



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS
POPE JOHN PAUL II
TO A DELEGATION FROM THE CROATIAN EPISCOPAL
CONFERENCE AND THE GOVERNMENT OF CROATIA**

Tuesday, 15 December 1998

*Mr Deputy Prime Minister and distinguished authorities,
Venerable Brothers in the Episcopate,
Gentlemen,*

On the occasion of the exchange of the instruments of ratification for the *Agreement between the Holy See and the Republic of Croatia regarding Economic Questions*, which took place yesterday in this Apostolic Palace, you wished to express your feelings of devotion and gratitude to the Pope. I thank you sincerely. I also thank you for recalling my second Apostolic Visit to Croatia, which remains deeply impressed in my heart. Through the intercession of Bl. Cardinal Alojzije Stepinac, I ask the Lord that this visit will continue to bear much fruit for the good of all the members of the dear Croatian nation.

I am pleased to greet your delegation, led by Dr Jure Radiæ, Deputy Prime Minister and President of the State Commission for Relations with Religious Communities. I also extend a cordial greeting to the representatives of the Croatian Episcopal Conference, led by His Excellency Archbishop Josip Bozaniæ of Zagreb.

The Agreement regarding Economic Questions, happily concluded between the Holy See and the Republic of Croatia, seeks to make amends for the injustices caused in the past by the confiscation of ecclesiastical goods, in the desire of providing the Catholic Church with the necessary means for carrying out her pastoral work. The Church has always claimed the right to possess and administer temporal goods. However, she does not ask for privileges in that area, but rather the possibility to use the means at her disposal for a threefold purpose: "to order divine worship; to provide decent support for the clergy and other ministers; to perform the works of the sacred apostolate and of charity, especially towards the needy" ([can. 1254, §2](#) of the *Code of Canon Law*). I noted with satisfaction that this purpose indicated in the [Code of Canon Law](#) is clearly present in the text of the Agreement.

This also represents a challenge for the Church and the State. The Catholic Church must consider, among other things, an adequate way to maintain the clergy, according to the directives of the Second Vatican Council, providing her ministers with fair and decent support (cf. *Presbyterorum ordinis*, nn. 20-22). She will then have to reorganize and strengthen her social and charitable activity. For its part, the State will have to compensate for the injustices of the past, while acknowledging the social benefit of the Church's work of caring for the needs of her less fortunate brethren, who must be the object of the special and combined care of Church and State.

While expressing my best wishes for the correct application of this Agreement for everyone's benefit, I sincerely impart to you and to all of Croatia my Apostolic Blessing, which I accompany with my most fervent wishes for a Happy Christmas.

Praised be Jesus and Mary!

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