



# The Holy See

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***ADDRESS OF THE HOLY FATHER JOHN PAUL II  
TO A BULGARIAN DELEGATION  
FOR THE FEAST OF SAINTS CYRIL AND METHODIUS***

*Saturday, 11 May 2002*

*Dear Bulgarian Friends,*

Again I have the joy of welcoming a Bulgarian Delegation on the occasion of the Feast of Saints Cyril and Methodius. Your visit has by now become traditional. This year it has special significance as I look forward to my own visit to Bulgaria in two weeks time. I thank Your Excellency, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, for your gracious words, and Your Excellency, Metropolitan Kalinik, for your fraternal words and for the greeting you bring on behalf of Patriarch Maxim. I assure Your Delegation of my heartfelt prayers for the well-being of the Bulgarian people, so rich in history and humanity.

While my visit to your country will have a pastoral purpose, that of confirming my Catholic brothers and sisters in their faith, it is also my fervent desire to strengthen the bonds of Christian communion between the Catholic Church and the Bulgarian Orthodox Church. Our encounter will surely help Bulgaria to consolidate its Christian foundations at a time when the old order has gone and a new life is taking shape for your country. And it would be a service rendered by the Churches to the continent of Europe as it seeks to build a new unity, drawing more abundantly upon the riches of both East and West.

Such a contribution would be profoundly in keeping with the vision of Saints Cyril and Methodius, a vision which has lost none of its relevance through the centuries. Born of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, theirs was a vision of unity within diversity, of freedom tied to truth, of hope in the face of every affliction. In visiting Bulgaria, I shall be visiting the people born of their witness and meeting the culture which embodies the soul of their teachings.

To the Holy Synod I send greetings of peace from the Tombs of the Apostles Peter and Paul. To the Government and people of Bulgaria I express my joy that I will soon be in your land. Entrusting you to the protection of the Mother of the Saviour and to the intercession of Saints Cyril and Methodius, I invoke upon the nation the abundant blessings of Almighty God.