



JOHN PAUL II

APOSTOLIC JOURNEY TO GREAT BRITAIN

Welcome Ceremony Address Of John Paul II, Liverpool Airport, Sunday, 30 May 1982

My brothers and sisters in Jesus Christ,

1. Thank you for your kind welcome. Thank you for coming here to greet me. In my turn, I greet you in the words of the Risen Saviour: Peace be with you. May peace be in your homes, and may the peace of Christ reign in your minds and hearts.

It is good to be here. I am glad to pay my first visit to this region of England and to the city of Liverpool of which you are so proud.

Here near to the sea, I am reminded that you are a seafaring nation. For centuries the people of these islands have traded by sea, explored by sea and made a living from the sea. I am also thinking of the many missionaries – priests, sisters, brothers and lay people – who have sailed from your ports to play their part in building up the life of the Church in other lands. These men and women are a sign of the vitality of the faith which you have received and cherished. And their going forth upon the sea is a symbol of the confidence and trust which Christ asks of all his disciples.

We do well, too, to remember in our prayers those who have given their lives at sea and whose resting place bears no stone or monument. May they rest in the peace of the Lord. For so long your city of Liverpool has been a great port. People of many lands have made it their home. Here in past centuries people have seen the face of suffering, caused by such evils as slavery and great poverty. You have also witnessed the achievements of technical progress and human development. But perhaps your greatest heritage is found in all those who have struggled here to overcome the ills of society and to build up a common brotherhood. In this regard I am told that you have your own pioneer of charity, Father Nugent.

2. It is only fitting that I should take this occasion to acknowledge the generosity for which Britain has long been known. Though the links between this nation and other parts of the world have changed in the course of time, much aid is still sent to those in need, especially in the developing countries – and lately to my own homeland. I remember how Cardinal Heenan, who had once been Archbishop of Liverpool, told the Polish Bishops during the Second Vatican Council: “It was the Polish pilots who saved England during the war”. His words and your recent assistance to Poland show the strong ties of concern and friendship which have existed for years between Poland and Britain. I pray that these ties will be ever deepened and renewed.

I hope that, despite all obstacles, the generosity of your hearts will never weaken. I hope that, through programmes such as the Catholic Fund for Overseas Development, you will continue to help the poor, to feed the hungry and to contribute to the cause of development. Always keep alive your Gospel tradition of loving concern and service to others in the name of Jesus.

3. Our times present us with many challenges and difficulties. One problem in particular which I would like to mention is unemployment. I know that you are experiencing this very seriously in Liverpool, and it is one of the major problems facing society as a whole. In many countries, unemployment has risen sharply and caused hardship to individuals and families. It tends to sow seeds of bitterness, division and even violence. The young, unable to find a job, feel cheated of their dreams, while those who have lost their jobs feel rejected and useless. This tragedy affects every aspect of life, from the material and physical to the mental and spiritual. It therefore very much concerns the Church, which makes her own

the hardships and sufferings, as well as the joys and hopes, of the men and women of our time. It is a matter of vital importance and it deserves the attention and prayers of all people of good will.

4. I greet warmly all the disabled who have come here to meet me today. You have a special place in my heart and in the love of Christ. And I assure you that your role in the Church is a most important one. You and those who are sick and infirm build up the Kingdom of God when you patiently accept your sufferings and offer them with Christ as a pleasing sacrifice to our heavenly Father. As Saint Paul said, your sufferings help “to make up all that has still to be undergone by Christ for the sake of his body, the Church” (Col. 1, 24).

I have been told that as I travel through Liverpool our motorcade will be passing along Hope Street. This name struck me immediately as an expression of the aspirations of the people who live here, an expression of their hope for the future, especially for the future of their children and their children’s children. So many dangers and problems face our young people today. I have already mentioned unemployment. In addition there are such evils as alcoholism and drug addiction, pornography, misguided notions of sexuality, and increasing crime and violence.

All these ills of society could bring us to disillusionment and even despair, if we were not a people of hope, if we did not have a deep and abiding confidence in the power and mercy of God. And so our young people, indeed all of us, need the virtue of hope, a hope founded not on fantasy and dreams, not even on what is seen, but a hope which arises from our faith in the God who loves us and is our gentle and merciful Father. “Glory be to him whose power, working in us, can do infinitely more than we can ask or imagine; glory be to him from generation to generation in the Church and in Christ Jesus for ever and ever. Amen” (Eph. 3, 20–21).

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