



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI
TO H.E. Mr STEFAN GORDA
NEW AMBASSADOR OF MOLDOVA TO THE HOLY SEE**

Clementine Hall

Thursday, 9 June 2011

Mr Ambassador,

I am pleased to receive you this morning, at the moment when you are presenting the Letters accrediting you as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Moldova to the Holy See. I thank you for your kind words. To reciprocate I would be grateful if you would kindly express to Mr Marian Lupu, President *ad interim* of the Republic of Moldova, my cordial wishes for himself and for all the people of Moldova.

The year 2011 is the 20th anniversary of your country's Independence. It is now possible to see what has been done and what has yet to be built. In your discourse you very rightly emphasized the trials your nation has had to face and the intense hope that prevails among the population for settling the financial problems and those of national unity. It is clear that unity in peace and serenity is a factor that encourages economic and social development but this development also serves to achieve unity.

Finally I pray that lasting solutions may be found for the good of all through proper political mediation and the preservation of the different identities. Your people have written glorious pages in the history of the European continent. May this past inspire your present!

Your country wishes to move forward. It has set very understandable and necessary economic priorities. However, these must also respect the interests of national sovereignty and contribute to the well-being of all the members of your society, seeking to avoid trends that favour some to the detriment of others. To help achieve this goal your country hopes to establish close relations with the European Union. It is right and fitting that Moldova wishes to return to the common European

home, but this legitimate aspiration can only take place with respect for the positive values of your country and must not be determined solely by the economy and material well-being.

The fact that these two elements were ideologized in the past is an indication of the pitfalls to be avoided for they can lead to a unilateral abdication from the age-old values of your culture. This adherence, an important element, will be authentic only if the European Union recognizes the specific contribution that Moldova can make, so as to be able to move on together towards a future enriched by the identity of each nation.

Because of its tradition and its Christian faith, Moldova can courageously help the European Union rediscover what it no longer wishes to see and even denies. Moreover, the peace, justice and prosperity of Moldova that are bound to result from the realization of its European aspirations will only be effective if they are experienced by each one of our fellow citizens in the quest for the common good and with an ongoing concern for ethics. Among these essential values the religious values are to be found.

The harmonious diplomatic relations between Moldova and the Holy See, established 18 years ago, give me great pleasure. This harmony is due to the Christian faith that dwells in your nation and its inhabitants and I pay a tribute to the Orthodox Church as a whole. She has always shared with the Catholic Church the need to defend the religious and cultural values against the surrounding materialism and relativism which calls into question the Christian contribution to life and to society. May the brotherly relations between the Orthodox and the Catholic faithful grow deeper. These relations of reciprocal respect and friendship are a witness of love that over and above divisions and their consequences points out that hearts can be opened to reconciliation, solidarity and brotherhood.

The faithful of the Catholic Church in Moldova are not very numerous. I greet them through you, and especially the Bishop of Chişinău. I give thanks for the juridical recognition which the Catholic Church enjoys in Moldova, for her gradual organization and for the construction of new churches, including the cathedral. These facts show the excellency of the dialogue and collaboration between the civil institutions and the Catholic Church.

We all know that certain problems inherited from a recent past have yet to be resolved. The effort to care for and heal these wounds is another way of making a positive contribution to the unity of the country and to its development. May the civil authorities have the courage to find satisfactory solutions that are right and fair concerning the confiscated ecclesiastical patrimony, in order to allow the Catholic Church the means to fulfil her mission, not only in the religious domain but also in the educational, health-care and charitable sectors.

The Church does not ask to be granted special privileges. She wishes to be faithful to her own goal and to serve everyone, without distinction, in accordance with the mission entrusted to her by

Christ. The successful integration of Catholics in your country, the excellence of relations with the Orthodox Church show her good will. Moreover many Moldovans have moved to the European nations of Catholic tradition. They seek there financial stability of course, but they also weave bonds with Catholics, thereby further deepening the good relations between both Churches. These two factors are encouraging in order to find other solutions to reinforce increasingly the harmony between the Moldovan State and the Catholic Church.

My thoughts go in particular to the young Moldovans. I pray for them and I would like to encourage them. I express to you my joy in knowing that 100 of them will be able to take part for the first time in the *World Youth Day next August in Madrid*. And, next October the Catholic Church will be organizing the first *Social Week*. The prospect of these two events gives me great pleasure. They should inspire your country's pride.

At the time when you are officially beginning your mission to the Holy See, Your Excellency, I express my best wishes for its success. You may be sure, Mr Ambassador, that you will always find with my co-workers the attention and cordial understanding that your lofty office deserves, as well as the affection for your country of the Successor of Peter. As I invoke the Virgin Mary's intercession, I pray the Lord to pour out an abundance of Blessings upon you, upon your family and upon your collaborators, as well as upon the Moldovan people and their leaders.