



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF JOHN PAUL II
TO A DELEGATION FROM BULGARIA
FOR THE FEAST OF SAINTS CYRIL AND METHODIUS**

Friday 25 May 2001

Ladies and Gentlemen,

1. I am pleased to greet your delegation which has come to make its annual pilgrimage to the tomb of St Cyril, in the ancient basilica of St Clement, to show the Bulgarian people's attachment to the memory of the two brothers, the holy apostles of the Slav world, and at the same time to pay a visit to the Bishop of Rome. Through you, I cordially greet the beloved Bulgarian people, the country's civil authorities, the Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church of Bulgaria.

2. As I had the opportunity to repeat during my recent Jubilee pilgrimage in the footsteps of St Paul, the lives of the holy brothers, Cyril and Methodius is a particularly eloquent example of evangelization to which the whole Church is called. Having set out to meet the Slav peoples, the two brothers of Salonika first devoted themselves to translating the Bible and learning the language, but also the customs and usage of the peoples who welcomed them. In creating a new alphabet adapted to the Slav language they made an essential contribution to the culture and literature of all the Slav nations. They *"not only carried out their mission with full respect for the culture already existing among the Slav peoples, but together with religion they eminently and unceasingly promoted and extended that culture"* (*Slavorum Apostoli*, n. 26). In a Europe in search of its identity and unity, they offer an exemplary and stimulating way for it to be nurtured and made fruitful by the Gospel, which is deeply rooted in the popular culture. This is a specific contribution to the continent's development which your act forcefully underlines.

3. At the end of our interview, I warmly thank you for your pleasant visit and express my fervent good wishes for all the people of Bulgaria. May it continue on its way towards the fulfilment of its legitimate aspirations to peace and concord. I entrust these wishes to God, and through the

intercession of Sts Cyril and Methodius, I invoke an abundance of divine Blessings upon you and upon all those you represent.