



The Holy See

APOSTOLIC JOURNEY

OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II

TO SARAJEVO (APRIL 12-13, 1997)

**ADDRESS OF THE HOLY FATHER
TO THE REPRESENTATIVES
OF THE ORTHODOX CHURCH**

13 April 1997

Metropolitan Nikolaj of Dabar Bosnia,

Dear Brothers in Christ, 1. I give heartfelt thanks to Divine Providence for enabling me, during this visit to Sarajevo, to have this meeting with you. I greet "with a holy kiss" (Rom 16:16) of the peace and love of the Lord Jesus, all the Serbian Orthodox of Bosnia- Hercegovina, for whom I have profound respect. My cordial greeting goes in the first place to you, Metropolitan Nikolaj, and then to all those who assist you in your ministry of governing, sanctifying and guiding the faithful of the Serbian Orthodox Church. My respectful thoughts and fraternal greeting go to His Beatitude Patriarch Pavle and to the Pastors of your Communities who spiritually lead this portion of the People of God in Bosnia-Hercegovina, proclaiming the Gospel and celebrating the divine mysteries. 2. Divine grace unites us in our faith in the One and Triune God, revealed to us in Christ, and makes us one in our esteem and love for the Sacred Scriptures, which constitute the common roots of the doctrine preached by the Fathers and enunciated ever since the first Ecumenical Councils. We are called to make ourselves proclaimers of this doctrine, in the footsteps of the Apostles, to whom the ministry of reconciliation was entrusted (cf. 2 Cor 5:18). This is a task which, in the context of present difficulties, impels us to join forces in order to offer to our contemporaries, often enticed by the allurements of the world, the only Word which truly heals and the grace which gives hope. After the years of the deplorable fratricidal war, at the approaching dawn of a new Christian millennium, we all feel the urgent need for a real reconciliation between Catholics and Orthodox, so that, with a new heart and a new spirit, it might be possible to resume the journey of an ever more perfect following of Christ, the High Priest and sole Shepherd of his flock. *Let us forgive and let us ask for forgiveness:* this is the first step for creating new trust and new relationships between all those who recognize in the Son of God the sole Saviour of humanity. 3. The patrimony which unites us, the living gift of the Holy Spirit, is so much greater than what still divides us and prevents us from proclaiming our faith in total harmony. The unity of all Christians is a gift of the Lord and in prayer we ask for it constantly. The Risen Christ lives with us, walks with his Church, constantly raises up disciples, abundantly bestows his

forgiveness which heals and the grace which gives life. Together, therefore, we are committed by the Master's will to preach the Gospel to every human being. Together we are filled by the desire that faith should grow and that from faith there should come peace between all the peoples of Bosnia-Herzegovina. We are all aware that peace cannot be given by the world. It is for this reason that we turn to Christ and listen once more to his voice: "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid" (Jn 14:27).⁴ The commitment to achieve peace strengthens still more our brotherly relationship in our common witness to the Lord of history. This is also the prayer which together we raise to him today, uniting ourselves spiritually to all of our Communities. We are all children of a testimony of love, the testimony of a God who "so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life" (Jn 3:16). Each of us is called to taste and to share the stupendous gifts which God has wished to plant, by the work of salvation, in our hearts and in human history. May the longing for total peace and the practical willingness to build it, combined with a lively desire for perfect unity, guide our steps also today. It is with these sentiments that I wish to offer to the whole Orthodox Community of Bosnia-Herzegovina the good wish voiced by the Apostle: "May the Lord of peace himself give you peace at all times in all ways. The Lord be with you all" (2 Thes 3:16).