



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF THE HOLY FATHER JOHN PAUL II
TO THE DELEGATION OF DIGNITARIES
FROM THE FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA***

Monday 22 May 2000

*Mr President,
Ladies and Gentlemen,*

I am pleased to welcome you today to the Vatican. Once again this year, in keeping with a now well-established custom, a Delegation of dignitaries from the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia has come to pay a respectful visit to the tomb of Saint Cyril. I thank you, Mr President, for your kind words on behalf of all present.

The solemn ceremony by which your Representation wishes to commemorate Saints Cyril and Methodius, Co-Patrons of Europe, takes place in the ancient Basilica, located near the Colosseum, which preserves the venerable remains of Saint Clement of Rome, the third Successor of Peter, and of Saint Cyril, the younger of the Holy Brothers of Salonika, the Apostles of the Slavs. What noble memories are evoked by the names of these great witnesses to the faith!

Today in particular our thoughts turn to the rich cultural patrimony of Eastern Europe built on the foundations laid by Saints Cyril and Methodius. In fact, these two celebrated brothers made "an outstanding contribution to the formation of the common Christian roots of Europe, roots which by their strength and vitality are one of the most solid points of reference, which no serious attempt to reconstruct in a new and relevant way the unity of the Continent can ignore" (Encyclical Epistle *Slavorum Apostoli*, 25). The challenge today is for East and West, through a mutual exchange of gifts, to make the "common house" of Europe more and more a place of civilization, brotherhood, solidarity and respect.

These bonds of solidarity between the peoples of Europe take on particular significance in this

Jubilee Year, when the Church celebrates the two thousandth anniversary of the Incarnation of the Son of God. The Great Jubilee is a time of grace and spiritual rebirth, in which all those who believe in Christ are called to take part, sharing their joy with all men and women of good will.

Drawing inspiration from the richness and the power of the heritage left to you by Saints Cyril and Methodius, may the people of the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia find fresh inner strength to continue in the great task of building up their country in peace and harmony. With affection I assure you of a special remembrance in my prayers, and I invoke upon your entire nation the abundant blessings of Almighty God.

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