



SALA STAMPA DELLA SANTA SEDE  
**BOLLETTINO**

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**Visit to Croatia of the Secretary for Relations with States, H.E. Msgr. Paul Richard Gallagher (9 to 12 October 2018)**

H.E. Msgr. Paul Richard Gallagher, Secretary for Relations with States, visited the Republic of Croatia from 9 to 12 October, upon invitation by the President of the Episcopal Conference of Croatia, the Most Rev. Msgr. Želimir Puljić, archbishop of Zadar, on the occasion of the twentieth anniversary of the ratification of the Agreement between the Holy See and the Republic of Croatia on economic issues and the tenth anniversary of the erection of the Ecclesiastical Province of Đakovo-Osiek.

The Secretary for Relations with States arrived in Zagreb on the evening of Tuesday 9 October, accompanied by the Rev. Msgr. Giovanni Gaspari, nunciature counsellor in service at the Section for Relations with States, and was received at the airport by the apostolic nuncio, H.E. Msgr. Giuseppe Pinto, by the archbishop of Zagreb, His Eminence Cardinal Josip Bozanić, from the president of the Episcopal Conference, H.E. Msgr. Želimir Puljić, and the secretary of the same Conference, H.E. Msgr. Petar Palić, bishop of Hvar. Also present were the Rev. Msgr. Janusz Błachowiak, secretary of the apostolic nunciature in Zagreb, the ambassador of Croatia to the Holy See, H.E. Mr. Neven Pelicarić, and some officials of the State Protocol.

On Wednesday, October 10, H.E. Msgr. Gallagher met with leaders of the other Christian denominations and religious communities present in Croatia at the apostolic nunciature. He was received by the president of the Episcopal Commission for Ecumenism and Interreligious Dialogue, H.E. Msgr. Antun Škvorčević, bishop of Požega. In his greeting Archbishop Gallagher reiterated the importance of religion in the life of man and of society, encouraging dialogue, the witness of spiritual and ethical values and collaboration for the great causes of humanity. In the subsequent dialogue emphasis was placed on the need for respect for religions and for understanding, which goes beyond the mere tolerance.

Subsequently, the Secretary for Relations with States proceeded to the Great Hall of the Catholic University of Croatia, based in Zagreb, where he attended a Conference on the Holy See's disciplinary action, in addition to the academic authorities and of students, including state and diplomatic authorities. The intervention by the distinguished guest was introduced with welcome speeches by the archbishop of Zagreb and Grand Chancellor of the Catholic University, His Eminence Cardinal Bozanić, and by the pro-rector, Professor Emilije Marin, former ambassador of Croatia to the Holy See.

On Thursday 11 October, H.E. Msgr. Gallagher, at the seat of the Episcopal Conference, spoke with the bishops gathered that day in the Plenary Assembly. Introducing the debate, he recalled the Christian identity of the country, which is a structural element in Croatian society, today affected by a transitional phase that also calls into question the responsibilities of the Catholic Church.

The meeting with the Croatian Bishops was preceded by an interview with the Catholic media in which the Secretary for Relations with States answered questions about the significance of his visit and general questions concerning the Church in Croatia.

After sharing lunch with the bishops, H.E. Msgr. Gallagher left for Đakovo, in the Slavonia region, located in the north-east of Croatia, where he celebrated the Eucharist in the majestic cathedral, full of faithful, on the tenth anniversary of the erection of the ecclesiastical province of Đakovo-Osijek. He was welcomed by the archbishop, Msgr. Đuro Hranić, and by a large group of bishops and priests. The archbishop of Belgrade, the bishop of Srijem and the military ordinary for Bosnia and Herzegovina were also present, representing the Episcopates of the neighbouring countries Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina.

In his homily, the Secretary for Relations with States remarked that where differing beliefs about truth have given rise to tensions, misunderstandings and sometimes even social and political conflicts, the love of Christ is the indispensable premise for seeing those things that unite and hold together, rather than those that distinguish and separate, and thus for developing thoughts of peace that open the way to forgiveness and reconciliation.

Finally, on Friday 12 October, H.E. Msgr. Gallagher met with the president of the government, Mr. Andrej Plenković, and, soon after, with the minister for Foreign Affairs, Ms. Marija Pejčinović Burić, with whom he discussed the international and regional political situation and ongoing bilateral issues.

Before leaving for Rome, the Secretary for Relations with States visited the Cathedral of Zagreb, where the remains of Blessed Alojzije Stepinac are preserved, for a moment of personal prayer, accompanied by the archbishop of Zagabria and two auxiliaries.

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