



The Holy See

***ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI
TO H.E. Mr GJOKO GJORGJEVSKI
AMBASSADOR OF THE FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC
OF MACEDONIA TO THE HOLY SEE***

Thursday, 22 April 2010

Mr Ambassador,

I am pleased to welcome you, Your Excellency, for the presentation of the Letters accrediting you as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia to the Holy See. I am grateful to you for the cordial words, you have addressed to me also on behalf of the authorities and of the noble nation that you represent. Please convey to them the expression of my esteem and good wishes, together with the assurance of my prayers for concord and for the harmonious development of the whole country.

In receiving you my thoughts turn to the annual meeting of the Successor of Peter with an authoritative official Delegation of your country that takes place on the occasion of the Feast of Sts Cyril and Methodius, the venerated spiritual guides of the Slav peoples and Co-Patrons of Europe. This event, which has become a pleasant custom, testifies to the good relations that exist between the Holy See and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. They are bilateral relations which have developed well, especially in recent years, and are marked by cordial cooperation. In this regard, I wish to express my pleasure at the mutual commitment to the recent construction of new buildings for Catholic worship in various localities of the country.

As you emphasized, the signs of human and Christian values, embodied in people's lives, are clearly visible in the Macedonian People and constitute the appreciated spiritual and cultural patrimony of the nation. Further evidence of this are the wonderful religious buildings, constructed in different epochs and places but especially in the city of Ohrid. The Holy See regards this precious heritage with high esteem and consideration, encouraging insofar as it is her competence

the study of its history and documentation, for a greater knowledge of its religious and cultural past. Drawing on this patrimony, in the future too the citizens of your country will continue to build their own history. Strong in their spiritual identity, they will be able to contribute their experience to the consortium of European peoples. For this reason I am anxious that the aspirations and increasing efforts of this country to become part of a united Europe, may meet with success, in a condition of acceptance of the respective rights and duties with reciprocal respect for collective structures and the traditional values of the individual peoples.

Mr Ambassador, in addressing the Macedonian People's commitment to encourage increasingly dialogue and coexistence among the ethnic and religious groups that make up the country, I identified in that universal aspiration to justice and internal consistence which has always motivated it and which can become an example to others in the Balkan region. In fact, the bridges of the exchange of a broader understanding and close religious relations among the various members of Macedonian society have favoured the creation of an atmosphere in which people recognize each other as brothers and sisters, children of the same God and citizens of one country. In the first place it is certainly the task of those in charge of the institutions to identify ways in which to express in political initiatives the aspirations of men and women to dialogue and to peace. Believers, however, know that peace is not only the result of planning and human endeavour but is first and foremost a gift of God to people of good will. Moreover, justice and forgiveness are the pillars that support this peace. Justice assures full respect for rights and duties, and forgiveness heals and rebuilds from their foundations relations between people who are still suffering the consequences of the ideological clashes of the recent past.

Having surmounted the tragic period of the last World War, after the sorrowful experience of a totalitarianism that denied the fundamental rights of the human person, the Macedonian People have set out towards a harmonious progress, giving proof of patience, a readiness to sacrifice and persevering optimism, tenaciously striving to create a better future for all the country's inhabitants. A stable social and economic development cannot but take into account peoples' cultural, social and spiritual needs, as it must also make the most of the noblest of the popular traditions and resources. This must be done in the awareness that the growing phenomenon of globalization, which on the one hand brings with it a certain levelling out of social and economic differences, on the other, might aggravate the imbalance between those who increasingly benefit from the ever greater possibilities of producing riches and those on the contrary who are left on the margins of the progress.

Mr Ambassador, your country boasts a long and luminous Christian tradition which dates back to apostolic times. I hope that in a global context of moral relativism and the scant interest in religious experience with which part of European society often acts, the citizens of the noble people you represent will be able to carry out a wise discernment, opening themselves to the new horizons of authentic civilization and true humanism. To do this, it is necessary to keep alive and sound, at the personal and community level, those principles that are also at the root of this People's civilization:

attachment to the family, the defence of human life and the promotion of religious requirements, especially those of young people. Even though the Catholic Church in your nation is a minority, she wishes to make her sincere contribution to building a more just and supportive society, based on the Christian values that have inspired the consciences of its inhabitants. I am certain that the Catholic community, in the awareness that charity in the truth "is the principle driving force behind the authentic development of every person and of all humanity" (*Caritas in Veritate*, n. 1), will pursue her charitable mission which is so widely appreciated in your country, especially for the poor and the suffering.

Your Excellency, I am sure that you too, in fulfilling the lofty office entrusted to you, will contribute to intensifying the already good relations that exist between the Holy See and the Macedonian nation, and I assure you that to this end you will be able to rely on the full availability of all my collaborators in the Roman Curia. With these fervent good wishes, I invoke upon you, Mr Ambassador, upon your family, upon the leaders and upon all the inhabitants of the nation that you represent, an abundance of divine Blessings.

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