



# The Holy See

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PASTORAL VISIT IN KAZAKHSTAN  
COURTESY VISIT TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF KAZAKHSTAN

## ***ADDRESS OF THE HOLY FATHER\****

*Presidential Palace  
Astana, Sunday 23 September 2001*

I am grateful to you Mr President for your kind words. Again I thank Providence for having allowed me to come here and to be here. A few days ago some felt that it would not be possible on account of the tragic events in the United States. But we have seen that it is possible, thanks be to God.

It is the first time I visit this part of the globe, Central Asia. The first source of information on Kazakhstan was for me Fr Bukowinski, who is well known here. During the Second World War he was deported as a priest from Poland to the Soviet Union and here he passed his entire life. Here he died and was buried, at Karaganda. From him I begin to learn about Kazakhstan. But now it is the first time that I can see them with my own eyes. It is a shame that I cannot visit Karaganda and the tomb of Fr Bukowinski.

I see here that Astana is a modern city. These meetings, these experiences I have lived, compel me to pray even more for your country, your People and for you, Mr President. I am happy that my visit falls on the tenth anniversary of your independence, because I am convinced - as is the Church - that every nation has the right to its sovereignty. This national sovereignty is also the full expression of what a nation is to be as a political subject. I make the wish for all of you, and above all for you Mr President that this sovereignty be long lasting, fruitful, ever fuller, embracing all the sectors of national life: economic, political, cultural. This is very important.

I hope that the Catholics present in Kazakhstan may be able to contribute to the common good of the country. They are a restricted group, a minority but they can and will contribute - to the best of

their ability - to the common good of Kazakhstan.

*After the President finished his greeting, begging God's blessings on Kazakhstan, the Holy Father added:*

My wish for you, Mr President, and for the whole people, is that God may bless all of you.

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