



The Holy See

APOSTOLIC JOURNEY
OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II
TO SARAJEVO (APRIL 12-13, 1997)
DEPARTURE CEREMONY AT SARAJEVO AIRPORT

ADDRESS OF THE HOLY FATHER

13 April 1997

Mr President,

My Brother Bishops,

*Dear Brothers and Sisters!*1. Before arriving in Sarajevo for this pilgrimage which is so significant for me, I constantly followed in my thoughts and prayers the unfolding of events in this sorely-tried land. The great suffering and the many tragedies which it has experienced in these recent years have always had a profound and painful echo in my heart. Many times I have drawn the attention of people of good will and the international bodies to your situation, so that the conflict which was destroying these lands might be halted. I did everything in my power to encourage the leaders to work for a just and lasting peace. Now, at the end of my much-desired visit, I can say that I have experienced directly and at first hand a courageous and proud people, and I bear witness to the fact that this is a society which wishes to be reborn, in spite of the difficulties which persist, a society which intends to build its future by following the paths of peace, justice and cooperation.2. I am grateful to God that I have encountered a Church which is alive and, despite immense hardships and sufferings, full of enthusiasm, a Church which has carried its cross and thus testified to all the saving power of the Gospel message. She continues to proclaim that now is the time of hope, and she commits herself concretely in this regard by working to bring peace to hearts embittered by suffering and by encouraging a fraternal charity open to accepting others, with respect for the ideas and feelings of every individual. As I prepare to return to Rome, allow me to repeat the words: Never again war! It is a wish, but also a prayer which I entrust to the hearts and minds of all. For Bosnia-Herzegovina this is truly the time for building peace. To succeed in this demanding task, you must call upon your best energies and cooperate with all the people of Bosnia-Herzegovina, in the knowledge that all are brothers and sisters, for all are children of the one God. How many times in recent years have I sought to assure you that "you are not abandoned. We are with you. We shall always be with you". The whole Church is at your side along the difficult path of building a new civilization, the civilization of love. Now, before I depart, I wish to say to you: I remain with you in spirit. I remain in spirit with your families and with your communities.3. Once more I thank everyone for all that they have done to ensure the orderly progress of my pilgrimage. In particular I thank the authorities of Bosnia- Herzegovina and of the Canton of

Sarajevo, as well as the international authorities who have lent their assistance. I express my gratitude to you, Cardinal Puljic, to all my Brother Bishops, to the clergy, to the Religious, to all the lay faithful and also to all who in many different ways have shown me esteem, respect and affection. May Almighty God, who is rich in mercy, protect and bless you all.

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