be given proper care because of a lack of resources?

On the streets and in the squares, the number of homeless people is increasing. We cannot pass over in silence the presence in our midst of all these brothers and sisters who are also members of the Mystical Body of Christ. As we approach the Eucharistic table to be fed with his Body, we cannot remain indifferent to those who lack daily bread. We need to talk about them, but we must also meet their needs. This is an obligation that rests especially on those who exercise authority: those who are at the service of the common good have the obligation to establish appropriate laws and to guide the national economy in such a way that these painful phenomena of social life find a proper solution. But it is also a common duty of us all, a duty of love, to provide help according to our abilities to those who expect it. “As you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me” (Matthew 25:40). Our Christian work is needed, our love, so that Christ present in our neighbor will not suffer want.

In our country, much has already been done about this. The Church in Poland too has done and is doing much in this regard. The Church’s pastoral activity now includes regular programs to help the needy, the sick, and the homeless, not only in this country but also abroad. Volunteer associations and works of charity are developing. I therefore wish to express my appreciation to all those among the clergy, religious, and laity who every day show sensitivity to the needs of others, the ability to share their assets generously and a great commitment to the well-being of others. Your service, often hidden, often passed over in silence by the media, remains a permanent sign of the pastoral credibility of the Church’s mission.

Despite these efforts, there still remains a wide field for action. I encourage you, Brothers and Sisters, to become ever more sensitive to every kind of need and to work generously with others to bring hope to those who have none. May the Eucharist be for you an endless source of this sensitivity and of the strength necessary for putting it into action in daily life.

4. I would like to dwell for a moment on the question of human work. At the beginning of my Pontificate, I devoted to this problem a whole Encyclical, *Laborem Exercens*. Today, 16 years after its publication, many problems are still with us. Many of these are even more acute in our country.



Pope John Paul II during a visit to Germany in 1987. "How many individuals and entire families have fallen into extreme poverty because of . . . the reorganization of businesses and agricultural enterprises?" the Pope asked, referring to free-market reforms. "How many young people no longer see any reason to take up studies or to raise the level of their qualifications, because they are faced with the prospect of lack of employment in their chosen profession?"

How can I fail to mention those who, following the reorganization of businesses and agricultural enterprises, have found themselves faced with the tragedy of the loss of their jobs? How many individuals and entire families have fallen into extreme poverty because of this! How many young people no longer see any reason to take up studies or to raise the level of their qualifications, because they are faced with the prospect of lack of employment in their chosen profession! I wrote in the Encyclical *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* that unemployment is a sign of social and economic underdevelopment in states. . . . Therefore, everything possible should be done to prevent this situation. Work, in fact, "is a good thing for man—a good thing for his humanity—because through work man not only transforms nature, adapting it to his own needs, but he also achieves fulfillment as a human being and indeed, in a sense, becomes 'more a human being' " (*Laborem Exercens*, 9). On the other hand, for Christians who own means of production, it is also an obligation springing from faith and love to work for the creation of jobs, and thus contribute to the solution of the problem of unemployment around them. I pray earnestly to God that all who desire to earn an honest living by the work of their own hands will find the right conditions to do so.

Alongside the problem of unemployment, there is also the attitude of those who consider the worker as a tool of production, with the result that man is insulted in his personal dignity. In practice, this phenomenon takes the form of

exploitation. It is often manifested in conditions of employment in which the worker not only has no guaranteed rights, but is subjected to such an atmosphere of uncertainty and fear of the loss of his job that he is in practice deprived of any freedom of decision. This exploitation is also often seen in the fixing of work schedules which deprive the worker of the right to rest and to provide for the spiritual good of his family. This is often associated with inadequate pay, together with a negligence in the areas of insurance and health assistance. Nor are there lacking cases in which the right to personal dignity is denied, especially with regard to women.

Human labor cannot be treated merely as a resource necessary for production—the so-called "workforce." Man cannot be regarded as a tool of production. Man is the creator of work and its craftsman. Everything must be done to ensure that work does not lose its proper dignity. The purpose of work—of all work—is man himself. By means of his work he should be able to perfect and deepen his own personality. It is not right to forget—and I want to emphasize this strongly—that work is "for man" and not man "for work." God places before us great tasks, demanding from us testimony in the social sphere. As Christians, as people who believe, we must sensitize our consciences to every kind of injustice and every form of exploitation, open or disguised.

