

*Santo Padre:*

*¡Dios nos ha traído a Usted, el Hombre de la Paz, a Hungría!*

*¡Bienvenido! En húngaro se dice: "Isten hozta" y literalmente significa: Dios nos ha traído a Usted para estar con nosotros.*

*Most Holy Father, Man of Peace!*

*A warm welcome to Hungary!*

*Bienvenido! – in Hungarian, we say: „Isten hozta”. This phrase literally means: God has brought you to us.*

We, Hungarians welcome the guests we hold dear with these words. Today, this greeting has a deeper and higher meaning. I believe, we believe, that the arrival of Your Holiness right now, right here, in Hungary, is not a coincidence. Neither is it the consequence of the world political context alone. It is also more than the acceptance of the invitation of the Catholic Church of Hungary and the Hungarian state. The visit of Your Holiness to Budapest is Kairos. The right time and the right place for a meeting, to ring the bells, to announce just peace. When the time is right, God brings together and armours with courage those who trust in the power of love, unity and peace. We Hungarians wish to rise to the height where – sursum corda - we find the self-evident togetherness of the followers of Christ and – without distinction - all well-intended people seeking peace. Where we can look forward to a renewal of our lives.

József Mindszenty, former cardinal of Hungary awaiting beatification, who „exercised Christian virtues to a heroic degree” once said: „The rise of a nation always begins today.” There are embers under the ashes in the weary, too. They are only waiting to catch fire.“

We would like the visit of Your Holiness to Hungary to be a starting post for this ascension, leading to a height from which we see the path to intellectual-spiritual renewal and peace. But we, Hungarians and Europeans, must push off and then stay on the right course ourselves. We may expect encouragement, guidance, confirmation in all of this – as indeed we do – but only we, the people and leaders of Europe can use the free will God gave us in a way leading to a more peaceful, democratic and stronger Europe.

The need stated in our Fundamental Law, adopted in 2011, addresses us all: „after the decades of the twentieth century, which led to a state of moral decay, we have an abiding need for spiritual and intellectual renewal.”

Saint John Paul II visited us when his visit was needed most: at the new beginning after the fall of communism. The same is also true for today’s visit: Your Holiness has come when Hungary and Europe need it most. Over the past thirty years, we renewed the ecumenism conceived in martyrdom of the Catholics, the Orthodox and the Protestants in the ecumenism of the preservation of Christian values. Your Holiness now confirms our faith that a life built on Christian values has a foundation, a meaning and a future in the 21st century as well. We also support Your Holiness in the same. This is what we give to each other: the protection of human life, of the family, the preserving power of the Christian faith. This is why we declared in our Fundamental Law that „Hungary shall protect the institution of marriage as the union of a man and a woman established by voluntary decision, and the family as the basis of the survival of the nation”, and that “Every human being shall have the right to life and human dignity; the life of the foetus shall be protected from the moment of conception.”

We are allies. We protect human life together, men and women separately and in union with each other, our prosecuted Christian brothers and sisters, but also the freedom of those who think and live differently.

Now, the bloody war in our immediate neighbourhood gives a grave, tragic timeliness to our alliance.

Filled with pain and hope, I am turning to Your Holiness. We, Hungarians, can almost touch the devastating reality of the war. One and a half million people fled Ukraine in our direction, and we are helping the refugees by exemplary cohesion. We see the pain of families torn apart, hear the wailing of mothers grieving their sons. Among them Hungarian mothers in Transcarpathia. We see the injustice. We want to protect our values, and our common future. We, mothers, want to win peace, not the war. We do not want to send our sons and husbands to the front.

How far away we still are from the road to peace! Where is the real will for a ceasefire! Where is the realisation that war and anger must not be heated, but cooled!

Holy Father! Hungarians – and millions across the world - see you as the Man of Peace! Who we hope will be able to talk: with Kiev, Moscow, Washington,

Brussels, Budapest, with everyone without whom there can be no peace. Here in Budapest, we are asking you to act in person for a just peace as soon as possible!

Most Holy Father! As the first female president of our country I thank you for encouraging and strengthening women in starting a family, raising children, and in their leadership roles at the head of our communities.

Blood, death and deepening poverty marks the passage of the war. Today, we must pay particular attention to those suffering deprivation. To us Hungarians, our history has given us wonderful examples of saints even in this. Eight hundred years ago we had a princess, Elisabeth, who governed the province in place of her husband, a margrave, who went off to war. Later, Elisabeth smuggled out food collected in secret for the poor in her apron. In the face of an attempt to disclose her forbidden philanthropy, God turned the alms into roses to preserve Elisabeth's truthfulness. Since then, the rose of Saint Elisabeth has been spiritual nourishment for millions: the symbol of helping the needy, the vulnerable, refugees; the symbol of mercifulness. In Hungary, this rose is also the symbol of a joint programme of the government and the Church enabling over one hundred thousand children each year to camp at Elisabeth Camp and enjoy physical and spiritual recreation. The life of Saint Elisabeth also proves that women have a special responsibility to point out that good governance without mercifulness and without solidarity with the vulnerable is not possible.

Among our gifts, Your Holiness will find Saint Elisabeth's rose bushes. And when they blossom out in the Vatican Gardens, think of all those – including the poor, those seeking support in their need and us, Hungarians -, to whom you give spiritual nourishment, joy and hope by your visit and service. Bienvenido – God has brought you to us!