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LE LETTERE CREDENZIALI DELL'AMBASCIATORE DELLA EX-REPUBBLICA JUGOSLAVA DI MACEDONIA

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Alle ore 11 di questa mattina, Benedetto XVI ha ricevuto in Udienza S.E. il Signor Bartolomej Kajtazi, Ambasciatore della ex-Repubblica Jugoslava di Macedonia, in occasione della presentazione delle Lettere Credenziali.

Pubblichiamo di seguito il Discorso del Papa rivolto al nuovo Ambasciatore, nonché i cenni biografici essenziali di S.E. il Signor Bartolomej Kajtazi:

• DISCORSO DEL SANTO PADRE

Your Excellency,

I am pleased to welcome you today and to accept the Letters of Credence by which you are appointed Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia to the Holy See. I am grateful for the warm words of greeting which you have conveyed from President Crvenkovski. I gladly reciprocate them and assure the Government and citizens of your nation of my prayers for the country's peace and well-being.

The feast of Saints Cyril and Methodius who, along with Saints Benedict, Bridget of Sweden, Catherine of Siena and Teresa Benedicta of the Cross, are the great Patrons of Europe, is marked by an annual visit to Rome of a delegation from your country. This richly symbolic event recalls the close interest Popes Nicholas I, Hadrian II and John VIII showed in the Apostles of the Slavs, by encouraging them to fulfil their missionary activity with fidelity and creativity. Just as Cyril and Methodius recognized the acute need to transpose correctly Biblical notions and Greek theological concepts into a very different context of thought and historical experience, so today the primary task facing Christians in Europe is that of casting the ennobling light of Revelation on all that is good, true and beautiful. In this way all peoples and nations are drawn towards that peace and freedom which God the Creator intends for everyone.

I recognise with sentiments of thanksgiving that your nation has reaffirmed its commitment to forge a path of

peace and reconciliation. By doing so it can become an example to others in the Balkan region. Tragically, cultural differences have often been a source of misunderstanding between peoples and even the cause of senseless conflicts and wars. In fact dialogue between cultures is an indispensable building stone of the universal civilization of love for which every man and woman longs. I encourage you and your citizens therefore to affirm the fundamental values common to all cultures; common because they find their source in the very nature of the human person. In this way the quest for peace is consolidated allowing you to dedicate every human and spiritual resource to the material and moral progress of your people, in a spirit of fruitful co-operation with neighbouring countries.

Mr Ambassador, you have noted that the goal of social integration which your Government is courageously pursuing legitimately brings you closer to the rest of Europe. Indeed your traditions and your culture find a natural resonance there and belong to the spirit that permeates this Continent. As my beloved predecessor said on a number of occasions: Europe needs the Balkan nations, and they need Europe! Entry into the European Community should not, however, be understood merely as a panacea to overcome economic adversity. In the process of the European Union's expansion it is "of capital importance" to remember that it "will lack substance if it is reduced to merely geographic and economic dimensions." Rather, the union must "consist above all in an agreement about values which ... find expression in its law and in its life" (*Ecclesia in Europa,* 110). This rightly demands of each state a proper ordering of society that creatively reclaims the soul of Europe, acquired through the decisive contribution of Christianity, affirming the transcendent dignity of the human person and the values of reason, freedom, democracy and the constitutional state (cf. *ibid*., 109).

The people of your land have already achieved much in the difficult but rewarding task of ensuring social coherence and stability. Authentic development requires a coordinated national plan of progress which honours the legitimate aspirations of all sectors of society and to which political and civic leaders can be held accountable. Human history teaches us repeatedly that if such programmes are to effect a lasting positive change, they must be based on the protection of human rights including those of ethnic and religious minorities, the practice of responsible and transparent governance, and the maintenance of law and order by an impartial judiciary system and an honourable police force. Without these foundations, the hope for true progress remains elusive.

Mr Ambassador, your Government's commitment to improving the social and economic prosperity of its citizens presents the young generation with a vision of confidence and optimism. Central to this promise is the creation of educational opportunities. Where schools function in a professional manner and are staffed by people of personal integrity, hope is offered to all and most especially the youth. Integral to such formation is religious instruction. This assists the young to discover the full meaning of human existence, especially the fundamentally important relationship of freedom to truth (cf. *Fides et Ratio*, 90). Indeed, knowledge enlightened by faith, far from dividing communities, binds peoples together in the common search for truth which defines every human as one who lives by belief (cf. *ibid*., 31). I strongly encourage the Government, therefore, to pursue its intention to permit the teaching of religion in primary schools.

The Catholic Church in your nation, though numerically small, desires to reach out in co-operation with other religious communities to all members of Macedonian society without distinction. Her charitable mission, particularly to the poor and suffering, forms part of her "commitment to practical and concrete love for every human being" (*Novo Millennio Ineunte,* 49) and is much appreciated in your country. I am confident that the Church is willing to contribute even more extensively to the country's human development programmes, promoting the values of peace, justice, solidarity and freedom.

Your Excellency, the diplomatic mission which you begin today will further strengthen the bonds of understanding and cooperation existing between your country and the Holy See. I assure you that the various offices of the Roman Curia are ready to assist you in the fulfilment of your duties. With my sincere good wishes, I invoke upon you, your family and all the people of your nation God's abundant blessings.

S.E. il Sig. Bartolomej Kajtazi,Ambasciatore della ex-Repubblica Jugoslava di Macedonia

E' nato a Skopje il 12 maggio 1966.

Ha conseguito la laurea in Ingegneria elettronica presso l’Università di Skopje.

Ha svolto un’intensa attività professionale, ricoprendo ruoli direttivi in primarie società nazionali ed internazionali del settore della comunicazione.

Parla il macedone, l’albanese e l’inglese.

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