

DATE: August 23, 1991

FROM: Rev. Kenneth J. Doyle

O 202-541-3200

H 202-832-1520

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**CARDINAL GLEMP OF POLAND CONDEMNS ANTI-SEMITISM,
REGRETS MISUNDERSTANDINGS SURROUNDING AUSCHWITZ CONVENT**

WASHINGTON--Jozef Cardinal Glemp, primate of Poland, has voiced anew his condemnation of anti-Semitism as "evil and contrary to the spirit of the Gospel" and expressed regrets over misunderstandings in 1989 surrounding a convent of Carmelite nuns situated within the boundaries of the World War II concentration camp at Auschwitz.

Specifically, Cardinal Glemp said that he now understands that seven Jewish demonstrators did not intend physical harm to the Carmelite Sisters or destruction of their convent when they were apprehended by Polish workers for scaling the walls of the convent during a demonstration on the site.

Controversy had flared soon after the incident when Cardinal Glemp said of the demonstration during a homily that "because they were restrained, it did not result in the killing of the sisters or the destruction of the convent."

Church leaders have now agreed to move the Carmelite convent to a new interfaith center for dialogue and prayer currently under construction at a site removed from Auschwitz.

Cardinal Glemp's latest words, indicating that he rejects his initial interpretation of the Auschwitz demonstration came in an August 12 letter to Archbishop Adam Maida of Detroit; the Polish primate was responding to a statement by Archbishop Maida welcoming the forthcoming pastoral visit by Cardinal Glemp to Polish-American communities in the United States. Archbishop

Maida issued the statement in his capacity as Episcopal Liaison for the Polish Apostolate for the National Conference of Catholic Bishops.

Cardinal Glemp, Archbishop of Warsaw and President of the Polish Episcopal Conference, will visit the United States from September 19 to October 7. The Cardinal will meet with Polish American communities in the arch/dioceses of New York, Brooklyn, Buffalo, Albany, NY, Hartford, CT, Boston, Cleveland, Gary, IN., Chicago, Pittsburgh, Scranton, PA, Newark, Metuchen, NJ and Washington, D.C.. In each he will pray and celebrate Mass as well as exchange insights with the local Church.

"Cardinal Glemp's visit comes at a time of new and sweeping changes in Eastern Europe in which Poland has been in the forefront," Archbishop Maida said. These social, economic and political transformations in Poland have also influenced the life of Polonia in the United States. The Archbishop noted that during the past 25 years the number of Polish immigrants to the United States has greatly increased. More than 106,000 Polish immigrants have come to the United States since 1979, and more than 20,000 people emigrated here from Poland in the past year.

"The Church's pastoral constitution on the care of migrant peoples calls on sending and receiving countries to maintain a close relationship in fulfilling their mutual interest in the care of these peoples," Archbishop Maida stated. "As the spiritual leader of Polonia worldwide, Cardinal Glemp bears a special responsibility for seeing to their needs. Polish communities across the United States, especially the new immigrants, truly have a need to see and hear Cardinal Glemp. And for more than a decade now, various Polish individuals and organizations in our country have requested that the Cardinal come to visit Polonia," Archbishop Maida continued. "Therefore, Cardinal Glemp's visit at this time will be very significant and beneficial. Through sharing of the Eucharist, homilies and meetings, the spiritual life of the Polish-American communities will be strengthened and culturally enriched," the Archbishop said.

more...

Cardinal Glemp will devote himself to many pastoral issues during his tour, including the allocation of Polish-speaking priests, will celebrate Mass at the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington, and will hold a series of meetings at the headquarters of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops, including one with representatives of the Jewish community.

"In his meetings and in all his activities in this country, Cardinal Glemp will be working to intensify and enhance the relationship between the Church in Poland and the United States," Archbishop Maida said. "The cooperation of these two societies is very important now since Poland is increasingly becoming a western country with all its benefits and shortcomings."

