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UDIENZA AL PRIMO MINISTRO DELLA EX-REPUBBLICA JUGOSLAVA DI MACEDONIA

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Benedetto XVI ha ricevuto questa mattina in Udienza S.E. il Signor Vlado Buchkovski, Primo Ministro della ex-Repubblica Jugoslava di Macedonia, con la Consorte e il Seguito, ed ha loro rivolto il discorso che pubblichiamo di seguito:

• DISCORSO DEL SANTO PADRE

Mr Prime Minister, Ladies and Gentlemen,

With great joy I greet you on the occasion of the feast of Saints Cyril and Methodius and I express to you my gratitude for this welcome visit. In a particular way I greet the Prime Minister and those who are accompanying him. With equal warmth I welcome the ecclesiastical Delegation. I gladly take this opportunity to send good wishes to all the people of your beloved country.

When I received the new Ambassador a few days ago, I wanted to acknowledge how strongly the traditions and culture of the Macedonian people resonate with the values which permeate the spirit of Europe. The brothers Saints Cyril and Methodius, Apostles of the Slav peoples, contributed significantly to its formation. Their human and Christian activity left indelible traces in the history of your own country. The pilgrimage which you make every year to the tomb of Saint Cyril provides a fitting occasion to return to the roots of your history. Cyril and Methodius, natives of Salonika sent on mission among the Slav peoples by the Church of Byzantium, laid the foundations of an authentic Christian culture, and at the same time actively took steps to create the conditions for peace among all the different populations. Those values of peace and fraternity, which these holy Patrons of Europe, together with Saint Benedict, tirelessly defended, remain indispensable elements for constructing communities of solidarity, open to integral human progress, respecting the dignity of every human being and of the whole human being.

I am convinced that the way to give life to a society truly attentive to the common good is to seek in the Gospel the roots of shared values, as the experience of Saints Cyril and Methodius demonstrates. This is the ardent desire of the Catholic Church which has no other interest but to spread and bear witness to Jesus Christ's words of hope and love, words of life which down the centuries have inspired many martyrs and confessors of the faith.

I sincerely hope that your pilgrimage today will contribute to keeping vibrant throughout the Nation these high human and Christian ideals. I pray too that your country will confidently open up to Europe, thereby contributing significantly to building its future, inspired by your invaluable religious and cultural heritage.

I would like to add the assurance of my prayers for the beloved Macedonian people, that they may advance towards a future of ever firmer hope, assisted by every element of civil and religious society. I therefore invoke the heavenly blessing of Saints Cyril and Methodius. May God always bless and protect your country and all its people.

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