

Excerpts from the sermon given by Pope John Paul II in Warsaw, 1987

"And lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." (Matthew 28:20). These words of Christ have a special ring today, in the capital of Poland, on the occasion of the conclusion of the Eucharistic Congress. They ring forth here and they rang forth along the entire route of the Congress; wherever I was fortunate enough to stand personally, and everywhere, all over the Polish lands. For a Eucharistic Congress has this quality. It encompasses the entire territory of the fatherland. "I am with you"—what, more than the Eucharist, confirms these words? . . . Christ said to his Apostles, "Go forth . . . and teach all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit." From Christ the way of Christian initiation goes directly to the Eucharist: "I am with you," I am with every one of you. . . .

God, in and of Himself, is the absolute Fullness of Existence. God, in and of Himself, is Love. The world begins its existence from this Fullness. Every aspect of its history, its creation, relates to the Creator. It testifies about Him. The world begins its existence from this Love. And here begins, between God and the world, a process which transcends far beyond the mystery of creation. . . . What does "eternal love" mean? It means above all, that the world that was created by God from love carries in itself a calling to God's love. "You will love the Lord God with all your heart and all your soul, and with all your might" (Matthew 22:37). That call is inscribed onto the very structure of the cosmos. . . . Yes, the whole world, the universe, visible and invisible. In the visible world there is one thing, one trouble spot, in which this call to love becomes a requirement of conscience, of the mind, the will, and the heart. That trouble spot is man. You are to love in the name of all creation. You are to answer love with Love. The history of man on earth has occurred differently. From the beginning he succumbed to whispers flowing from the world of those invisible creations which turned away from the Creator. Created in the image and likeness of God, man recognized that he could be his own "god." All calls to love were neglected. The rich energy of love embedded in the heart of man was dispersed, remaining stuck entirely in the objects of creation. As a result, man did not know how to love either his neighbors, or even himself or the world. He succumbed to anti-love. For one can love oneself and one's neighbors, and the world, only by loving God, loving above all else. And likewise, "how can a man love God whom he does not see, if he does not love his brother, whom he sees?" A brother, under the same roof, in the same workplace, on the same

fatherland. And further, beyond its boundaries, to the West and the East, to the North and the South, in ever increasing circles. . . .

We know how history flows on earth, how far we can go [in understanding that history] with the help of our cognitive methods. We know how history has flowed over the course of the last few millennia, as the supply of evidence has continually increased. In recent times this increases in an accelerated, absolutely stunning tempo. We know a lot. We know ever more. At times even that which we know can hinder us in perceiving that which is most important. We know too how history has flowed in our fatherland within the limits of one millennium of history, already after Christ. Already within the limits of what St. Paul called "the fullness of time" (Galatians 4:4). We know that in our century resistance and opposition against Him who "so loved the world" has risen—opposition and resistance that extends to a negation of God. To programmatic atheism. But none of this can change the fact of Christ. The fact of the Eucharist. No matter how much God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit is rejected by people. No matter if people and societies govern their lives by ignoring God, as if God did not exist. No matter how far negation and sin goes. None of this changes the basic fact: there was and there continues to be in the history of mankind—and in the history of the universe—a Man, a true Son of Man, who "loved to the end." He loved God with a love that is worthy of God, like a Son for a Father. Love above everything, with all His heart and all His soul, with all His strength, all the way to its ultimate depletion in the agony of Golgotha. . . . That man, Jesus Christ, is a "sign of opposition." But no matter how far that opposition towers over human heart in history, in the history of societies and world-views, His love "to the end" remains human. And that is the love of redemption. That is the love of salvation. . . .

"All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth" (Matthew 28:18). Everyone who looks upon the crucified Jesus Christ knows that this is not the power of violence, but the power of love.

Accepting the love with which Christ "loved to the end" those who were "of the world," all of you should accept as your own the evangelical mission that the first Apostles received: "Go therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost" (Matthew 28:19). Go—become servants of the word of Divine Truth, dispensers of the Divine mysteries, pioneers of evangelization. Go—and let there grow on the Polish lands a missionary zeal, that breath of the living God, the call of the cross and the

resurrection. Go—bringing to others that which is the thousand-year heritage of the Church on the Polish lands. Share it with others. "The whole Church is missionary." All of it, and everywhere. All of you, who do not take up service in missionary territories, remember that our own Polish Fatherland still needs new evangelization. Just like all of Christian Europe. After centuries, and millennia—continually from the start. All of Europe has become the site of a new, great challenge for the gospels. And Poland as well.

Source: Pope John Paul II, "Sermon, 14 June 1987," trans. Brian Porter, Vatican: the Holy See, <http://www.vatican.va> (accessed September 18, 2006).