



# The Holy See

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APOSTOLIC JOURNEY TO CROATIA

(JUNE 4-5, 2011)

**FAREWELL CEREMONY**

***ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI***

*Pleso International Airport, Zagreb*

*Sunday, 5 June 2011*

**(Video)**

*Mr President,*

*Distinguished Authorities,*

*Dear Brother Bishops,*

*Brothers and Sisters in the Lord!*

My visit to your country is drawing to a close. Though brief, it has been graced with encounters that have made me feel part of you, and part of your history, and they have given me the opportunity to confirm the faith of the pilgrim Church in Croatia in Jesus Christ, our only Saviour. That faith, which came to you through the brave witness of many of your brothers and sisters, some of whom did not hesitate to die for Christ and his Gospel, I have found to be alive and sincere. Let us give thanks to God for the abundant gifts of grace which he dispenses generously on the daily path of his sons and daughters! I wish to thank everyone who helped in the planning and the smooth progress of my visit.

These days have left a deep impression on my mind and my heart. The people's participation in this morning's celebration of Mass on the occasion of the National Day of Croatian Catholic Families was unanimous and heartfelt. In yesterday's gathering at the National Theatre I was able to share some thoughts with representatives of civil society and religious communities. The young

people present at the prayer vigil showed me the radiant face of Croatia turned towards the future, illumined by a sincere faith, like the flame of a precious lamp handed down by our forebears for us to guard and replenish along the way. The prayer at the tomb of Blessed Cardinal Stepinac reminded us in a special way of all who have suffered - and still suffer today - on account of their faith in the Gospel. Let us continue to invoke the intercession of this fearless witness of the Risen Lord, so that every sacrifice, every trial offered to God out of love for him and for our neighbour, may be like the grain of wheat fallen to the ground that dies so as to bear fruit.

It was a joy for me to experience today the vitality of your people's long-standing Christian tradition. I could sense it in the warm welcome given to me by the people, just as they welcomed Blessed John Paul II on his three visits, recognizing them as visits from the Successor of Peter who comes to confirm his brothers in the faith. This ecclesial vitality, which must be maintained and strengthened, will surely have positive results for society as a whole, thanks to the cooperation between the Church and public institutions which it is hoped will always be serene and fruitful. At a time when stable and trustworthy reference points seem to be lacking, Christians united "together in Christ", the cornerstone, can continue to act as the "soul" of the Nation, helping it to develop and to make progress.

As I leave for Rome, I place all of you in the hands of God. May he who is infinite providence, the giver of all good things, always bless the land and the people of Croatia; may he grant peace and prosperity to every family. May the Virgin Mary watch over the historic journey of your homeland and of the whole of Europe. And let my Apostolic Blessing, which I offer you with great affection, accompany you on your way.