

Contacts of the Holy Father John Paul II with the Croats during Yugoslavia: the main messages addressed to the Croatian side*

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Introduction

Croats call John Paul II 'our Pope'! By doing that, they have in mind his closeness and understanding that he was showing them all the time. This was especially evident in the difficult and decisive moments of their recent history, namely the aggression against the Republic of Croatia and its international recognition, in which Vatican diplomacy played a decisive role, being the first among the states to recognize its sovereignty and independence. Behind this bold step is the fact that John Paul II had excellent knowledge of Croatian national and church history, which is due to his connections with Croats even before his appointment as Peter's successor (1978). Without mentioning these connections, their subsequent mutual relations would certainly seem quite incomprehensible. After discussing the aforementioned period, this article will review the meetings and messages that John Paul II sent to Croatian Catholics, to the hierarchy as well as lay believers of all ages, classes and professions, from 1978 to January 13, 1992, when the Vatican recognized the renewed, democratic and independent Republic of Croatia. And the Croats were always happy to meet and to listen to John Paul II.

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1. Why were Croats happy to listen to John Paul II?

The Croatian nation is a small Slavic nation. After the migration was completed, they started to inhabit the area where the influences of the Eastern and Western Roman Empire intersected. In the middle of the 7th century, they encountered Latin culture, which they gradually adopted, building at the same time links with the centers of Christianity under the Roman jurisdiction: with Aquileia, and above all with Rome. This orientation will definitely determine the overall self-experience and identity of the Croatian people, and will form their own centuries-old spiritual and civilizational habitus. As a small nation, located on the southeastern borders of that western world, they were often left to themselves in the vastness of historical reality. In fact, they were threatened with destruction. Not only political but also biological, which quite often did not disturb the European community of peoples too much. Possible destruction was sometimes even seen as a solution within the framework of some new political and identity entities. Their own leaders were not blameless either, who in their recent history sometimes used to take them into the »fog«, i.e. into historical adventures which led entire generations to their deaths, and whose graves remain an unwelcome reminder of those delusions, along with the sad fact that even today the descendants of those victims cannot visit the graves of their loved ones! The experience of undesirability and redundancy on the part of powerful forces gave rise to collective frustration and strengthened doubts about any real possibility of finding some space of freedom and independence.

But then suddenly, in recent history, the miraculous figure of one institution shone in its full glory, an institution to which the Croats turned, starting from the 7th century, and never cut that precious thread of connection, and whose light of civility and sense remained a permanent stronghold in the face of all seducing ideologies of the 20th century. Despite all human limitations, it was the only one who knew how to oppose the challenges of history, paying a high price itself. Yes, it was the Catholic Church with its head Pope John Paul II. And suddenly people heard that in their own language: My dear Croats! Pope loves you. He hugs you. The Pope blesses you – you and all yours in the homeland and around the world! That was just hard to believe! Well, until now, foreigners only knew how to pat us on the back maybe, out of courtesy, because of the battles that we won for their interests as famous soldiers. And this one – is now almost talking sweetly to us to hug and receive us, to love us, and that completely selflessly, so – for our sake! These words elated our hearts and filled them with hope that despite all the humiliations, frauds and misfortunes of every kind, with His help we can win freedom as a framework for our personal and national self-realization, the freedom that our poet Ivan Gundulić wrote about in the 17th century in our Dubrovnik, Croatian Athens, and sang: »Oh beautiful, oh dear, oh sweet freedom, // a gift in which all the

treasures our heavenly God to us has given!« It is known that for the direction of historical movements, it is always fateful people who recognize »kairós« – now or never! For a long time now, everyone has agreed that the crucial figure for the downfall of the communist regime, as the most inhumane system that ever existed and got its hands on humanity, was precisely Karol Wojtyła. In him, the peoples of Eastern Europe simply recognized a providential figure and put all their hopes in him. On this horizon of hope, Wojtyła's homeland did not have to fear for its survival, nor for its independence. But Croatia had to! What's more, these values had to be fought for, and many sacrifices had to be made, not only material ones but also sacrifices of life. But even that struggle, first for bare survival, and then for the longed-for independence, Croats were happy to listen to the Pope's messages and instructions, even when, humanly speaking, it was not at all easy for them!

