



The Holy See

ADDRESS OF THE HOLY FATHER JOHN PAUL II TO THE BULGARIAN FEDERATION*

Monday, 22 May 2000 Your Excellency,

Dear Friends, 1. The annual feast of Sts Cyril and Methodius, co-patrons of Europe, gives me the pleasant opportunity to extend a cordial greeting to you who represent the beloved Bulgarian people. Set in the territorial and cultural context of the "old continent", it has much to contribute to the other peoples with regard to traditions, human and spiritual energy and wealth of civilization. Through you, the members of the delegation that has come to visit the Bishop of Rome, I would like to express my most affectionate sentiments to your compatriots and to assure them of my constant remembrance and fervent prayer that God will grant them all the good they desire. 2. In recalling these two great brothers from Salonika, "sons of the East, Byzantine by nationality, Greek by origin, Roman by mission, Slavs by apostolate", my predecessor Pius XI noted that they spent all their energy in giving themselves without reserve to win people to Christ (cf. *Apostolic Letter Quod S. Cyrillum*, 13 February 1927: AAS 19 [1927], p. 95). The evangelizing work of Cyril and Methodius also reinforced among the Bulgarian people the foundations for the growth of their national identity and their openness to meeting other peoples of the continent, to the point that Bulgaria became an irreplaceable instrument in the dialogue between East and West. The universal dimension of the preaching of Sts Cyril and Methodius and the intense apostolate they carried out so that everyone would come to knowledge of the truth and to share as one in the saving love of God helps us to understand that "all individuals, all nations, cultures and civilizations have their own part to play and their own place in God's mysterious plan and in the universal history of salvation" (Encyclical *Slavorum apostoli*, 2 June 1985, n. 19). Their memory reminds us of events that are ancient but not forgotten. A light of holiness and grace, which deeply honours the Church of Christ, still shines today from their imposing figures. Their fearless witness spurs us constantly to seek ways of dialogue and to make plans for unity. I know that the dear Bulgarian people are determined to face the inevitable difficulties with courage and confidence, and I hope that they will be able to build an ever more serene and peaceful present, from which a future filled with good fruits will spring. 3. Your pilgrimage to the tomb of St Cyril occurs in the broader context of the Great Jubilee, an event which recalls the 2,000 years since the birth of Christ. May this period be a witness to a renewed desire for peace, dialogue and collaboration with all, so that understanding between peoples and the exchange of the gifts which God has given them will advance with ever greater intensity! I thank you for your visit and offer my fervent wishes that your compatriots can persevere in the spiritual and material reconstruction already under way. I entrust these wishes to God and, through the intercession of Sts Cyril and Methodius, I invoke an abundance of divine blessings on you and on everyone you represent.

**L'Osservatore Romano. Weekly Edition in English* n.23 p.6 (p. 294).

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