

Fornebu Airport

Not to be released before
1 June 1989 1200 hours

Prime Minister
Gro Harlem Brundtland

Speech at the welcome ceremony on the occasion of the pastoral visit to Norway of His Holiness The Pope John Paul II, Oslo, 1 June 1989

Your Holiness,

It is a pleasure and a great honour for me, on behalf of the Norwegian government, to welcome you to Norway on this pastoral visit.

Your visit marks a historic moment. In the long history of the Catholic Church, it is the first time that a Pope sets foot on Norwegian soil. Yet history provides evidence of longstanding relations between the papacy and our country.

We are pleased that, in addition to the capital, you will also visit the cities of Trondheim and Tromsø which is the home of the northernmost Catholic congregation in the world.

From 1152, and for several centuries, Trondheim was the seat of the Archbishop whose authority extended to large parts of the North Atlantic Area.

For a thousand years the Christian faith and religion have been a strong cultural and spiritual force in Norway. The death of Olav Haraldson - later to be called Saint Olav - at the Battle of Stiklestad in the year 1030 is seen as a decisive turning point in the christianization of Norway.

Through the centuries that followed up to the Reformation the Catholic Church played a dominating role in the intellectual and political life of Norway

During your reign as Pope contacts between Norway and the Holy See have been expanded. This reflects the importance of the

Holy See in international relations, including your own very important role as a mediator and arbitrator in international affairs.

Dialogue and communication have become important hallmarks of your missions. These are crucial for promoting mutual understanding between people from different cultures, of different religions and ideologies. We should all be able to enter into dialogue and respect each other's points of view as people of good faith.

The role that you personally play in support of individual freedoms, freedom of conscience, the free exercise of religion and the urgent need to improve the human conditions is widely respected.

We have noted that Your Holiness time and again has warned the world that the unacceptable, increasing poverty in the developing countries is also becoming a threat to peace. We share this concern and we firmly believe that the poverty gap between North and South is one of the gravest challenges of our time as we look to the next century and the prospects of an increasing world population.

Your Holiness,

I hope your stay will be rewarding and that you will gather many memorable impressions of Norway and of the Norwegian people.