



The Holy See

***LETTER OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI
TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF HUNGARY
ON THE FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY
OF THE BUDAPEST UPRISING****

*To His Excellency
Mr László Sólyom
President of the Republic of Hungary*

On 23 October 1956, the courageous people of Budapest struggled to express their desire for freedom, in the face of a regime that was pursuing ends contrary to the values of the Hungarian Nation. Memories are still vivid of the tragic events that, in the space of a few days, left thousands of people dead or wounded, and caused deep distress throughout the world. At that time the grief-stricken appeals of my venerable Predecessor Pope Pius XII resounded strongly; with four impassioned public interventions, he pleaded insistently that the International Community recognize Hungary's right to self-determination, within a framework of clear national identity, in order to guarantee true freedom. I gladly support the various initiatives planned to commemorate this significant event, so vital for the history of the Hungarian People and for Europe. It is for this reason that I have asked the Dean of the College of Cardinals, Cardinal Angelo Sodano, until recently my Secretary of State, to be present at the celebrations in my name and to voice the sentiments that arise in my heart on this Fiftieth Anniversary of the Budapest uprising.

Mr President, in asking you to receive my Legate *a Latere*, Cardinal Angelo Sodano, with the same honour that you would show to me, I gladly take the opportunity to call to mind the thousand-year-old agreement that governs relations between the Apostolic See and the noble people of Hungary. At the same time, I am pleased to observe, Mr President, that despite all the oppression they have endured down the centuries, most recently from Soviet Communism, your people have always maintained the correct evaluation of the relationship between the State and citizens, beyond all ideology. According to the Christian vision that inspired the various peoples who were to form the Hungarian Nation, the human person, with his legitimate moral, ethical and social

aspirations, takes precedence over the State. The legal structure and the secular nature of the State have always been conceived with respect for natural law expressed in authentic national values which, for believers, are enriched by Revelation. The heartfelt wish that I now renew is that Hungary may build a future free from all forms of oppression and ideological conditioning.

Mr President, I ask you to count me among those who gratefully commemorate this most important historical event, and I pray that it will provide an occasion for timely reflection on the moral, ethical and spiritual ideals and values that have shaped Europe, of which Hungary is a part. May your country, Mr President, continue to promote a civilization based on respect for the human person and his supreme destiny.

May Mary, the *Magna Domina Hungarorum*, Saint Stephen, Saint Elizabeth and the other saints from the noble land of Pannonia continue to watch over the legitimate aspirations of the Hungarian people. I assure them of my spiritual closeness, and as a sign of my constant affection, I impart to you and to your compatriots a special Apostolic Blessing.

From the Vatican, 7 October 2006

BENEDICT XVI

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