2. The relationship between Croats and Cardinal Wojtyła before his appointment as Peter's successor

Krakow Archbishop Karol Wojtyła's close connection with Croats goes a long time back, at the time of the Second Vatican Council, where, working in its commissions, he became friends with two Croatian metropolitan archbishops: Franjo Šeper and Frane Franić. The ties deepened when Zagreb Archbishop Franjo Kuharić in his Easter greeting in 1976 informed Wojtyła, who had meanwhile been made a cardinal, about the planned nine-year celebration of the great jubilee under the name *Thirteen Centuries of Christianity in Croats*. Cardinal Wojtyła responded to the congratulatory telegram at the end of April of the same year, in which he mentioned some historical similarities between the Polish and Croatian peoples whom the Poles consider a »brotherly people«, and points out: »All this is an opportunity to express our joy to you and to promise you the unity of prayer for intentions of the Croatian people«.¹

After that, the connection between Cardinal Wojtyła and the Croats intensified. Due to his inability to participate »in persona« in Solin in 1976 at the celebration of the thousandth anniversary of the construction of the most important Our Lady's church on Croatian soil, which was built by Queen Jelena,

¹ Božidar NAGY (prepared and edited), *Pope John Paul II. speaks to Croats. All greetings, speeches and messages of Pope John Paul II. which he addressed to Croats during his pontificate from 1978 to 2005*. Zagreb, Philosophical-Theological Institute of the Society of Jesus, 2011, 45. [Original edition: Božidar NAGY (priredio i uredio), *Papa Ivan Pavao II. govori Hrvatima. Svi pozdravi, govori i poruke pape Ivana Pavla II. koje je uputio Hrvatima za vrijeme svojega pontifikata od 1978. do 2005*. Zagreb, Filozofsko-teološki institut Družbe Isusove, 2011.]. In the essay, only the Pope's words from this edition are cited in the Croatian translation, in such a way that the editor's name and page number are given in parentheses in the text itself.

he, however, sends a letter to Cardinal Šeper, the Pope's envoy at the time, but also to the whole Croatian people, in which it is written:

»With you, as with us, the seeds of Christianity was growing slowly, and that without any shedding of heathen blood. With the same courage and the same faithfulness, our two Churches endured the hostile opposition and persecutions that we kept experiencing throughout history. These similarities bring us closer to each other and enable us to understand each other better, to love each other more« (Nagy, 46).

He ended the letter with the words:

»May Our Lady, Queen of the Croats and Queen of the Poles, Our Lady of Otok and Our Lady of Jasna Góra (Częstochowa) intercede for us. To her, with whom we have been connected for so many centuries, we entrust the future of our two nations and churches« (Nagy, 46).

So, in the first part, Cardinal Wojtyła draws the attention of the Croats to the gift of faith, to which one should be gratefully faithful, and then to the virtue of trusting in Mary's help.

At the end of May 1978, Archbishop Franjo Kuharić stayed as a guest in Poland, first with Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński in Warsaw, where he led the Corpus Christi procession, and then as a guest of Cardinal Karol Wojtyła from Krakow. In the Marian shrine of Piekary, the archbishop preached in the Croatian language in front of 200000 worker-pilgrims. On that occasion, the then first man of the Church in Croats, who was already unusually respected, loved and considered a true shepherd by the people, familiarized the soon-to-be successor of Peter with the history of the Croatian people, which will be of precious significance in his future ministry (Nagy, 47).

3. K. Wojtyła's messages as Pope to the Croatian people before democratic changes and aggression against the Republic of Croatia

It is interesting that the Holy Father in the year of his election sends a Christmas card to Archbishop Kuharić and all members of the Bishops' Conference, but does not mention Yugoslavia! He only mentions that he prays »so that the Church in your regions would grow stronger...« (Nagy, 49). At Christmas in 1978, for the first time in history, a congratulatory message was heard from the mouth of a Pope in the Croatian language: »Sretan Božić i na dobro vam došlo porođenje Isusovo! – Merry Christmas and blessed be the birth of Jesus!« (Nagy, 50). Of course, that congratulation in the Croatian language itself was a unique message for Croats!

In 1979, the Church in Croatia marked the so-called »Branimir's year«. Namely, the 1100th anniversary of the exchange of letters between Prince Branimir and Pope John VIII was celebrated, which accepts the re-establishment of Croatian ties with the Roman Church and the heirs of Peter, and blesses Branimir and his people. It was June 7, 879. (The Republic of Croatia rightly celebrates June 7 as the Day of Croatian Diplomacy). It was a decisive event for the future history of the Croatian people and the Church, for its culture and independence. In memory of that important jubilee, John Paul II served St. Mass in front of 10.000 cheering Croats from the homeland and abroad in the Basilica of St. Peter in Rome, over the grave of the apostolic champion, and gave everyone his apostolic blessing. In his sermon, he emphasized three values that adorn the Croats: fidelity to Christ and the Gospel, love and devotion to the Pope of Rome, and devotion to the Mother of God. This will be the tenor of all subsequent addresses of the Holy Father in meetings with Croats. Nevertheless, his message to the young people on that occasion remained striking:

»We are especially addressing you, young believers: you are the hope of the Church and the people, you are the hope of the Christian revival of the world! Get to know and love Jesus Christ, the only Redeemer of man, and be proud of your Christian name!« (Nagy, 53).

