



The Holy See

***ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI
TO H.E. Mr. GGEORGE IVANOV
PRESIDENT OF THE FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA
ON THE LITURGICAL MEMORIAL OF STS CYRIL AND METHODIUS****

Friday, 22 May 2009

Mr President

Honourable Members of the Delegation

Venerable Brothers of the Orthodox Church and of the Catholic Church!

I am happy to welcome you again this year on the liturgical memorial of Saints Cyril and Methodius. I am pleased that during your visit to pay homage to the Co-Patrons of Europe you have expressed the desire to meet with me, an occurrence that has already become a tradition. I thank you for this courteous gesture and I extend to each one of you my heart-felt welcome and my appreciation for the sentiments that you bring to this gathering. I express a special welcome to the authorities and to all the population of the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. I also send particular greetings to the faithful and to those who have pastoral responsibilities in your country. I avail myself of the occasion to express the sentiments of esteem and friendship that unite the Holy See to the beloved Macedonian people.

The annual celebration of the feast of Saints Cyril and Methodius, teachers of the faith and apostles of the Slavonic peoples, invites all of us who are united by the one faith in Jesus Christ, to contemplate their heroic evangelical witness. At the same time we are challenged to conserve the patrimony of ideals and values that they have transmitted by word and deed. In fact this is the most precious contribution that Christians can offer to the construction of a Europe of the third millennium, which aspires to a future of progress, justice and peace for all.

Your beloved homeland, marked by the influence of these two great saints, seeks to become more and more a place of peaceful encounter and dialogue between the country's many social and

religious spheres. My hope, which I renew today with all my heart, is that you may continue to progress on this path. As I invoke divine protection upon the authorities of your nation, to whom I renew the closeness of the Apostolic See, I wish to assure you of my personal esteem and friendship.

Once again I extend my warm good wishes to each one of you on this Feast-day and offer fervent prayers to the Lord both for you who are present here today and for all the Macedonian people.

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