



The Holy See

***ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI
TO H.E. MR GEORGI PARVANOV
PRESIDENT OF BULGARIA****

Monday, 23 May 2005

*Mr President,
Ladies and Gentlemen,*

I am pleased to welcome you on the occasion of your traditional visit to the tomb of St Cyril and I greet you cordially. I thank you for the kind words you addressed to me. Our meeting highlights the age-old bond of respect and spiritual closeness that has always united the Roman Pontiffs to the noble People you represent.

The affection that the Apostolic See has for the Bulgarian People is great. From Pope Clement I, of venerable memory, until today, the Bishops of Rome have always maintained a fruitful dialogue with the residents of ancient Thrace.

Your visit today, Mr President, is all the more meaningful since it is in memory of the two Saints Cyril and Methodius, Co-Patrons of Europe, who shaped the human and cultural values of the Bulgarians and of other Slav nations in a Christian perspective. One could also say that, through their work of evangelization, Europe was formed, that Europe of which Bulgaria feels itself an active party.

Furthermore, Bulgaria also has a particular responsibility towards other peoples, that of being one of the bridges between East and West. In addressing you, I wish to express my encouragement to all of your citizens so that they continue this specific political and social mission with trust.

The meeting of the President Magistrate of Bulgaria with the Successor of Peter, three years after the [Visit to Bulgaria](#) of my well-beloved late Predecessor, Pope John Paul II, was a new

confirmation of the good relations that exist between the Holy See and the Nation that you represent. How can we fail to thank Divine Providence for this re-found ability for friendly and constructive dialogue after the long and difficult period of the Communist regime?

Contacts between your Country and the Holy See have known highly significant moments in the last century. I am thinking, for example, of the affection that the Apostolic Delegate at the time, Angelo Roncalli, the future Pope John XXIII, always entertained for the inhabitants of Bulgaria.

Mr President, I cannot fail to mention at this time the closeness that Bulgaria has shown to the Holy See in the course of these last two months. You yourself, the Government, the Parliament and many of your citizens have expressed to the Catholic Church your sincere wishes on the occasion of the death of John Paul II and on my election as his Successor.

I also recall the faces and the warmth of the Representatives of the venerable Orthodox Church of Bulgaria, who desired to revive the dialogue of charity in the truth. I ask you to convey to them my feeling of gratitude, in particular to the venerable Bulgarian Patriarch, His Holiness Maxime.

We have before us a common obligation: we are called together to build a more free, more peaceful and more solidary humanity. In this perspective, I would like to formulate the fervent hope that your Nation may always know how to promote in Europe the cultural and spiritual values that make up her identity.

In this spirit, I assure you of my prayers and, through the maternal intercession of the Virgin Mary, I invoke an abundance of divine Blessings on you, the people accompanying you and all the People of the very beautiful Land of Bulgaria.

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