



The Holy See

ADDRESS OF THE HOLY FATHER JOHN PAUL II TO THE PILGRIMS FROM BOSNIA AND HERCEGOVINA

Thursday, 30 March 2000

*Your Eminence,
Venerable Brothers in the Episcopate,
Dear Priests,
Dear Brothers and Sisters,*

1. I extend a cordial greeting to each of you, Pastors, and to you gathered here, faithful of the beloved Churches of Vrhbosna, Mostar-Duvno, Trebinje-Mrkan and Banja Luka. I welcome all of you with great joy. You have come to the tombs of the Apostles Peter and Paul and of the other Roman martyrs to celebrate the Great Jubilee of the Year 2000 and to reaffirm your communion with the Church of Rome and the Successor of the Prince of the Apostles. As I welcome you affectionately, I thank dear Cardinal Vinko Puljic for the sentiments he has expressed to me on behalf of you all.

I have vivid memories of the [Pastoral Visit](#) which, after several necessary postponements, I was able to make on 12 and 13 April 1997. I was able to realize personally the great tragedy that in the last 10 years has befallen you and the other inhabitants of the region. The Holy See was constantly close to you throughout this period and will be in the future. The Pope's heart beats for you and he shares not only your sorrows and concerns, but also your joys and hopes.

2. Yes, dear brothers and sisters! Despite the numerous difficulties you encounter each day because of the political and economic situation, and despite the clouds that still gather on the horizon of your homeland, this is a time of hope! Just as in these days there are many signs announcing nature's reawakening, so too there are indications of a promising recovery in your society. It is the task of Christians to strengthen this positive process by contributing the Gospel leaven of new life. The Christian message contains an extraordinary potential for hope. It is the

responsibility of every member of the faithful to enable the brothers and sisters he meets to share in it.

Your message of hope, dear friends, will be convincing if it is accompanied by the Gospel witness of deep ecclesial communion and of a charity that knows no boundaries. May your very life be eloquent proof to everyone of your Christianity! Be the first to offer and accept forgiveness, freeing your memory from hatred, resentment and the desire for revenge, and recognizing even those who have done you wrong as brothers and sisters. Do not let yourselves be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good (cf. *Rom* 12: 21). "As the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive" (*Col* 3: 13).

I fervently trust that with God's help the flame of faith, kindled so many centuries ago in your lands, may continue to burn in the third millennium. The Church in your homeland will continue to be full of life if she remains open to the promptings of the Holy Spirit and united around her Bishops, the successors of the Apostles. It is they, the Pastors, who guarantee the Catholic unity of each of your parish and diocesan communities.

The fervent observance of this Great Jubilee offers all Christians a favourable opportunity to intensify the work of salvation that is carried out in the Church, the Mystical Body of Christ and universal sacrament of salvation. May the celebration of the Jubilee bear abundant fruits of conversion and holiness in the Catholic communities of your regions! May the Cross of Christ once again reveal its saving power among you!

3. Dear Catholics of the Ecclesiastical Province of Vrhbosna, may you remain united with one another in order to overcome the difficulties of the current moment. Together with your fellow citizens, you will thus be able to build in your land a hope-filled future of peace. You will succeed in this undertaking, which is certainly not easy, if you continue to show solidarity to one another, and if you can develop the spirit of sharing and co-responsibility, helping in particular the weakest, the poor and the war victims in your midst!

Bosnia and Hercegovina need honest dialogue and the active cooperation of all its peoples, as well as respect for the rights and identity of each person and each individual group. Indeed, if one wants to build a future of peace and social stability, no one can be favoured to the prejudice of others, and equality must be guaranteed for all.

During the past five and a half centuries your homeland has been governed by systems whose legacy greatly hinders the current democratic development. To overcome this situation and to relaunch true democracy, the commitment and collaboration of all is required. Authentic democracy is the result of appreciating the cultural, social and religious aspects of the various members of the country, with respect for fairness, justice and truth. It can be neither imported nor imposed. Its good functioning depends in particular on the extent to which the dignity of the person

and the sacredness of human life are respected.

4. I also cordially greet the pilgrims from the parishes of Dol, Postira and Splitska. During the recent war their island of Brac gave hospitality to the major seminary of Vrhbosna in Sarajevo and to many other refugees. May God abundantly reward all the inhabitants of that beautiful island!

Upon all of you here and on your diocesan communities, I invoke the motherly protection of the Most Holy Mother of God, as I cordially impart my Apostolic Blessing to each of you.

Praised be Jesus and Mary!

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