The Holy Father ended his sermon with the words:

»My dear Croats! Thank you for this meeting, for this declaration of renewed loyalty. As Pope John VIII once did, so I rejoice today in your faith, your love, your faithfulness to Jesus Christ and His Church. The Pope loves you, the Pope embraces and welcomes you, the Pope blesses you! Amen!« (Nagy, 53)

On the jubilee line, John Paul II sent a message to all Croats that was read in all churches two weeks later on the Feast of the Holy Trinity, in which it is stated that he has confidence in them and encourages life-giving loyalty:

»We have confidence in you. We are full of confidence that you will continue to express this communion with Christ and the Church. And not only by preserving the heritage of truth, but also by life: you will preach Christ and at the same time emphasize that human society can be built firmly, peacefully and happily only on the basis of his teachings. And that only there the temporal well-being truly flourishes, where there are true Christians, because they show themselves worthy of trust, and able to connect human fellowship and shape the best society« (Nagy, 55).

Through his legate, Cardinal Šeper, on August 22, at the final celebration of Branimir's year in Nin, once again reminisced to the entire nation about the events of that jubilee, wishing them to bear spiritual fruits, and shared his apostolic blessing to everyone. From these lines it can be read that in his message the Pope appeals for creative fidelity to the traditional adherence of Croats to Christ and the Church, which, however, finds its practical application in

the construction of a temporal social order, namely through Christians whose lives are worthy of trust because they are moral people. Up until the beginning of the open aggression against the Republic of Croatia in the summer of 1991, the Holy Father John Paul II continued to regularly send Easter and New Year's greetings to Croats. He was greeting them in their own language on all his many trips around the world, placing in their heart's fidelity to their Christian faith tradition, also supporting their national consciousness! (»May my right hand dry up, God, if I forget my holy Church, my family and my Croatian people!«). He was addressing them at regular audiences, he was receiving them on special occasions in Castel Gandolfo, Domaz's yard, Klementina Hall, or in other places on the occasion of celebrations of great church-wide, national and religious events. Thus, on July 25, 1986, in a meeting with young Croats on the occasion of a program on Croatian cultural heritage in Castel Gandolfo, he expressed his desire to visit Croatia (Nagy, 110). In addition to the mentioned messages, in his message to the National Eucharistic Congress in 1984, the Pope also impressed the culture of life upon their hearts:

»Do not allow selfishness and the culture of death to prevail among you! The earth belongs to the living, not the dead or the unborn, and God's Blessing descends on the peoples and families who generously cooperate in his plan« (Nagy, 89).

On various occasions, he was pointing out to young people the responsibility for building a better and fairer world based on moral and spiritual values. His messages had a strong resonance with young people. The communist authorities were well aware of this, and in 1983, after returning from Rome from the already traditional May Day pilgrimage, they invited the participants to informative interviews, threatened them, and some had their passports confiscated (Nagy, 77).

In January 1991, John Paul II greeted a group of Croats in the Vatican, saying:

»In these dramatic moments of suffering and fear in certain parts of the world, and in your homeland as well, I encourage you to pray to God for peace, for rejecting the attacks of mistrust and rivalry, and for respect for basic human rights and for respecting the dignity and rights of the people« (Nagy, 148).

Furthermore, addressing the pilgrims on the Square of St. Peter on April 21, 1991, he invited them to pray »for the peoples of Yugoslavia, different in culture, religion, history and language, in the search for new relations of freedom, equality and justice, in respect for the rights of people and nations«. He ended his address with the words:

»Finally, I make an urgent appeal to the believers of this beloved country – Christians and Muslims – that, in the name of God, the common Father, they can unite in the renewed obligation to create favorable conditions for coexistence in mutual respect and love« (Nagy, 150).

In the Vatican on May 8, 1991, he greeted the Croats, instructing them to be devoted to Mary: »And may She, the Queen of Peace and Mother of men, advocate of mercy, beseech God for His help and blessing. Praised be Jesus and Mary!« (Nagy, 151).