In his response to Archbishop Maida's welcome, Cardinal Glemp said that during his visit to the United States he wants to become "better acquainted with the Catholic Church as well as other Christian communities and religious denominations." He praised the long tradition of democracy in the U.S. which has shaped the relationship between faith communities and he noted in particular "the importance of personal contacts" with Jewish people.

Cardinal Glemp said that if there had been more personal contact between Catholic and Jewish leaders in Poland, the "regrettable misunderstandings" surrounding the convent at Auschwitz would have been avoided.

Among recent activities involving dialog between the Polish Bishops Conference and Jews, Cardinal Glemp noted a pastoral letter by the bishops in November of last year which pointed out "inappropriate attitudes and actions toward the Jewish Community." Voicing his strong personal support for that letter, Cardinal Glemp said, "I would like to re-state today that anti-Semitism is evil and is contrary to the spirit of the Gospel."

Of his forthcoming meetings with the Polish community in the United States, Cardinal Glemp said, "I want to bring to those who

have their roots on the Vistula River and have become devoted citizens of this country special greetings from Poland and share with them the recent experiences of the Church and Solidarity which have far-reaching meaning." The Polish primate said that he views his trip as a symbol of the gratitude he feels to the U.S. Catholic Church leaders who had come in past years to Poland and who "gave us Christian encouragement which was much needed in difficult times."

Accompanying Cardinal Glemp's letter to Archbishop Maida was a memorandum prepared by Bishop Henryk Muszynski giving background on the Jewish-Catholic dialogue in Poland. Bishop Muszynski is the chairman of the Polish Episcopal Committee for dialogue with Judaism. His memo notes Cardinal Glemp's key role in authoring and promulgating last November's strong condemnation by the Polish bishops of anti-Semitism as well as other efforts by Cardinal Glemp to promote Catholic-Jewish understanding, including theological symposia on the Holocaust conducted at Cracow, Warsaw and Lublin.

Following are the statements by Archbishop Maida and the letter of response by Cardinal Glemp. The background memorandum of Bishop Muszynski is available upon request.

#

91-107

A, ISR

STATEMENT BY ARCHBISHOP ADAM J. MAIDA

On behalf of American Catholics, and as the Episcopal Liaison for the Polish Apostolate for the National Catholic Conference of Bishops, I welcome with sincere anticipation next month's pastoral visit by His Eminence Joseph Cardinal Glemp to the Polish-American communities in the United States

Cardinal Glemp's visit comes at a time of new and sweeping changes in Eastern Europe in which Poland has been in the forefront. These social, economic, and political transformations have, no doubt, influenced the life of Polonia here in this country.

More than 106,000 Polish immigrants have come to the United States since 1979. 20,000 emigrated in the past year alone. The Church's pastoral constitution on the care of migrant peoples calls on sending and receiving countries to maintain a close relationship in fulfilling their mutual interest in the care of these peoples. As the spiritual leader of Polonia worldwide, Cardinal Glemp bears a special responsibility for seeing to their needs. Polish communities across the United States, especially the new immigrants, truly have a need to see and hear Cardinal Glemp. And for more than a decade now, various Polish individuals and organizations in our country have requested that the Cardinal come to visit Polonia.

It is for these reasons, therefore, that Cardinal Glemp's visit at this time will be very significant and beneficial. Through sharing of the Eucharist, homilies and meeting, the spiritual life of the Polish American communities will be strengthened and culturally enriched.

Cardinal Glemp arrives September 19th. During his two weeks here he will travel to fourteen cities and devote himself to many pastoral issues. In addition to celebrating Mass at the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception, he will focus on the allocation of Polish-speaking priests in the United States, and will hold a series of meetings at the headquarters of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops, including one with representatives of the Jewish community.

In his meetings and in all his activities in this country, Cardinal Glemp will be working to intensify and enhance the relationship between the Church in Poland and the United States. The cooperation of these two societies is very important now since Poland is increasingly becoming a western country with all its benefits and shortcomings.