Here I speak first of all to those brothers in Christ who give work to others. Do not let yourselves be deceived by

visions of immediate profit, at the expense of others. Beware of any semblance of exploitation. Otherwise every sharing in the Eucharistic Bread will become for you an accusation. On the other hand, to those who undertake work, any type of work, I say: Do it responsibly, honestly and accurately. Take on your duties in a spirit of cooperation with God in the work of the creation of the world. "Subdue the earth" (cf. Genesis 1:28). Take on your work with a sense of responsibility for the promotion of the common good, which is to serve not only the present generation but all those who in the future will dwell in this land—our homeland—Poland.

5. "See, I have set before you this day life and good, death and evil. If you obey the commandments of the Lord your God which I command you this day, by loving the Lord your God, by walking in his ways, and by keeping his commandments and his statutes and his ordinances, then you shall live and multiply, and the Lord your God will bless you" (Deuteronomy 30:15-16)—these words from the testament of Moses resound today with great force in our land. "Therefore choose life!" (Deuteronomy 30:19), Moses exhorts.

Which road shall we take into the Third Millennium? "I have set before you this day life and good, death and evil," the Prophet says. Brothers and sisters, I beg you: "Therefore choose life"! This choice is made in the heart, in the conscience of every person, but it is not without effect also in the life of a society—of a nation. Therefore, every believer is somehow responsible for the shape taken by life in society. A Christian who lives by faith, who lives by the Eucharist, is called to build his own future and the future of his Nation—a future based on the solid foundations of the Gospel. Have no fear therefore of accepting responsibility for the social life of our homeland. This is the great task placed before man: to go with courage to the world, to lay the foundations for the future; so that it may be a time of respect for man, a time of openness to the Good News! Do it with the unanimity that is born of love of man and love of country.

At the end of this century, what is needed is "a great act and a great work"—thus wrote one day Stanislaw Wyspianski (*Przy wielkim czynie i przy wielkim dziele*)—to fill the civilization in which we live with the spirit of justice and love. There is need of "a great act and a great work," in order that contemporary culture may open itself wide to holiness, that it may cultivate human dignity, teach contact with beauty.

The spiritual foundations of European unity

On the millennium of the death of St. Adalbert Gniezno, June 3.

Dear brothers and sisters, after so many years I repeat the same message: A new openness is needed. For we have seen, at times in a very painful way, that the recovery of the right to self-determination and the growth of political and economic freedom is not sufficient to rebuild European unity. How can

we not mention here the tragedy of the nations of the former Yugoslavia, the drama experienced by the Albanian people and the enormous burdens felt by all the societies which have regained their freedom and with great effort are liberating themselves from the yoke of the Communist totalitarian system?

Can we not say that after the collapse of one wall, the visible one, another, invisible wall was discovered, one that continues to divide our continent—the wall that exists in people's hearts? It is a wall made out of fear and aggressiveness, of lack of understanding for people of different origins, different color, different religious convictions; it is the wall of political and economic selfishness, of the weakening of sensitivity to the value of human life and the dignity of every human being. Even the undeniable achievements of recent years in the economic, political, and social fields do not hide the fact that this wall exists. It casts its shadow over all of Europe. The goal of the authentic unity of the European continent is still distant. *There will be no European unity until it is based on unity of the spirit.* This most profound basis of unity was brought to Europe and consolidated down the centuries by Christianity with its Gospel, with its understanding of man and with its contribution to the development of the history of peoples and nations. This does not signify a desire to appropriate history. For the history of Europe is a great river into which many tributaries flow, and the variety of traditions and cultures which shape it is its great treasure. The foundations of the identity of Europe are built on Christianity. And its present lack of spiritual unity arises principally from the crisis of this Christian self-awareness.

Brothers and sisters, it was Jesus Christ, "the same yesterday and today and for ever" (cf. Hebrews 13:8) who revealed to man his dignity! He is the guarantee of this dignity! It was the patrons of Europe—Saint Benedict and Saints Cyril and Methodius—who grafted on to European culture the truth about God and about man. It was the ranks of missionary saints, recalled to us today by Saint Adalbert, Bishop and martyr, who brought to the peoples of Europe the teaching about love of neighbor, even love of enemies—a teaching confirmed by the gift of their lives for the sake of others. This Good News, the Gospel, has sustained our brothers and sisters in Europe over the course of the centuries, down to the present day. This message was repeated by the walls of churches, abbeys, hospitals and universities. It was proclaimed by books, sculpture and painting, by poetry and musical compositions. Upon the Gospel were laid the foundations of Europe's spiritual unity. . . .

On education and science

At a meeting with the rectors of Polish universities, Krakow, Collegiate Church of St. Anne, June 8.

