



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF POPE JOHN PAUL II
TO H.E Mr EMILIO MARIN
NEW AMBASSADOR OF CROATIA
TO THE HOLY SEE***

Saturday, 11 December 2004

Mr Ambassador,

I am pleased to welcome you for the presentation of the Letters accrediting you as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Croatia to the Holy See. I am grateful to you for your cordial words, also on behalf of the President of the Republic, the Government and the Croatian People whom you represent here. Please convey to them the assurance of my esteem and benevolence as well as of my prayers for peace and for the harmonious development of the entire Nation.

In receiving you, I am reminded of your beautiful and hospitable Croatia, which I have had the joy of visiting three times. My most recent Apostolic Pilgrimage there last year was also my 100th International Journey. On each occasion I could feel tangibly the very visible signs of Christianity incarnate in the life of the People.

By drawing on this incorruptible religious patrimony, Croatians will continue also in the future to build their history. With their strong spiritual identity they will be able to contribute their own experience to the consortium of European Peoples. I therefore hope that the sustained efforts of Croatia to join the European Union will be successful, and I share the concern expressed by some that if Croatia's entry into the European Union should be delayed, this could damage the process of democratic reform not only in this Country, but also in the other nations on that part of the Continent which are moving with strong hope towards European integration.

Mr Ambassador, in your words about the Croatian People's commitment to fostering dialogue,

reconciliation and peace in your Homeland and in the larger consortium of Euro-Atlantic Countries, I could detect that universal aspiration to justice and cooperation that always motivates it. It is of course primarily the task of those responsible for the institutions to identify practical and technical ways to express these aspirations in legislation and in political initiatives. Believers, however, know that peace is not only the product of planning and human endeavour, but also a gift of God to people of good will. This peace then rests on the structural pillars of justice and forgiveness. Justice guarantees full respect for rights and duties and forgiveness heals and rebuilds from their foundations relationships between people who are still feeling the consequences of the clashes between ideologies in the recent past.

Yes! It is true, the Country you represent also needs reconciliation and peace. I am thinking, moreover, of the on-going problem of refugees and exiles and especially of the refugees from Bosnia and Herzegovina who are waiting to return to their own homes.

I would like to express my appreciation for the concrete steps taken to resolve this problem, and I offer my fervent good wishes that the return to the Homeland of one and all will be effectively permitted and facilitated. In this regard, the recent Agreement between Croatia and Serbia makes a positive and important contribution to guaranteeing the full and reciprocal recognition of the rights of the Croat minority in Serbia and Montenegro, and of the Serb minority in the Republic of Croatia.

After the sad experience of totalitarianism that denied the fundamental rights of the human person and having left behind the grievous period of the last war, Croatia is now on its way towards harmonious progress, giving proof of patience and the readiness for sacrifice and persevering optimism as it tenaciously strives to create a better future for all its inhabitants. Stable social and economic development cannot fail to take into account the cultural, social and spiritual needs of the people, just as it must appreciate its noblest resources and popular traditions. It must do this, aware that the growing phenomenon of globalization worldwide could only negatively affect, in your Country too, the levelling out of social and economic diversities and accentuate the present imbalance between those who benefit from the ever greater possibility of producing wealth and those who are left on the fringes of progress.

Mr Ambassador, your Country boasts of a long tradition of useful collaboration between the ecclesial and secular Communities. In the recent past, the Church has also played a positive role in reconciliation and in solving many problems and tensions. I have had the opportunity to encourage the Bishops several times to spare no effort to promote an evangelization that makes the most of the valid elements of popular devotion and to cooperate actively with the State for the true good of Croatian society.

In this regard, the Agreements stipulated between the Holy See and Croatia that are demonstrating their efficacy have been useful, although some aspects still await full

implementation. I have cause to think that the good relations which exist between the Government and the Church in Croatia will facilitate every further step to increase mutual understanding for the benefit of all citizens.

I am certain that in fulfilling the lofty task entrusted to you, you too will contribute to reinforcing the good relations that already exist between the Holy See and your Country. I assure you that you will be able to count on the full availability of all my collaborators in this regard.

I also wish you an enjoyable stay in the city of Rome, rich in history, culture and Christian faith. Its ancient remains are well known to you who are a scholar of Roman antiquities and Christian archaeology.

As I invoke the heavenly protection of the Mother of God, venerated as *Advocata Croatiae fidelissima* [most faithful advocate of Croatians], and of St Joseph, Patron of Croatia, upon you, Mr Ambassador, your family, the Government Authorities and all the inhabitants of the beloved Croatian Nation, I cordially impart my Apostolic Blessing to you, to your loved ones and to all those you represent here.

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