Primate of Poland

Warsaw, August 12, 1991

His Excellency Archbishop Adam J. Maida
1234 Washington Boulevard
Detroit, Michigan 48226
U.S.A.

Honorable and dear Archbishop!

Heartfelt thanks to you for your kind words, written to me on August 5 of this year out of friendship and concern for my pastoral visit to the United States.

Likewise that same friendship and hospitality has been expressed to me in letters from the other American bishops whose dioceses I will visit. I am especially grateful for this atmosphere of openness, friendship and brotherhood. Only through these values can we build that which is good - a loving society.

During my visit in the United States, I wish to become better acquainted with the Catholic Church as well as other Christian communities and religious denominations. American society has a long tradition of democracy which shapes the relationship between these faith communities. In the United States people are noted for their hard work, their respect for the law and their positive attitude. We need this in Poland; we yearn to learn it.

I believe that our sensitive and unique way of expressing the Gospel message and living out our faith will once again inspire the recent immigrants from Poland and Americans of Polish descent, together with the clergy.

I want to bring to those who have their roots on the Vistula River and have become devoted citizens of this country special greetings from Poland and share with them the recent experiences of the Church and Solidarity which have far-reaching meaning.

Personal meetings with brother bishops and clergy, as well as with Catholic laity, will allow me to know better the people in their environments. This personal contact will be a source of information and knowledge far more adequate than any literature could provide. Because of this, with great gratitude, we received in Poland the visits of Cardinal Bernardin, Cardinal Law, Cardinal Szoka, Archbishop McCarrick, Bishop Malone, past Presidents of the Bishops' Conference of the United States, and other members of the hierarchy. Their presence in Poland gave us Christian encouragement which was much needed in difficult times. By my presence in various dioceses throughout the country, I would like to express to the entire Roman Catholic Church in the United States my gratitude.

The importance of personal contacts extends also to our relations with the Jewish people. If in the past we had had more contacts and learned more about each other, we would not have arrived at those regrettable misunderstandings which took place in Poland in 1989 concerning the Carmelite convent in Auschwitz. I understand that seven members of the Jewish community who disturbed the peace of the Carmelite Sisters in July 1989, to which I reacted in my Homily on August 26, 1989, did not intend to kill the Sisters or to destroy the convent. I am not anti-Semitic; I have publicly expressed my negative attitude toward anti-Semitism (see "30 Giorni" - 6 VI 1989). I would like to re-state today that anti-Semitism is evil and is contrary to the spirit of the Gospel.

Likewise I do not intend to take action against anyone for the defamation revolving around the so-called "Auschwitz conflict" which appeared in publications and newspapers, comparing me to a Nazi, a persecutor, etc. These accusations were made without reference to my homily delivered on the 10th day of April 1983 on the occasion of the 40th anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. In this homily I called for dialogue and respect for the suffering of the Jewish people.

We are entering now a new era. It will be a difficult one for Poland as well as for other countries emerging from Communist totalitarianism. We hope that this new era will be a time of hope and positive opportunities for our people. We must jointly build the future, in mutual understanding and goodwill. The Church's present activities in Poland are specifically directed to openness and dialogue. We have many positive results from dialogue with the Germans, Russians, Ukrainians, Byelorussians, Lithuanians as well as the Jewish community. Permit me to enumerate a few activities of the Episcopal Committee for dialogue with the Jews, such as: a pastoral letter of the Polish Conference of Bishops pointing out inappropriate attitudes and actions toward the Jewish Community; symposia in our Catholic universities; participation in Judeo-Christian courses in Chicago; and numerous published documents. These are the new initiatives of a new era - ones we are currently developing which reflect the teaching of the Second Vatican Council as well as the papal social encyclicals.

Allow me to close by expressing my gratitude to you and the members of the American hierarchy whom I have met and will meet. Asking God for continued help in fulfilling my obligations, and with the request of your prayers, I remain

Sincerely yours,

Jozef Cardinal Glemp
Primate of Poland