



The Holy See

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

**ADDRESS OF THE HOLY FATHER
AT THE MEETING WITH THE REPRESENTATIVES
OF THE ISLAMIC COMMUNITY**

13 April 1997

Mr Reis ul-Ulema,

*Distinguished Gentlemen!*1. I offer you my cordial greeting and thank you for this meeting which is close to my heart and which enables me to greet - together with you, Mr Reis ul-Ulema Mutafa efendija Ceric, and your closest colleagues - all the Muslims of Bosnia-Herzegovina. As you know, the Church regards with esteem the followers of Islam who, as the Second Vatican Council recalls, adore the one God, living and subsistent, merciful and almighty, creator of heaven and earth, who has spoken to man (cf. *Nostra Aetate*, 3). To this faith in God, which draws Muslims close to the believers of the other monotheistic religions, is added the consideration that the Islamic tradition preserves great respect for the memory of Jesus, esteemed as a great prophet, and for Mary, his Virgin Mother. May this closeness make possible ever more mutual understanding at the human and spiritual level. May it help bring about greater fraternal and constructive understanding also between communities of different beliefs living in Bosnia-Herzegovina.2. God is one, and in his justice he asks us to live in conformity with his holy will, to regard ourselves as brothers and sisters of one another, to commit ourselves to working to ensure that peace is safeguarded in human relationships, at every level. All human beings are put on earth by God to make a pilgrimage of peace, starting from the situation in which they find themselves and from the culture in which they live. The Islamic community of Bosnia-Herzegovina is also aware of this "destiny" willed by God, but it knows, at the same time, the efforts involved in the journey necessary for carrying it out, and today it is experiencing the consequences of a war which spared no one suffering and sorrow. The time has come to resume a sincere dialogue of brotherhood, accepting and offering forgiveness: the time has come to overcome the hatred and vengeance which still hinder the re-establishment of genuine peace in Bosnia-Herzegovina. God is merciful - this is the affirmation that all believers in Islam love and share. Precisely because God is merciful and wills mercy, each individual must situate himself within the logic of love, so as to reach the goal of true mutual forgiveness. Peace, then, which is a gift offered by God in his goodness, is required by him and demanded of our consciences. He wills peace between one person and another,

between one nation and another. This is what God commands, for he himself manifests his love to every man and woman, together with his saving forgiveness.³ It is my hope that the communities of Islam, a religion of prayer, can join in the prayer which all people of good will raise to Almighty God, to implore, with unity of purpose, an active peace which enables people to live and work together effectively for the common good. May the Most High God protect all those who, with sincerity and mutual understanding, join forces with generous commitment and openness in order to restore the moral values common to all people who believe in God and love his will. Upon these good people, as also upon all of you here present, I invoke the blessing of Almighty God.

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