



The Holy See

JOHN PAUL II

**HOLY FATHER'S ADDRESS
IN HIS VISIT TO THE PATRIARCHAL CATHEDRAL
OF BUCHAREST**

Friday, 7 may 1999

1. *"The God of peace be with you all!" (Rom 15:33).*

Dear brothers and sisters, I wish to greet you in the words of the Apostle Paul to the Romans, to show you my affection and the deep joy that I feel to be with you and His Beatitude Patriarch Teoctist for the first time here in Romania. Thank you for your warm and festive welcome, which comes from faith in the One who is ever present where two or three are gathered in his name: Jesus Christ, our Lord (cf. *Mt 18:20*).

2. Christ has always accompanied the history of the Romanian nation. Indeed, how can we forget that the evangelization and formation of the first Christian communities coincided with the very formation of your ancient and noble people? How can we not point out with gratitude that the Gospel has deeply permeated its life and customs since its beginning, becoming a source of civilization and a principle of synthesis among the diverse inspirations of its culture? Thanks to the Christian faith, this country, linked with the memory of Trajan and the Roman world and which by its very name recalls the Roman Empire, but is also marked by Byzantine civilization, down the centuries has become a bridge between the Latin world and Orthodoxy, between Greek civilization and the Slavic peoples.

The history of your faith is significantly portrayed by the paintings on many façades of your churches, which, despite the wind and rain, continue to proclaim God's love for mankind. Romanians too, throughout the tragic events of their past and more recent history, have courageously preserved the gift of Christian faith, enduring violent persecutions and the insidious

influences of a life without God.

In giving thanks to the Lord for all the shining testimonies that have flowered in Romania, I offer the wish that faith in Christ will become ever more rooted in your hearts and shine forth in your lives, to be passed on in its integrity to future generations.

3. Dear Romanians, may the Lord accompany the journey of your people into the third Christian millennium! May he inspire in your hearts good projects and hopes and give you the strength to build the civilization of love, based on justice, solidarity and commitment to the common good, for a truly fraternal society.

I particularly hope that a growing understanding between all who are honoured by the name Christian — Orthodox, Catholics of the various rites and Protestants of different denominations — may be a leaven of unity and harmony in your homeland and on the whole European continent.

The peace of Christ be with you always. Amen!