



The Holy See

ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II

TO BULGARIAN DELEGATIONS 25 May 1979 *Your Excellency,*

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I thank you for this visit to the Vatican. Thank you in particular for the greetings and good wishes you transmitted to me from the President of the Council of State of the Bulgarian People's Republic; I sincerely offer him my own.

I greet all those who make up the delegations present here: the personalities who represent Bulgarian cultural traditions; Metropolitan Pankratij, the leader of the delegation of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church; and the members of the Catholic delegation, among whom I see my brothers in the episcopate, His Excellency Mons. Bogdan Dobranov and Mons. Samuel Dijoundrine,

Your presence in Rome to attend the inauguration of the exhibition organized at the Vatican apostolic Library on "Vatican manuscripts and documents concerning the history of Bulgaria" and to take part in the celebrations in honour of SS Cyril and Methodius, is an eloquent illustration of the fact that the ties of the Holy See with Bulgaria, on the ecclesiastical and civil plane, do not date from yesterday but go back many centuries. Your delegations—composed of personalities of the religious world and the cultural world—prove, moreover, that culture and religious faith are not only not opposed to each other, but have with each other relations similar to those of the fruit with the tree. It is sufficient to study the origin of the cultures of different peoples to see how culture was and remains a real manifestation of some of the deepest requirements of man, who wishes to express, in art and in morals, what seems to him true, good, beautiful, just, and worthy of being loved.

In my first encyclical *Redemptor Hominis*, I explained how all the ways of the Church lead to man. It is a historical fact that the Christian Churches of East and West have encouraged and spread throughout the centuries love for one's own culture and respect for that of others. It was in this way that there arose magnificent churches and places of worship, full of architectural riches and sacred images such as the icons, for example, fruits of prayer and penitence as much as of artistic skill. It was in this way that there were produced so many documents and writings of a religious and cultural character, which instructed and edified the peoples for whom they were intended.

In this context, it is with pride and emotion that my thought rises to the Saints Cyril and Methodius. They left to the Slav peoples a cultural heritage which is concretely, as it were, the fruit of the tree of their Christian faith, deeply rooted in love of God and their brothers, whom they served in circumstances which were not always favourable. I hope that their message of unity among peoples, in real brotherhood and in peaceful life in society, is still heard today in the regions where they lived, where they worked, and which they loved with all their fervour as apostles, to the end of their lives.

When you return to your country, I want you to take with you the wishes of happiness, peace, and prosperity, both spiritual and material, which I form for the whole Bulgarian people, which is always so close to my heart.

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