



## The Holy See

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**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI  
TO H.E. Mr MARIUS GABRIEL LAZURCA  
NEW AMBASSADOR OF ROMANIA TO THE HOLY SEE\***  
*Saturday, 20 January 2007*

*Mr Ambassador,*

I am pleased to welcome you at the Vatican, Your Excellency, on the occasion of the solemn presentation of the Letters accrediting you as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Romania to the Holy See.

I would be grateful if you would kindly convey to H.E. Mr Traian Basescu, President of Romania, my cordial good wishes for him and for the happiness and prosperity of the Romanian People. I pray God may accompany the efforts of all in the work of building an increasingly united and brotherly Nation.

At the beginning of this year, Mr Ambassador, after years of negotiations, your Country has rightly rejoiced on being officially admitted to the European Union. The Holy See, which has had close and fruitful relations with Romania for a long time as you yourself emphasized, learned with pleasure of this new situation since it consecrates increasingly each day the rediscovered unity of the European Continent after the long, sad period of separation during the Cold War.

Your Country has a long Christian tradition that is lively and fertile in its culture as well as in the dynamism of its various Churches and Ecclesial Communities and their active participation in social life.

Thus, I rejoice that Romania, rich in this "undeniable Christian heritage of the Continent, which has greatly contributed to the formation of European nations and European peoples" (*Address to the Diplomatic Corps*, 8 January 2007; *L'Osservatore Romano* English edition [ORE], 17 January, p. 7), is able to make its original contribution to the European community to ensure that Europe is not

only an economic power and an important trade centre, but also that it discover a new political, cultural and spiritual impetus to build a promising future for the new generations.

As I recently reminded the Diplomatic Corps, "It is by respecting the human person that peace can be promoted, and it is by building peace that the foundations of an authentic integral humanism are laid. This is where I find the answer to the concern for the future voiced by so many of our contemporaries" (*ibid.*).

Your Country has been involved for years in the task of a thorough renewal of society, anxious to heal the wounds of the past and to enable one and all to enjoy the fundamental freedoms and benefit from economic and social progress. I rejoice in this.

Furthermore, I encourage political leaders to pay special attention to the need for active solidarity between every sector of the population, to prevent in the era of globalization a widening of the gap between those citizens who have legitimate access to the benefits of economic development and those who are finding themselves gradually marginalized, that is, excluded from this process, as unfortunately can be noted in many modern societies.

It is equally important to guarantee to all fair access to an independent and transparent system of justice that can effectively fight those who fail to respect the common good and who bend the law to suit their own interests. In this perspective, I likewise hope that new attention will be paid to the poorest families so that they may raise their children in dignity.

I also rejoice in the progress made by your Government in the sensitive management of the return of property confiscated from religious communities. This is a long-term task demanded by justice and equity that must enable all recognized forms of worship to have their own legitimate place in Romanian society.

I also hope that the rules regulating religious freedom, which is a fundamental freedom, will be properly respected, especially where they involve the Greek Catholic Church. I know that for her part the Catholic Church is always prepared to examine in a spirit of dialogue with the competent Authorities the means with which to overcome the possible problems that might arise in their mutual relations. This will make an important contribution to social peace.

In this regard, I cannot but express my concern about the matter of St Joseph's Cathedral in Bucharest, regarding which the Archdiocese of Bucharest has approached the competent State Authorities a number of times in order to preserve the historical patrimony that is constituted by the Cathedral and the value of faith that it represents, not only for the Catholic community but also for the entire Romanian population.

Pope John Paul II's Visit to your Country in 1999 left a mark in "the heart and mind of Romanians",

as you said. It especially led to a new blossoming of relations between the Catholic Church and the Romanian Orthodox Church.

While, through you, I cordially greet H.B. Teoctist, the Orthodox Patriarch of Romania, who in turn came to visit the Church of Rome in 2002, I express the hope that both Catholic and Orthodox faithful will continue to form more and more brotherly relations in daily life and likewise that opportunities for dialogue will increase at all levels.

In particular, I hope that the European Ecumenical Meeting scheduled to take place in Sibiu next September will be an important landmark on this journey towards unity on which we have set out together.

May I also greet the Catholic community of Romania, united round its Pastors. As my Predecessor recalled, it has had "the providential opportunity to see flourishing side by side for centuries the two traditions, the Latin and the Byzantine, that beautify the face of the one Church" (John Paul II, *Address to the Bishops of Romania on an Ad Limina Visit*, 1 March 2003; *ORE*, 12 March, p. 4). This requires it to bear a special witness to Catholic unity and quite specially qualifies it to work for ecumenism.

I know that the Catholic faithful play an active part in the life of the Country, especially in the social and spiritual context, and I warmly encourage them to witness courageously to the indispensable place of the family in the heart of society.

At the time when you are officially assuming your office to the Holy See, Your Excellency, I offer you my best wishes for the success of your mission. Be assured, Mr Ambassador, that you will always meet with the attention and cordial understanding of my collaborators.

I wholeheartedly invoke an abundance of divine Blessings upon you, Your Excellency, upon your family, your collaborators at the Embassy and the entire Romanian People.

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