



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI
TO A DELEGATION FROM THE REPUBLIC OF BULGARIA
FOR THE CELEBRATIONS IN HONOUR
OF STS CYRIL AND METHODIUS***

Saturday, 24 May 2008

*Honourable Members of Government and Distinguished Authorities,
Venerable Brothers Representatives of the Orthodox Church and the Catholic Church,*

As I do every year, I have the pleasure of addressing a cordial welcome to all of you, members of the official Bulgarian Delegation who have come to Rome for the Feast of Sts Cyril and Methodius, venerated in both the East and the West. The liturgical Memorial of these two holy Brothers has a highly symbolic value for Bulgaria and at the same time is an important cultural event. In fact, their memory inspires in both Orthodox and Catholic believers a marked desire to offer the Country a significant encouragement to acquire a deeper knowledge of its rich Christian heritage whose origins date back, precisely, to the tireless initiative of the two great evangelizers from Thessalonica. The composition of your Delegation, led by the Vice-Prime Minister and constituted by representatives of the various Churches and cultural Institutions present in Bulgarian territory is a sign of this common commitment.

It is essential today to continue to look at the work of evangelization carried out with apostolic zeal by Sts Cyril and Methodius in the area inhabited by the Slav Peoples because it is a model of inculturation of the faith, in its essential elements, even in the post-modern epoch. In fact, the Gospel never weakens anything authentic that is found in the diverse cultural traditions but helps people in all the epochs to recognize and do what is genuinely good, illumined by the splendour of the truth. Thus it is a task for Christians to maintain and to strengthen the intrinsic bond existing between the Gospel, the mission of Christ's disciples and their respective cultural identities. To rediscover its Christian roots is important in order to help build a society in which the spiritual and cultural values that derive from the Gospel are present. These values and ideals are nourished by ceaseless union with God, as is illustrated by the lives of Sts Cyril and Methodius who never

ceased to weave relations of mutual knowledge and cordiality between different peoples and different ecclesial cultures and traditions. I wished to recall this in my Encyclical *Spe Salvi*: "If we are in relation with him who does not die, who is Life itself and Love itself, then we are in life" (n. 27).

We can enter into an authentic relationship of solidarity with our neighbour. I wholeheartedly hope that this meeting of ours may be for all of you present here and for the ecclesial and civil realities which you represent a cause of ever more intense supportive brotherly relations. May the Lord bless your beloved Country and all its citizens.

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