The vocation of every university is to serve truth: to discover it and to hand it on to others. This was eloquently expressed by the artist who designed the Chapel of Saint

John Kety which adorns this Collegiate Church. The sarcophagus of Master John has been placed on the shoulders of figures personifying the four traditional faculties of the university: Medicine, Jurisprudence, Philosophy and Theology. This brings to mind precisely the image of the university, which, through the work of research carried out by many scientific disciplines, gradually approaches the supreme Truth. Man transcends the boundaries of individual branches of knowledge in order to direct them towards that Truth and towards the definitive fulfillment of his own humanity. Here we can speak of the *solidarity of the various branches of knowledge* at the service of man, called to discover ever more completely the truth about himself and the world around him.

Man has a lively awareness of the fact that *the truth is above and beyond him*. Man does not create truth; rather, truth discloses itself to man when he perseveringly seeks it. The knowledge of truth begets *a spiritual joy (gaudium veritatis)*, alone of its kind. Which of you, dear Ladies and Gentlemen, has not experienced in greater or lesser measure, such a moment in your work of research? I hope that moments of this kind will be frequent in your work. In this experience of joy at having known the truth we can see also a confirmation of man's transcendent vocation, indeed, of his openness to the infinite.

If today, as Pope, I am here with you, men and women of science, it is to tell you that *the men and women of our time need you*. They need your scientific curiosity, your perceptiveness in asking questions, and your honesty in trying to answer them. They also need that specific transcendence which is proper to universities. The search for truth, even when it concerns a finite reality of the world or of man, *is never-ending, but always points beyond* to something higher than the immediate object of study, to the questions which give *access to Mystery*. How important it is that human thought should not be closed to the reality of Mystery, that man should not become insensitive to Mystery, that he should not lack *the courage to plunge into the depths!*

5. There are few things as important in human life and society *as the service of thought*. The "service of thought" to which I am alluding is essentially nothing other than the service of truth in its social aspect. Every intellectual, independently of his personal convictions, is called to let himself be guided by this sublime and difficult ideal and to *function as a critical conscience* regarding all that endangers humanity or diminishes it.

Being a scholar entails obligations! First of all, it entails the obligation of a particular concern for the development of one's own humanity. Here I wish to recall a man known personally by many of those present and by myself as well. Linked to the scientific circles of Krakow, he was a professor at the Polytechnical Institute of Krakow. To our generation he became a particular witness of hope. I am thinking of the *Servant of God Jerzy Ciesielski*. His passion for science

was inseparably linked to an awareness of the transcendent dimension of truth. He united the meticulousness of a scientist and the humility of a disciple striving to hear what the beauty of the created world tells us of the mystery of God and of man. *He turned his service as a man of science, his "service of thought" into a path to holiness*. When we speak of the vocation of the scholar we cannot ignore this perspective either.

In the daily work of a scholar a particular *ethical sensitivity* is also needed. For it is not enough to be concerned about the logical, formal correctness of one's thinking. The workings of the mind must necessarily be nourished by the spiritual climate of indispensable moral virtues like sincerity, courage, humility, honesty, and an authentic concern for man. Moral sensitivity makes it possible to preserve a *connection between truth and goodness* which is very essential for science. These two problems cannot in fact be separated! The principle of freedom of scientific research cannot be separated from the *ethical responsibility* of every scholar. In the case of men and women of science this ethical responsibility is particularly important. Ethical relativism and purely utilitarian attitudes represent a danger not only for science but directly for individuals and for society.

Another condition for a sound development of science which I would like to emphasize is *an integral notion of the human person*. Here in Poland, the great debate on the theme of man in no way ended with the fall of Marxist ideology. It continues, and in some ways has even intensified. Debased forms of understanding the human person and the value of human life have become more subtle and for that reason more dangerous. Today there is need of *great vigilance* in this area. Here a vast field of activity opens up before the Universities, for men and women of science. A distorted or incomplete vision of man can easily make science change from a blessing into a serious threat to humanity. The great progress made by scientific research today fully confirms such fears. *From being a subject and goal*, man is not infrequently considered an object and even a form of "raw material"; here we need only mention experiments in genetic engineering which are a source of great hope but at the same time of considerable preoccupation for the future of the human race. The words of the Second Vatican Council, which I frequently refer to in my meetings with men and women of science, are truly prophetic: "Our age, more than any of the past, needs such wisdom to humanize man's discoveries. *For the future of the world is endangered unless wiser men are forthcoming*" (*Gaudium et Spes*, 15). This is the great challenge which academic institutions today face in the fields of research and teaching: the training of men and women not only competent in their specialization or full of encyclopedic knowledge, but above all endowed with authentic wisdom. Only people with this kind of education will be capable of shouldering responsibility for the future of Poland, Europe and the world.