



The Holy See

***ADDRESS OF JOHN PAUL II
TO H.E. MR GEORGI PARVANOV,
PRESIDENT OF BULGARIA***

Thursday, 27 November 2003

Mr President,

1. The visit that you are paying me today is especially appreciated. As I greet you, Mr President, and your entourage, I would like to renew my most fervent good wishes to the entire Bulgarian Nation that it may continue on its way with confidence.

Today's meeting takes me back to the unforgettable visit that Providence granted me to make last May to Sofia, St John of Rila and Plovdiv. I vividly remember the faces of countless people who wanted to express to me their vibrant spiritual joy. I was able to perceive their determination to build the Country with newfound serenity and trust in the future, within the great European household.

Moreover, my cordial meeting with the civil Authorities of every order and rank convinced me of the determination of one and all to continue courageously in the peaceful reconstruction of the whole of society, undaunted by the challenges that confront them from day to day.

2. My thoughts then go to the venerable Patriarch Maxim, Head of the Orthodox Church of Bulgaria, who desired to welcome me to his home with brotherly attention during my visit. This marked another stage in our progressive growth in ecclesial communion. With him, I observed that Europe expects the common commitment of Catholics and Orthodox in the defence of human rights and the culture of life.

I witnessed the same sentiments of readiness for dialogue and collaboration in the small but fervent Catholic community, actively committed to bearing witness to Christ on Bulgarian soil also

in constant collaboration with the other religious Communities of the Country. My fervent hope is that this atmosphere of positive understanding will increase, for the full benefit of the reciprocal understanding and good of society as a whole.

3. Mr President, as I again express my pleasure at your visit today, I ask you to be kind enough to take back to your compatriots my renewed affectionate greeting and the assurance of my constant remembrance in prayer, so that God will continue to support your County's activities with abundant Blessings.

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