



The Holy See

ADDRESS OF JOHN PAUL II TO A DELEGATION FROM BULGARIA*

Monday, 24 May 1999

*Mr Prime Minister,
Your Excellencies,
Dear Friends,*

It is a joy for me to welcome your delegation from Bulgaria, which comes to Rome each year to honour Sts Cyril and Methodius, whose memory is very alive in your country and throughout the region.

By the presence here today of Catholic and Orthodox Pastors, "we clearly see that the heritage of the Brothers from Salonika is and remains ... deeper and stronger than any division" (*Slavorum Apostoli*, n. 25), showing that the two traditions, Eastern and Western, arose within the one Church of Christ. In fact, Sts Cyril and Methodius helped to establish and spread Christian faith and culture in the Slav world; faithfully united to the Successor of Peter, they bequeathed to various peoples a rich patrimony, which all have zealously worked to preserve down the ages especially through the active presence of monastic movements and popular devotion. May the veneration of Sts Cyril and Methodius, to whom you show your deep attachment by your presence in Rome, help increase the faith of your peoples, as well as our brotherhood in Christ and solidarity with all people!

When proclaiming the Gospel, the holy brothers were respectful of genuine human and moral values and cultural differences, leaving to each people their distinctive characteristics and opening the way to unity among different cultures. They were also committed to awakening in their contemporaries an attitude of openness and acceptance towards everyone. By acting in this way, they were in a sense the promoters of a united Europe and of a profound peace among all the continent's inhabitants, showing the basis for a new art of living together with respect for differences, which in no way are an obstacle to unity. I hope that these great saints of your land will be models of human and Christian life for all Bulgarians, called to be ever more committed, along with their brothers and sisters in the region, to the path of peace and reconciliation, thereby

making a notable contribution to the construction of a Europe of nations.

At the end of our meeting, I thank you warmly for your kind visit; I offer my best wishes for your delegation, through which I extend my cordial greetings to the Bulgarian authorities and people, assuring them of the fervent prayers of the Bishop of Rome. As I entrust you all to the intercession of Sts Cyril and Methodius, I ask the Lord to grant you the benefits of his blessing.

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