



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF JOHN PAUL II
TO A DELEGATION FROM THE FORMER
YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA***

Friday, 23 May 2003

*Dear Prime Minister,
Distinguished Friends,*

The feast of Saints Cyril and Methodius has brought you once more to Rome, where the relics of Saint Cyril are preserved, and I am pleased to greet you. I thank the President of the Government of the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia for his kind words and good wishes. It is my fervent prayer that your country will be ever strengthened in its commitment to unity and solidarity, ideals which the Holy Brothers of Salonika so effectively embodied in their lives dedicated to preaching the Christian faith.

During their earthly life, these two saintly men were bridges linking East and West. By the values they taught and the example they gave, they brought different cultures and traditions together into one rich heritage for the entire human family. In fact, the witness of their lives reveals an ageless truth that the world of the Third Millennium urgently needs to rediscover: only in charity and justice can peace become a reality enveloping all human hearts, overcoming hatred and conquering evil with good. This charity and justice become tangible realities when people of good will in every part of the globe, like the Brothers Cyril and Methodius, are uncompromisingly committed to "the cause of reconciliation, friendly coexistence, human development and respect for the intrinsic dignity of every nation" (Encyclical Epistle *Slavorum Apostoli*, 1).

Ladies and Gentlemen, this annual pilgrimage to Rome is not just a tribute to Saint Cyril but is also a testimony to the bonds of friendship existing between your nation and the Catholic Church. I encourage you to see that these bonds grow ever stronger, especially within your local communities, thus producing fruits of increased goodwill and attitudes of greater cooperation

towards the Catholic Church in your country. May Almighty God fill your minds and hearts with this peace, and may he abundantly bless the people of the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

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