



The Holy See

***ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI
TO THE NEW AMBASSADOR OF BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA
TO THE HOLY SEE****

*Castel Gandolfo
Thursday, 18 September 2008*

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 Bosnia and Herzegovina to the Holy See. On this significant occasion I would ask that you kindly convey my heartfelt greetings to the members of the Presidency and all the citizens of your country. Assure them of my fervent prayers for their ongoing efforts to achieve reconciliation and the consolidation of peace and stability.

The Holy See's diplomatic relations form a part of her mission of service to the international community. Her engagement with civil society is anchored in the conviction that the task of building a more just world must recognize the supernatural vocation proper to every individual. The Church therefore promotes an understanding of the human person who receives from God the capacity to transcend individual limitations and social constraints so as to recognize and uphold the universal values which safeguard the dignity of all and serve the common good.

Ambassador, as you have observed, your country though small in area is blessed with much natural beauty. Such evidence of the hand of the Creator gladdens the hearts of its inhabitants and helps them lift their thoughts towards the Almighty. Reflecting its particular geographical location, Bosnia and Herzegovina also contains a rich mix of cultures and precious patrimonies. Tragically, however, cultural and ethnic differences throughout history have not infrequently been a source of misunderstanding and friction. Indeed, as each of the three constitutive peoples that make up your country know only too well, they have even been the cause of conflicts and wars. No person wishes for war. No parents desire conflict for their children. No civic or religious group

should ever resort to violence or oppression. Yet, so many families in your land have been subjected to the suffering which results from these calamities. Listening to the voice of reason, however, and prompted by the hope that we all desire for ourselves and the generations which follow, every individual can find the strength to overcome past divisions and indeed hammer swords into ploughshares and spears into sickles (cf. *Is 2:4*). In this regard, I wish to acknowledge the progress being made to consolidate gestures of reconciliation and to encourage the International Community to continue its efforts to assist Bosnia and Herzegovina to this end. I trust that, in accepting the facts of regional history and the grave lessons to be learnt from recent years, the courage will be found to build a future with a healthy sense of solidarity.

A State's spirit is shaped at many levels. The family home is where children learn the essential values of responsibility and harmonious coexistence. It is here too that prejudices are either born or broken. Every parent therefore has the grave duty to instil in their children, through example, respect for the dignity that marks every person irrespective of ethnicity, religion or social grouping. In this way, the splendour of lives led justly - with integrity, fairness and compassion - can shine forth as examples for the young, indeed everyone, to emulate. Education too contributes greatly to the soul of a nation. Good schooling not only attends to the cognitive development of children but to the civic and spiritual as well. Teachers who exercise their noble profession with a passion for truth can do much to discredit any false anthropological ideologies that contain seeds of hostility (cf. *2007 Message for World Day of Peace*, 10) and to foster an appreciation of cultural and religious diversity in the life of a country. In this vein, I would also like to offer a word of encouragement to those working in the media. They can do much to overcome lingering attitudes of distrust by ensuring that they do not become tools of prejudice but rather transcend particular interests and promote broad-based and inclusive civic goals, thus becoming instruments at the service of greater justice and solidarity (cf. *2008 Message for World Communications Day*, 2).

Your Excellency, as you are well aware, the State too is called to pursue with vigour its responsibility to strengthen the institutions and extol the principles which lie at the heart of all democracies. This demands unwavering commitment to the rule of law and justice, the eradication of corruption and other forms of criminal activity, the support of an independent and impartial judiciary, and equal opportunity in the employment market. I am sure that the constitutional reforms which your government is currently studying will address the legitimate aspirations of all citizens, guaranteeing both the rights of individuals and social groups, while preserving the common moral and ethical values which bind all peoples and render political leaders accountable. In this way all sectors of society can contribute to the national planning of social and economic development and likewise assist in attracting the investment necessary for economic growth, enabling in particular your young people to find satisfying employment and guarantee a secure future.

For her part the Church in Bosnia and Herzegovina will continue to assist in the attainment of the goals of reconciliation, peace and prosperity. Through her parishes, schools, health-care facilities,

and community development programmes she exercises her mission of universal charity in its threefold form: material, intellectual and spiritual. Her participation in ecumenical and interreligious dialogue should be seen as a further way of serving society at large. The promotion of spiritual and moral values, discernible to human reason, not only forms part of the transmission of religious traditions but also nourishes the wider culture, motivating men and women of goodwill to strengthen ties of solidarity and to manifest how a united society can indeed arise from a plurality of peoples.

Your Excellency, I am confident that the diplomatic mission which you begin today will further strengthen the bonds of cooperation existing between Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Holy See. The application of the recently ratified Basic Agreement, among other matters, facilitates the right to establish places of religious worship and to undertake ecclesial works, and at the same time offers a positive example of the democratic principles taking root in the country. In this regard, I am confident that the Mixed Commission will soon commence its important work. Assuring you of the assistance of the various offices of the Roman Curia and with my sincere good wishes, I invoke upon you and your family together with all the citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the blessings of Almighty God.

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