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◆ **UDIENZA AI MEMBRI DELLA FONDAZIONE "GIOVANNI PAOLO II"**

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Alle ore 11.45 di questa mattina, nella Sala Clementina del Palazzo Apostolico Vaticano, il Santo Padre Benedetto XVI riceve in Udienza i membri della Fondazione "Giovanni Paolo II" e rivolge loro il discorso che pubblichiamo di seguito:

● **DISCORSO DEL SANTO PADRE**

Dear Cardinals,
Dear Brother Bishops and Priests,
Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Thirty years ago, at the request of "some brothers and sisters who live in Poland or have emigrated from there but retain strong links with their land of origin", my Predecessor Blessed John Paul II instituted in Vatican City a Foundation bearing his name, with the object of "promoting through their support, material and otherwise, initiatives of a religious, cultural, pastoral and charitable nature, and cultivating and reinforcing the traditional links between them and the Holy See" (*Decree of Institution*).

Today, members of the Foundation and friends from all over the world have chosen to celebrate this anniversary, giving thanks to the Lord for all the fruits that the various activities have produced in the course of three decades. I am pleased to be able to join you in this thanksgiving. I warmly greet all of you here today, especially Cardinal Stanisław Dziwisz, former Secretary of the beloved Holy Father and one of the promoters of the Foundation, now its *ex officio* head as Archbishop of Cracow. I extend a cordial welcome to Cardinal

Stanisław Rylko, President of the Council of Administration, and I thank him for the words that he addressed to me. I greet Archbishop Szczepan Wesoły, former President, as well as the distinguished Members of the Council, and together with them the Directors of the individual Institutions of the Foundation. Finally I extend a cordial greeting to all the members of the Circle of Friends of the Foundation dispersed throughout the continents. All who are present here represent the thousands of benefactors who continue to support the work of the Foundation financially and spiritually. I ask you to convey to all of them my greetings and my thanks.

As we read in the premise of the Statutes, "conscious of the greatness of the gift that the person and work of the Polish Pope represent for the Church, for the homeland and for the world, the Foundation seeks to conserve and develop this spiritual heritage, which it aims to transmit to future generations." I know that this object is realized above all through the "Centre for the Documentation and Study of the Pontificate of John Paul II", which not only collects archives, bibliographical material and museum items, but also promotes publications, exhibitions, congresses and other scientific and cultural events, in order to disseminate the teaching and the pastoral and humanitarian activity of the Blessed Pontiff. I trust that, through daily study of the sources and cooperation with bodies of similar character both in Rome and elsewhere, this Centre will become an ever more important point of reference for all who seek to know and appreciate the vast and rich heritage that he left us.

Affiliated to the Foundation, the *Casa Giovanni Paolo II* here in Rome, in collaboration with the noble Hospice of Saint Stanislaus, offers practical and spiritual assistance to pilgrims who come to the tombs of the Apostles so as to reinforce their faith and their union with the Pope and the universal Church. The Blessed Pontiff sought at every moment to bind the faithful not to himself, but ever more to Christ, to the Apostolic Tradition and to the Catholic community united to the episcopal college with the Pope as its head. I myself can experience the efficacy of these efforts, as I receive the love and spiritual support of so many people from all over the world who welcome me with affection as the Successor of Peter, called by the Lord to confirm them in the faith. I am grateful that the Foundation continues to cultivate this spirit of love that unites us in Christ.

One task of great human and cultural value, explicitly desired by John Paul II and undertaken by the Foundation, is that of assisting the "formation of the clergy and the laity, especially those from the countries of Central and Eastern Europe". Every year, students arrive in Lublin, Warsaw and Cracow from countries which, in former times, suffered the ideological oppression of the Communist regime, in order to pursue studies in the various branches of science, so as to live new experiences, to encounter different spiritual traditions, and to broaden their cultural horizons. Then they return to their own countries, enriching the various sectors of social, economic, cultural, political and ecclesial life. More than 900 graduates is a precious gift for those nations. All this is possible thanks to the study bursaries and the spiritual and professional assistance guaranteed by the generosity of the Foundation. I hope that this work will continue, develop and bear abundant fruits.

My dear friends, one could list many more successes and many accomplishments of your Foundation. Yet I would like to underline one aspect of primary importance, over and above its immediate and visible effects. In association with the Foundation, there has evolved a spiritual union of thousands of people in various continents who not only support it materially, but constitute the Circles of Friends, communities of formation based on the teaching and the example of Blessed John Paul II. They do not limit themselves to a sentimental memory of the past, but they discern the needs of the present, they look to the future with solicitude and confidence, and they commit themselves to imbue the world more deeply with the spirit of solidarity and fraternity. Let us thank the Lord for the gift of the Holy Spirit who unites, enlightens and inspires you.

With a grateful heart, through the intercession of your Patron, Blessed John Paul II, I entrust the future of your Foundation to Divine Providence and I bless you from my heart.

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