



The Holy See

**APOSTOLIC JOURNEY
OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II
TO SARAJEVO (APRIL 12-13, 1997)
*ADDRESS OF THE HOLY FATHER
ARRIVAL AT SARAJEVO AIRPORT***

12 April 1997

*Members of the Presidency of Bosnia-Herzegovina,
Representatives of Governments and of International Organizations,
My Brother Bishops,*

*Dear Brothers and Sisters!*1. My first thought, at this moment when it has been granted me to touch the soil of Bosnia-Herzegovina, goes to God who today has granted my long-cherished desire to make this pilgrimage. At last I am able to be here with you, to see you and to speak to you, having shared from afar the pain of your sufferings during the tragic period of the recent conflict. I would like to embrace all those who live in this region which has endured so much, especially those who have suffered the premature loss of a loved one, those who bear on their bodies the marks of war and those who have had to abandon their homes in these long years of violence. All of you should know that you have a special place in the Pope's heart. In my statements calling for peace in this country, I have been concerned to ensure that respect be shown for all individuals and their rights, without distinction of race or religion, and with special regard for the poor and the victims of hardship. As I enter the City of Sarajevo, I wish first to offer a respectful greeting to the Members of the Presidency, whom I thank for their invitation, for this welcome and for the hospitality which they are now offering me. My thoughts then turn to the three peoples who make up Bosnia-Herzegovina — Croats, Muslims and Serbs. From the first moment of my presence in their land I am happy to assure them of my deep esteem and cordial friendship.2. I gladly take the opportunity of this direct contact with the leaders of Bosnia-Herzegovina to extend to each of them my cordial encouragement to continue along the path of peace and the rebuilding of the country and its institutions. It is not a matter of material reconstruction alone; what is needed above all is to provide for the spiritual rebuilding of minds and hearts, in which the devastating fury of war has often shaken and perhaps even compromised the values which are the foundation of all civil coexistence. It is here, from the spiritual foundations of human coexistence, that a new beginning must be made. Never again war! Never again hatred and intolerance! This is the lesson taught by this century and this millennium which are now drawing to a close. This is the message with which I begin my Pastoral Visit. The inhuman

logic of violence must be replaced by the constructive logic of peace. The natural instinct for revenge must yield to the liberating power of forgiveness, which must put an end to extreme forms of nationalism and the ethnic conflicts which they generate. As in a mosaic, every part of this region needs to be assured that its own political, national, cultural and religious identity will be safeguarded. Diversity is a source of enrichment, when it becomes a united effort in the service of peace, for the building of a truly democratic Bosnia-Herzegovina.³ With respect and friendship I likewise greet all the diplomatic, international, civil and military authorities present. With this Visit I wish to express my heartfelt appreciation to the Governments, the International Organizations, the religious and humanitarian organizations, and also to the individual men and women who during these past years have worked to break down in this region the wall of incomprehension and hostility and to re-establish the values of mutual respect for the sake of resumed dialogue, constructive understanding and peace. Sarajevo Airport, where we now are, has often been, during the years of the recent war, the only port of entry for humanitarian aid. Through this entry I too now pass, "a pilgrim of peace and friendship", desirous of serving as best I can the cause of peace in justice and of reconciliation. To this most noble cause all people of good will must now devote their best energies. The cause of peace will triumph, if all parties can act in truth and justice, responding to the legitimate hopes of the people living in this region, who in their great variety can become a symbol for the whole of Europe. As I conclude these brief words of greeting, I cannot fail to pay homage to all who have lost their lives in carrying out missions of peace and humanitarian relief sponsored by international, national and private organizations. Thanks to their sacrifice, the door of peace did not completely close and the defenceless and the suffering hardly ever lacked the means needed to survive and to await better Times New Roman. Now that peace has finally been achieved, the commitment to preserve it becomes also a duty of gratitude towards those who gave their lives for this noble cause. May God grant to Bosnia-Herzegovina, to all the peoples of the Balkans, of Europe and of the world, that the time of peace in justice may never end.