

***Symposium on the 500 years anniversary of Religious Reform of
Martin Luther
- Krupina, Slovakia, 25 September 2017***

Address by H.E. Mrs. Steluta Arhire,
Ambassador of Romania to the Slovak Republic

Your Eminence General Bishop Dr. Miloš Klátik,
Your Eminence, Bishop Reinhart Guib,
Your Eminences,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to begin this message by thanking Your Eminencies for the invitation addressed to take part in this celebration and to welcome my fellow Romanian nationals, present at this event.

Also, allow me to bring a pious thought to the memory of all individuals who brought their contribution to strengthening the belief in God and to developing a tolerant European society up to the shape and form of present days.

By mere coincidence, the field of my daily activity – diplomacy and international relations – is symbolical connected to the Reform of Christian Faith advanced by Martin Luther, 500 years ago.

The end of the Reformation process - remembered in history as the end of *Thirty Years War*, known as the “*war of religions*” that lead to the *Peace of Westphalia* of 1648 - is considered, in the field of International Relations or World Politics, as the beginning of the world political order, based on a system of sovereign subjects/States, a set of norms and principles agreed among the political entities, among which the sovereignty, also named as “*Westphalian Sovereignty*” and the precedent of international peace, as a result of a diplomatic congress.

The Protestant Reformation that took place 500 years ago lead to the triumph of the Individual, confirmed by internalizing the act of Faith, by establishing a direct rapport between the individual believer and the Divinity and a profound meditation upon salvation, forgiveness and ways to pursue them.

The Reformation did not propose another form of relationship between the Individual and the Divinity. However, it stimulated the advancement of the entire Christian community towards progress.

The Reformation time coincided with the Renaissance epoch and progress in the field of science and technology, among which Gutenberg's printing press that lead to spreading the religious ideas and to educating

more and more people to have access to the new religious beliefs, bringing emancipation to larger masses in European societies.

Your Eminencies,

It is well-known that Romanians elected a president, His Excellency Mr. Klaus Werner Iohannis, who not only belongs to a minority ethnic group, the German minority, but also to a religious denomination – Evangelical - different from the one embraced by the majority of Romanian people, Romanian Orthodox Church. This fact by itself tells a lot about the religious tolerance in Romania.

Please, allow me to underline on this occasion that Romania respects and guarantees the fundamental right of person to the freedom of religion or belief, as it is enshrined in the Romanian Constitution and according to the international law and covenants my country is a party to. Nobody can be forced or constrained to adopt an opinion or accede to a religious denomination contrary to his/her beliefs, or therefore be subjected to discrimination or placed in an inferior position because of his/her belief, or as a result of his/her belonging to a religious cult or association.

There are 18 recognized religious cults¹, in Romania, that coexist peacefully, in absence of social tensions or conflicts among religious or ethnic groups.

I would like to evoke the fact that Christian communities lived peacefully for centuries, in Transylvania, Romanians, Hungarians, Saxons, Croats, Slovaks and Czechs, Ukrainians and Serbians have always found a way to tolerance and to live together.

I would also like to mention the „miracle of Turda”, a Romanian town close to the one I was born, in Cluj County, where representatives of 5 Christian religions prayed together and planted an apple tree, as a symbol of a new beginning and as a *memento* of the edict of tolerance of 13 January 1568.

This is - I believe - the best message of unity, love in the spirit of God and compassion that Your Eminencies could convey, as shepherds of your believers and followers.^[2]

^[1] Romanian Orthodox Church; Serbian Orthodox Episcopate of Timisoara; Roman- Catholic Church; Romanian Church United with Rome, Greek-Catholic; Armenian Church; Christian Russian Church of Old Rite; Reformed Church in Romania; Evangelical Church C.A. of Romania; Evangelical Lutheran Church; Unitarian Church of Transylvania; Union of Baptist Christian Churches; Christian Evangelical Church – Union of Christian Church after the Evangelic Book; Evangelical Church; Penticostal – Apostolic Church of God; Adventist Christian Church of Seventh Day; Federation of Jewish Communities; Moslim Cult; Jehova’s Witnesses Religious Organisation

On this occasion, I would like to underline the importance of a peaceful and harmonious inter-confessional coexistence, because Western Civilization is confronted with many dangers and challenges, today, more than ever.

In spite of the progress made by Humanity in the fields of medicine, science and technology, unfortunately we are not able to find always the best way to solve crises, some of which we thought were forgotten long time ago. The world around us is thorn by ethnic and religious conflicts. European nations should strive towards passing the maturity test and not give in to religious and ethnic xenophobia.

I pray, together with you, for the strength of the Faith of our fellow brothers and sisters and for the world peace.

Please, allow me to thank you again for the invitation to participate in this event and to wish every success to your symposium.

Thank you for your attention.

^[2] <https://www.12apfelbaeumchen.com/turda/>