



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI
TO H.E. Mr BOYKO BORISSOV,
PRIME MINISTER OF THE REPUBLIC OF BULGARIA
FOR THE CELEBRATIONS IN HONOUR
OF STS CYRIL AND METHODIUS**

Saturday, 22 May 2010

Mr Prime Minister,

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

I am glad to extend a cordial welcome to each one of you, honourable Members of the Official Delegation, who have come to Rome on the happy occasion of the liturgical Memorial of Sts Cyril and Methodius. Your presence, which testifies to the Christian roots of the Bulgarian people, offers me the propitious opportunity to express my esteem for this dear Nation, and permits us to consolidate our friendship, fortified by devotion for these two brother Saints from Thessalonica.

Through their tireless work of evangelization, realized with truly apostolic ardour, Sts Cyril and Methodius providentially rooted Christianity in the soul of the Bulgarian people. Thus it has become anchored in those Gospel values which always strengthen a nation's identity and enrich its culture. The Gospel, in fact, does not weaken the authenticity of diverse cultural traditions. On the contrary, precisely because faith in Jesus shows us the splendour of Truth; it gives a person the capacity to recognize what is truly good and in turn helps him or her to express it in life and in the social context. It is therefore reasonable to maintain that Sts Cyril and Methodius made a significant contribution to shaping the humanity and the spiritual makeup of the Bulgarian people, bringing it into a shared cultural Christian tradition.

On the journey towards full integration with the other European nations, Bulgaria is thus called to foster and witness to those Christian roots, which derive from the teachings of Sts Cyril and Methodius, which are more timely and necessary today than ever. It is called, that is, to remain faithful and to guard the precious heritage that unites those who profess the same faith in the Apostles and are united by a common Baptism, whether Orthodox or Catholic. As Christians, we

have the task of conserving and reinforcing the intrinsic bond that exists between the Gospel and our respective cultural identities. As disciples of the Lord in mutual respect of the diverse ecclesial traditions we are called to a shared witness of our faith in Jesus, in whose name we may obtain salvation.

I wholeheartedly hope that our meeting may be for all of those present, and for the ecclesial and civil entities that you represent, a catalyst for ever more intense, fraternal and supportive relations. With these sentiments, I encourage the Bulgarian people to persevere in the edification of a society founded on justice and peace. To this end, I assure you of my prayers and my spiritual nearness. I renew to you, Mr Prime Minister, and to each of you, my blessing which I also extend to all of the citizens of your beloved Country.

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