

APOSTOLIC PILGRIMAGE TO POLAND

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II
TO THE SICK GATHERED AT THE SHRINE OF JASNA GORA**

Czestochowa, 4 June 1979

My pilgrimage to Poland cannot go without a word to the sick, who are so close to my heart. I know, my dear friends, how in your letters to me you often write that you are offering for my intentions the heavy cross of your illness and suffering, that you are offering it for my mission as Pope. May the Lord reward you.

Every time I recite the morning, midday, and evening Angelus, I feel, dear fellow-countrymen, your special closeness to me. I unite myself spiritually with all of you. In a particular way I renew the spiritual unity that binds me to *every person who is suffering*, to everyone who is sick, to everyone confined to a hospital bed, to every invalid tied to a wheelchair, to every person who in one way or other is meeting his cross.

Dear brothers and sisters, every contact with you, no matter where it has taken place in the past or takes place today, has been a source of deep spiritual emotion for me. I have always felt how insufficient were the words that I could speak to you and with which I could express my human compassion. I have the same impression today also. I feel the same way always. But there remains the one *dimension, the one reality in which human suffering is essentially transformed*. This dimension, this reality, is *the Cross of Christ*. On his Cross the Son of God accomplished the redemption of the world. It is through this mystery that every cross placed on someone's shoulders acquires a dignity that is humanly inconceivable and becomes a sign of salvation for the person who carries it and also for others. "In my flesh I complete what is lacking in Christ's afflictions" (Col 1:24), wrote Saint Paul.

Therefore, uniting myself with all of you who are suffering throughout the land of Poland, in your homes, in the hospitals, the clinics, the dispensaries, the sanatoria—wherever you may be—I beg you to make use of *the cross* that has become part of each one of you *for salvation*. I pray for you to have light and spiritual strength in your suffering, that you may not lose courage but may discover for yourselves the meaning of suffering and may be able to relieve others by prayer and sacrifice. And do not forget me and the whole of the Church, and the cause of the Gospel and peace that I am serving, by Christ's will. You who are weak and humanly incapable, be a source of strength for your brother and father who is at Your side in prayer and heart.

"Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word" (Lk 1:38).

May these words that Mary is pronouncing by the lips of so many human beings be a light on your path for all of you.

May God reward you, dear brothers and sisters. And God reward all those who are looking after you. Through every manifestation of this care the Word becomes flesh (cf. Jn 1:14). For Christ said: "As you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me" (Mt 25:40).