



The Holy See

COMMEMORATION OF CARDINAL IULIU HOSSU (1885–1970)

ADDRESS OF THE HOLY FATHER LEO XIV

Sistine Chapel

Monday, 2 June 2025

[Multimedia]

Dear brothers and sisters!

We are meeting today in the Sistine Chapel during the Jubilee Year of Hope, in order to commemorate an Apostle of Hope: Blessed Iuliu Hossu, the Greek-Catholic Bishop of Cluj-Gherla and a martyr for the faith during the Communist persecution in Romania. Today, in a certain sense, he enters this Chapel, having been created a Cardinal *in pectore* by Saint [Paul VI](#) on 28 April 1969, while imprisoned for his fidelity to the Church of Rome.

I gladly greet all those present: the representatives of the Greek-Catholic Church in Romania, the civil Authorities and, in particular, the Honourable Silviu Vexler, President of the Federation of Jewish Communities in Romania.

We are celebrating a special year honouring Cardinal Iuliu Hossu, a symbol of fraternity transcending all ethnic and religious boundaries. The process of awarding him the title of “Righteous Among the Nations,” begun in 2022, was motivated by his courageous commitment to supporting and saving the Jews of Northern Transylvania when, between 1940 and 1944, the Nazis were carrying out their heinous plan of deporting them to extermination camps.

At enormous risk to himself and to the Greek-Catholic Church, Blessed Hossu undertook extensive activities on behalf of the Jews aimed at preventing their deportation. In the spring of 1944, as preparations were being made in Cluj-Napoca (in Hungarian Kolozsvár) and other cities

in Transylvania, to establish ghettos for the Jews, he mobilized the Greek-Catholic clergy and faithful through a pastoral letter published on 2 April 1944. We also know of this through the testimony of Moshe Carmilly-Weinberger, former Chief Rabbi of the Jewish community of Cluj-Napoca. In that letter, he launched a vibrant and deeply human appeal. “Our plea”, he wrote, “is addressed to all of you, venerable brothers and beloved children, to help the Jews not only with your thoughts, but also with your sacrifice, knowing that there is no act more noble to be carried out today than providing Christian and Romanian assistance, born of ardent human charity. Our first concern in the present moment must be this work of relief.” According to the personal testimony of the former Chief Rabbi, Cardinal Hossu helped save the lives of thousands of Jews in northern Transylvania between 1940 and 1944.

The hope shown by this great Pastor was that of a man of faith, who knows that the gates of evil will not prevail against God’s work.

His life was a witness of faith lived to the full, in prayer and devotion to others. A man of dialogue and a prophet of hope, he was beatified by Pope Francis on 2 June 2019 in Blaj. In the homily on that occasion, the Pope quoted a phrase of the Cardinal that summed up his entire life: “God has sent us into this darkness of suffering in order to offer forgiveness and to pray for the conversion of all.”

These words embody the spirit of the martyrs: an unshakeable faith in God, devoid of hatred and coupled with a spirit of mercy that turns suffering into love for one’s persecutor. Even now, those words remain as a prophetic invitation to overcome hatred through forgiveness and to live one’s faith with dignity and courage.

The Church is close to the sufferings of the Jewish people, which culminated in the tragedy of the Holocaust. She knows well what pain, marginalization, and persecution mean. Precisely for this reason, she feels committed, as a matter of conscience, to building a society centered on respect for human dignity.

Cardinal Hossu’s message remains most timely. What he did for the Jews of Romania, and his efforts to protect his neighbour in spite of all risks and dangers, today make him a model of freedom, courage and generosity, even to the point of making the supreme sacrifice. That is why his motto, “Our Faith is Our Life,” ought to become the motto of each one of us. It is my prayerful hope that his example, which anticipated the teaching later expressed in the Declaration Nostra Aetate of the Second Vatican Council — the sixtieth anniversary of which is approaching — together with your friendship, will serve as a beacon for today’s world. Let us say “No!” to violence in all its forms, and even more so when it is perpetrated against those who are defenseless and vulnerable, like children and families.

May God bless each of you and your loved ones!

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