



The Holy See

APOSTOLIC JOURNEY OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS TO SARAJEVO (BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA)

MEETING WITH AUTHORITIES AND THE DIPLOMATIC CORPS

ADDRESS OF THE HOLY FATHER

Presidential Palace
Saturday, 6 June 2015

[Multimedia]

Dear Ministers of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina,
Dear Chairman of the Presidency,
Members of the Diplomatic Corps,
Dear Brothers and Sisters,

I wish to thank the members of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina for their kind welcome, and in a special way for the cordial welcome extended to me by His Excellency Mladen Ivanić Chairman of the Presidency, on behalf of everyone. I am pleased to be in this city which, although it has suffered so much in the bloody conflicts of the past century, has once again become a place of dialogue and peaceful coexistence. Bosnia and Herzegovina has advanced from a culture of conflict and war to a culture of encounter.

Sarajevo and Bosnia and Herzegovina have a special significance for Europe and for the whole world. For centuries in these lands, communities were present who professed different religions, who belonged to distinct ethnic and cultural groups, each endowed with its own rich characteristics; each fostered its own traditions, without these differences having impeded for any length of time the establishment of mutually fraternal and cordial relationships.

The very architecture and layout of Sarajevo reveals visible and substantial characteristics of these different communities, each a short distance from the other – synagogues, churches and

mosques – so much so that Sarajevo has been called “The Jerusalem of Europe”. Indeed it represents a crossroads of cultures, nations and religions, a status which requires the building of new bridges, while maintaining and restoring older ones, thus ensuring avenues of communication that are efficient, sure and fraternal.

We need to communicate with each other, to discover the gifts of each person, to promote that which unites us, and to regard our differences as an opportunity to grow in mutual respect. Patience and trust are called for in such dialogue, permitting individuals, families and communities to hand on the values of their own culture and welcome the good which comes from others’ experiences.

In so doing, even the deep wounds of the recent past will be set aside, so that the future may be looked to with hope, facing the daily problems that all communities experience with hearts and minds free of fear and resentment.

I have come here as a pilgrim of peace and dialogue, eighteen years after [Saint John Paul II’s historic visit](#), which took place less than two years after the signing of the Dayton Peace Accord. I am happy to see the progress which has been made, for which we must thank the Lord and so many men and women of good will. However, we should not become complacent with what has been achieved so far, but rather seek to make further efforts towards reinforcing trust and creating opportunities for growth in mutual knowledge and respect. In order to favour this path, the solidarity – solidarity! - and collaboration of the International Community is fundamental, in particular that of the European Union and of all Countries and Organizations operating in the territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Bosnia and Herzegovina is indeed an integral part of Europe, the successes and tragic experiences of the former are integrated fully into the latter’s history of successes and tragedies. They constitute, too, a clear call to pursue every avenue of peace, in order that processes already underway can be yet more resilient and binding.

In this land, peace and harmony among Croats, Serbs and Bosnians, and the initiatives taken to extend these even further, as well as the cordial and fraternal relations among Muslims, Hebrews and Christians, and other religious minorities, take on an importance that goes beyond its boundaries. These initiatives offer a witness to the entire world that such cooperation among varying ethnic groups and religions in view of the common good is possible; that a plurality of cultures and traditions can coexist and give rise to original and effective solutions to problems; that even the deepest wounds can be healed by purifying memories and firmly anchoring hopes in the future. I saw this at my arrival this morning in the Muslim, Orthodox, Jewish, Catholic and children of other religions whom I met at the airport – together and joyful! This is a sign of hope! May we stake our future on this.

In order to successfully oppose the barbarity of those who would make of every difference the occasion and pretext for further unspeakable violence, we need to recognize the fundamental values of human communities, values in the name of which we can and must cooperate, build and dialogue, pardon and grow; this will allow different voices to unite in creating a melody of sublime nobility and beauty, instead of the fanatical cries of hatred.

Responsible politicians are called to the important task of being the first servants of their communities, taking actions which safeguard above all the fundamental rights of the human person, among which the right to religious freedom stands out. In this way it will be possible to build, with concrete measures, a more peaceful and just society, working step-by-step together to solve the many problems which people experience daily.

In order for this to come about, it is vital that all citizens be equal both before the law and its implementation, whatever their ethnic, religious or geographical affiliation. All alike will then feel truly involved in public life. Enjoying the same rights, they will be able to make their specific contribution to the common good.

Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Catholic Church, by means of the prayer and the works of her faithful and her institutions, is taking an part in the process of material and moral reconstruction of Bosnia and Herzegovina, sharing the country's joys and concerns. The Church is committed to offering her particular solicitude and closeness to the poor and to those most in need, inspired by the teaching and example of her Divine Master, Jesus.

The Holy See praises the work carried out in these recent years, and is determined to continue promoting cooperation, dialogue and solidarity, in the sure knowledge that peace and mutual listening in an ordered and civil society are indispensable conditions for authentic and lasting development. Through the contribution of all, and leaving behind completely the dark clouds of storms gone by, the Holy See fervently hopes that Bosnia and Herzegovina may continue along the journey embarked upon, so that after the winter chill, springtime may come to blossom. And already we see spring blooming here.

With these thoughts I implore the Almighty for peace and prosperity in Sarajevo and all of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Thank you.