



The Holy See

***DISCORSO DI GIOVANNI PAOLO II
DURANTE LA VISITA UFFICIALE DEL PRESIDENTE
DELLA REPUBBLICA SLOVACCA***

Lunedì, 7 giugno 1993

Mr. President,

With deep joy, in Your Excellency's person I welcome the first President of the Slovak Republic, which came into being on 1 January of this year after a long period of expectation and hope, within the framework of a democratic life which has finally been restored.

Your official visit to the Bishop of Rome can be seen as a new milestone on the long path of the trusting relations between your people and the Apostolic See. Slovakia has an illustrious past; bonds were already formed during the Roman Empire, then, too, the apostolic activity of Saints Cyril and Methodius, in full communion with the Pope of Rome, established the Church among you, giving a decisive stamp to the culture to which the nation has remained faithful, a culture to which the Gospel message has given much fruitfulness.

Mr President, thank you for having expressed here today the Slovak people's attachment to the Catholic Church. I often meet groups from your country who have come on pilgrimage to the tombs of the Apostles and I had the joy of going personally to Bratislava on a Pastoral Visit. Through you, it is to all your fellow citizens that I would like to express my ardent wishes for the prosperity of the nation in the growth of the human, spiritual and cultural values which are its most precious heritage.

The events which allowed Europe to turn over a dark page of its history are still quite recent. The path that has been travelled is already considerable, but we know quite well that there is still a long way to go before the whole continent can live in peace and experience a balanced prosperity. Therefore it is necessary that the deep roots which have never failed in these lands may nourish

the conscience and the active hope of Europeans, beginning with the best resources of their past.

The return to a democratic regime is essential for the renewal of society in Central Europe. I have been led to underscore that many times. Your coming to Rome gives me the fortuitous occasion to express my sincere wishes for Slovakia, that it may strengthen its institutions so that each of your citizens, including the members of national minority groups, may play a responsible role in the common life.

The still fresh memories of the turbulent history of the Slovak people and the region in which they live also clearly demonstrate the urgent need for achieving constructive understanding among the different countries of this continent. The legitimate diversity of identities must not cause people to overlook the many common elements of the patrimony which urges them tirelessly to take up the construction of a unity which will be the source of lasting peace. May Slovakia, together with the other countries of Europe, continue to progress towards solidarity expressed in freedom!

Mr. President, you exercise your noble mission in the service of a nation with a Catholic majority. In Slovakia, as throughout the world, the Church desires the authentic good of the individual and of the whole of society. Catholic faithful are called to serve the harmony among all the members of the nation, to pursue trusting and respectful dialogue with their brothers and sisters of other spiritual traditions, to promote the dignity of the person by defending his authentic values and to seek to live their faith in a charity that is open to all. I encourage them to give unreservedly in their efforts for the good of their people, in democratic life, in openness to the consideration of the neighbouring peoples and in a generous response to the appeals of the Gospel.

In bidding you welcome, Mr. President, my thoughts turn to all the people of the Slovak Republic. Invoking the Lord, our Lady and the saints of your country, I invoke the divine blessing upon you, your coworkers, and all your fellow citizens.

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