



The Holy See

APOSTOLIC JOURNEY
OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II
TO SARAJEVO (APRIL 12-13, 1997)

**REMARKS OF THE HOLY FATHER
AT THE AWARD
OF THE JOHN XXIII PEACE PRIZE**

Sarajevo, 13 April 1997

Ladies and Gentlemen, 1. I am pleased to offer you my cordial greeting. "*Blessed are the peacemakers!*" (Mt 5:9). I willingly accepted the invitation to award the John XXIII International Peace Prize to four humanitarian organizations which have particularly distinguished themselves by their active work of relief and assistance during the difficult years of the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina and in the Republic of Croatia. In a situation often marked by grave tensions and difficulties, they provided concrete signs of hope by their presence and their generous and courageous activity, and thus helped to lay the foundation for a future of reconciliation and of genuine solidarity between different peoples and cultures in this beloved region. 2. The Prize which it is my pleasure to present to you today, distinguished Representatives of humanitarian associations linked respectively to the Catholic, Serbian Orthodox, Muslim and Jewish communities, takes its inspiration from the desire for peace vigorously expressed to the whole world by my venerable predecessor Pope John XXIII. In his Encyclical *Pacem in Terris*, he recalled that "a very serious obligation is incumbent upon all people of good will: that of re-establishing social relationships under the aegis of truth, justice, charity and freedom", and he called this "a most exalted task, which brings about true peace in the order established by God" (V). The work of assistance and human promotion which you undertake, especially on behalf of the weakest and the most vulnerable, is inspired by the universal principle of the dignity of every person and of solidarity among human beings. For this reason I am happy today to award the John XXIII International Peace Prize to Caritas of the Episcopal Conference of Bosnia-Herzegovina, Dobrotvor of Sarajevo, Merhamet of Sarajevo and La Benevolencija of Sarajevo. The award of the Prize today is intended not only as an acknowledgment of the profoundly humanitarian work which you and your associates have carried out in the recent past, but also as an encouragement to continue with farsighted generosity in the present phase of reconstruction, working for peaceful coexistence in Sarajevo, Bosnia-Herzegovina and the whole region. It is likewise an expression of hope that the example given by your organizations and by the individuals and institutions which sent you

supplies to be distributed may also be followed elsewhere by those seeking to serve the cause of peace and reconciliation among peoples.³ As John XXIII stressed in his Encyclical, building peace is "so noble and exalted an aim, that human resources alone, even though inspired by the most praiseworthy good will, cannot hope to achieve it. God must come to man's aid with his heavenly assistance, if human society is to mirror as faithfully as possible the kingdom of God" (ibid., V). On this significant occasion, I invite you to join me in raising mind and heart to Heaven, that indispensable support may be granted from on high to all those who, often in difficult and extremely dangerous conditions, daily stand side-by-side with those who suffer, and thus seek to make an effective contribution to the building of a society in which justice and peace will reign. May God grant to Sarajevo and to the whole region the gift of strengthening the climate of a just and stable peace! May he protect the people of the Balkans! May peace soon triumph throughout the earth. May God's peace ever accompany you and all the humanitarian activities carried out by your organizations. © Copyright 1997 - Libreria Editrice Vaticana

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