



The Holy See

***ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI
TO H.E. Mr RROK LOGU,
AMBASSADOR OF ALBANIA TO THE HOLY SEE****

Friday, 29 September 2006

Mr Ambassador,

In welcoming you at the beginning of your mission, I thank you for your courteous words and for the sentiments of deep esteem that you have desired to express to me with regard to the Holy See.

Please convey to the President of the Republic my cordial reciprocation of his greetings as I turn my thoughts to the entire Albanian People, whose aspirations to truth and freedom, as you appropriately observed, have withstood the long and oppressive Communist dictatorship from which it emerged not many years ago.

Growth in a climate of genuine freedom requires a satisfactory ethical and spiritual context, founded on a concept of the human being and of the world that reflects their nature and vocation.

Europe, with its very rich heritage of ideas and institutions, has certainly been a privileged laboratory of civilization in the course of these two millennia, even at the cost of who knows how much suffering. How many wars have there been, up to those of the last century that acquired global proportions!

Albania also aspires to institutional integration with the European nations and feels it is already bound to them not only for geographical but especially for historical and cultural reasons.

I cannot but hope that these aspirations are totally and effectively attained, and that Albania can make its own special contribution to the harmonious process of the unification of Europe.

Mr Ambassador, I deeply appreciated your emphasis, with a look at the past and the present, on the importance of the Catholic Church's presence and work in Albania for the promotion of the faith and of spiritual values as well as for its support in multiple situations of need.

In this regard, I would like to recall Mother Teresa, proclaimed Blessed in 2003 by my venerable Predecessor John Paul II.

With the testimony of an evangelical life and with the disarming courage of her acts, words and writings, this chosen daughter of Albania proclaimed to all that God is love and that he loves every human being, especially those who are poor and neglected. In fact, love itself constitutes the true revolutionary power that changes the world and leads it forward towards fulfilment.

The Church intends to bear witness to this love with her institutions, providing education and assistance that are open not only to Catholics but to everyone. This is the style that Jesus Christ taught: good must be done for its own sake and not for other ends.

In underlining this commitment of the Church in the practice of evangelical love, I would like to recall that political activity lived as a service to the *polis*, to "public affairs", with a view to the common good, is an eminent form of charity.

Catholics, especially the lay faithful, feel called to render this service, respecting the legitimate autonomy of politics and collaborating with other citizens to build a prosperous, brotherly and supportive nation.

At this time, Albania must confront many challenges. Among the problems, I would like to mention the emigration of many of its children. If, on the one hand, it is necessary to fight the causes of this phenomenon, it is also necessary to create the conditions for those who so wish to return to their Homeland.

And here, I would like to honour those Albanians who have been able, faithful to the best values of their tradition, to make themselves appreciated in Italy, in Europe and in other countries of the world.

Then, with regard to official relations between the Catholic Church and the State, I express my appreciation for the approved legislation - to which you referred - that will bring into force the Accord of 2002 between the Holy See and the Republic of Albania, and I hope that opportune agreements will also follow to regulate the economic aspects which are very important.

In this way, the Holy See wishes to contribute in Albania to consolidating the state of rights and the necessary juridical framework for citizens' rights to be truly exercised in the religious context.

This will also foster coexistence between the different Religious denominations that exist in the Country, which until now have been able to offer an example of mutual respect and collaboration that should be preserved and promoted.

Mr Ambassador, I express to you my best wishes for a peaceful and profitable mission, and I assure you of the cordial collaboration of all who work in the various Offices of the Apostolic See.

I would like at the end of these reflections to re-echo the wish that the Servant of God, John Paul II addressed to the beloved Albanian People during his historic Pastoral Visit on 25 April 1993: "to continue united and strong on the journey which leads to complete freedom, with respect for everyone and by following the path familiar to you all, of peaceful coexistence, of open cooperation and understanding, among the different ethnic, cultural and religious groups" (*Address at Arrival Ceremony*, International Airport of Rinas, Albania, 25 April 1993; *L'Osservatore Romano* English edition, 5 May, n. 5, p. 3).

On this path, Albania will be able to count on the support of the Catholic Church, and in particular of the Holy See.

I assure you of this as well as of my remembrance in prayer, as I invoke heavenly Blessings upon you and your family, upon the President of the Republic and the entire Albanian People.

**L'Osservatore Romano* n. p. n. 45 p. 5.

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