



The Holy See

JOHN PAUL II

***HOLY FATHER'S ADDRESS
AT HIS DEPARTURE***

Sunday, 9 May 1999

1. As I leave this beloved land of Romania, I first of all offer to you, Mr President, my greeting and my thanks for the welcome you have given me. Through you I extend these sentiments to all the beloved Romanian people whose warmth and enthusiasm I have felt as they gathered around me these past few days.

I extend a particular greeting to His Beatitude Patriarch Teoctist, to the Metropolitans, the Bishops and all the people of the venerable Orthodox Church of Romania. I fraternally embrace the Bishops and Catholic communities of the Byzantine and Latin rites, all of whom have a place in my heart. I also extend my greetings to the other Christian denominations and to the members of other religions in the country.

2. These have been days of deep emotion, which I have intensely felt and which will be cherished in my heart. Let us accept the events we shared together as a gift from God's hand, confident that they will bear fruits of grace for Christians and for all the people of Romania. Your country has a unique ecumenical vocation stemming from its very roots. Because of its geographical location and long history, its culture and tradition, Romania in a way is a house where East and West meet in natural dialogue.

The Church too breathes here with her two lungs in a particularly visible way, as we have seen in these days. Side by side, as were Peter, Andrew and the other Apostles gathered in prayer with the Mother of God in the first Upper Room, we have experienced a new spiritual Pentecost. The wind of the Holy Spirit has blown powerfully over this land and has spurred us to be firmer in communion and bolder in proclaiming the Gospel. We have practised the new language given to

us, the language of fraternal communion, and have tasted its sweetness and beauty, its power and effectiveness.

3. While the door to the third millennium is about to open, we are asked to transcend our usual confines to make the wind of Pentecost more forcefully felt in the countries of the old continent and to the furthest ends of the earth. Unfortunately, the threatening crash of arms seems to be prevailing over the persuasive voice of love, and the outbreak of violence is reopening wounds which people were struggling patiently to heal.

I renew my wish that weapons will at last be laid down so that we can once again meet one another and engage in new and more effective dialogues of communion and peace! Christians have an important role in this regard, whatever their denomination. Today they are called to live and express their brotherhood with greater boldness, so that peoples can be encouraged, indeed, spurred to rediscover and to strengthen what they have in common. The spiritual event we have celebrated, blessed by St Demetrius and the holy martyrs of recent decades, is an experience to preserve and pass on, in the hope that the new millennium opening before us will be a time of renewed communion between the Christian Churches and the discovery of brotherhood among peoples. This is the dream I take with me as I leave this land so dear to me.

4. I would like to entrust this dream to you all. In particular, I would like to entrust it to the young. Yes, to you, dear young people of Romania! I would have liked to meet you personally; unfortunately it was not possible. This evening I make my own the words in which Peter announced the fulfilment of God's promise to those listening to him as the day of Pentecost was drawing to a close: *"I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams"* (Acts 2:17). In these days the Spirit is entrusting God's "dream" to you, young people: may all men and women belong to his family; may all Christians be one. Enter the new millennium with this dream!

You who have been freed from the nightmare of communist dictatorship, do not let yourselves be deceived by the false and dangerous dreams of consumerism. They also destroy the future. Jesus enables you to dream of a new Romania, a land where East and West can meet in brotherhood. This Romania is entrusted to your hands. Boldly build it together. The Lord is entrusting it to you. Entrust yourselves to him, knowing that *"unless the Lord builds the house, those who build it labour in vain"* (Ps 126 [127]:1).

May the Lord bless Romania; may he bless its people and may he bless Europe!

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