



The Holy See

APOSTOLIC JOURNEY OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS
TO LITHUANIA, LATVIA AND ESTONIA
[22-25 SEPTEMBER 2018]

MEETING WITH THE CIVIL AUTHORITIES, CIVIL SOCIETY AND THE DIPLOMATIC CORPS

ADDRESS OF THE HOLY FATHER

Rose Garden of the Presidential Palace (Tallinn, Estonia)
Tuesday, 25 September 2018

[Multimedia]

Madam President,
Members of Government and State Authorities,
Distinguished Members of the Diplomatic Corps,
Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am very pleased to meet with you here in Tallinn, the northernmost capital that the Lord has allowed me to visit. I thank you, Madam President, for your words of welcome and for this opportunity to meet the representatives of the people of Estonia. I know that among you there is also a delegation from the sectors of civil society and from the world of culture. This allows me to express to them my desire to learn more about your culture, and especially the capacity for resilience that has enabled you to begin anew in the face of so many situations of adversity.

For centuries these lands have been known as “the Land of Mary”, *Maarjmaa*. A name that is not simply part of your history, but also part of your culture. Thinking of Mary reminds me of two words: memory and fruitfulness. Mary is a woman of memory who treasures all living things in her heart (cf. *Lk 2:19*) and the fruitful mother who begets the life of her Son.

Hence, I would like to think of Estonia as a land of memory and of fruitfulness.

A land of memory

Your people had to endure, at different times in history, moments of bitter suffering and tribulation. Struggles for a freedom and independence that was constantly disputed or threatened. Nonetheless, in the last twenty-five years or so – since you once again took your proper place in the family of nations – Estonian society has taken “giant steps” forward. Your country, despite its small size, is a leader as concerns the indices of human development and the capacity for innovation; it also ranks high in the areas of freedom of the press, democracy and political freedom. You have also forged bonds of cooperation and friendship with a number of countries. As you consider your past and present, you have good reason to look to the future with hope and to confront new challenges. To be a land of memory is to keep remembering that what you have attained today is due to the efforts, the hard work, the spirit and the faith of your predecessors. Cultivating a grateful memory makes it possible for you to identify today’s achievements as the fruit of a history made up of all those men and women who strove to make freedom possible. In turn, it challenges you to honour them by blazing new trails for generations yet to come.

A land of fruitfulness

As I observed at the beginning of my ministry as Bishop of Rome, “in our time, humanity is experiencing a turning point in its history, as we can see from the advances being made in so many fields. We can only praise the steps being taken to improve people’s welfare” (*Evangelii Gaudium, 52*). Still, we do well never to forget that “the good life” and a life well lived are not the same thing.

One of the evident effects of technocratic societies is a loss of meaning in life and the joy of living. As a result, slowly and silently the capacity for wonder is dampened, often leaving citizens in an existential ennui. A sense of belonging and commitment to others, of being rooted in a people, a culture and a family, can gradually be lost, depriving the young in particular of their roots and the foundations needed to build their presence and their future. Depriving them of the capacity to dream, to risk and to create. To put all our “trust” in technological progress, as the only way possible, can lead to a loss of the capacity to create interpersonal, intergenerational and intercultural bonds. Ultimately, that vital fabric so important for us to feel part of one another and share in a common project in the broadest sense of the word. Consequently, one of the most important obligations incumbent on all of us who have social, political, educational and religious responsibilities has to do precisely with how we can keep building bonds.

A land of fruitfulness demands contexts in which roots can be planted and give rise to a vital network capable of ensuring that the members of its communities feel “at home”. There is no worse form of alienation than to feel uprooted, belonging to no one. A land will be fruitful, and its people bear fruit and give birth to the future, only to the extent that it can foster a sense of belonging among its members, create bonds of integration between generations and different

communities; and avoid all that make us insensitive to others and lead to further alienation. In this effort, dear friends, I wish to assure you that you can count always on the support and help of Catholic Church, a small community in your midst, yet one most desirous of contributing to the fruitfulness of this land.

Madam President, Ladies and Gentlemen: I thank you once more for your welcome and hospitality. May the Lord bless you and the beloved Estonian people. In a special way, may he bless the elderly and the young, so that, by cherishing memory and upholding it, they may make this land a model of fruitfulness. Thank you.