4. Messages of John Paul II during the aggression against the Republic of Croatia

For the initial orientation it should be mentioned here that at that time the Pope's messages consisted of encouraging prayer for peace, for building trust and respect for the dignity of every human being, which finds its most obvious expression in respect for human rights, but also in respect for the dignity and right of peoples to self-determination. In his telegram to the President of the Republic of Croatia Dr. Franjo Tuđman, John Paul II on June 29, 1991, expressed his solidarity with the suffering of the people:

»The news about new acts of violence and the loss of human lives in Croatia is a cause of great concern for the Holy See. I express my solidarity with the sufferings of the population of that republic and raise my voice to encourage all initiatives aimed at ending the use of force and creating conditions conducive to dialogue between different national groups. I pray God to inspire everyone with feelings of respect and fraternity in order to preserve the legitimate aspirations of individual parties so that civil peace can quickly be restored« (Nagy, 152).

Just a few days after that, on July 3, 1991, at the very beginning of the aggression against Slovenia, the Holy Father, at the general audience which was attended by pilgrims from all over the world, called for prayer for the victims, for compassion for the bereaved. »May God enlighten all those responsible and move them to hear the voice of the people of that country, respecting their rights and legitimate aspirations« (Nagy, 152). While the attacks aimed at occupying strategic points in Croatia were already ongoing, John Paul II appealed to young Croats at a general audience on July 24, 1991:

»While your Homeland, despite great difficulties, stands up for the defense of freedom and democracy, know how to preserve human and Christian dignity. Therefore, resist the temptation of violence and any form of provocation, which are a denial of humanity and civilization. The only path that leads to the future and peaceful coexistence is mutual respect, sincere dialogue and effective cooperation in solving existing problems. And don't stop praying together to Mary, the Queen of Peace, because 'Nothing is impossible with God!' (Luke 1:37). I invoke God's blessing and peace upon you and your homeland, Croatia. Praised be Jesus and Mary!« (Nagy, 153).

The Holy father was not only addressing the Croats in those already difficult days, but also the international community to help Croatia. During the

apostolic visit to Hungary, in Pécs on August 17, 1991, to all present Croats led by their bishops, headed by Cardinal Kuharić, the Pope said:

»I assure you once again that I am close to your legitimate aspirations, repeating my appeal to the international community to help you in this difficult hour of your history. I hope that one day not far off I will also come to you« (Nagy, 154).

The Croats undoubtedly felt encouraged, but the mention of a possible visit to Croatia sounded completely unbelievable at the time! He blessed the Croatian people through our bishops two days later in Szombathely (Nagy, 154).

In addition, on September 5, 1991, the Holy Father invited all the bishops of the world to pray with their faithful for peace in Croatia. That request, not anticipated by anybody, undoubtedly having a strong political message, was announced by John Paul II in a letter to Cardinal Kuharić. In it, among other things, it is stated:

»In these hours of pain and uncertainty, I want to express my solidarity with the families of the dead and wounded, with all those who are running away in fear, and especially with the entire Croatian people who are powerless to stop the disaster« (Nagy, 154).

During his visit to the diocese of Vicenza, the Pope looks back at the war destruction and the refugee crisis in Croatia with unprecedented political concern and disgust: »All this is happening today, in Europe, despite accepted international obligations to eliminate war once and for all« (Nagy, 155). In the end, he prays to Our Lady »that the parties would be brought to honest negotiations that would ensure freedom and dignity for all the peoples of Yugoslavia, who should be given the opportunity to choose their own future« (Nagy, 155). All the severity of the moment was expressed by the Pope on September 22, 1991 at the Square of St. Peter asserting »that what is happening in these countries is not worthy of man, not worthy of Europe« (Nagy, 156), thus appealing of course to decisive international factors to stop the violence. The Pope also expressed his closeness to the sufferings to the Croatian pilgrims at the audience on October 9, 1991:

»Faced with the immense drama that is happening before the eyes of Europe and the whole world, I invite you to Christian hope and to pray that the violence be stopped, the hatred be extinguished, and that evil be overcome by good; that peace be established in Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and that all peoples of the entire territory of Yugoslavia be able to live in mutual respect and in brotherly harmony. I commend you to the motherly Heart of the Mother of God, who is the Queen of Peace, whom you honor as the Queen of the Croats. May the almighty God bless you. Praised be Jesus and Mary!« (Nagy, 156).

In order to contribute to the conditions for a just peace, the Pope sent a letter to all Croatian bishops on October 10, 1991. In it, he first expresses deep sympathy for the pain and suffering of the victims and the material damages,

especially those on cultural monuments. The letter shows that the Holy Father was very well informed about everything that was happening in the Croatian regions. He warns of all the absurdity of war and prays to God to stop it. However, on the other hand, he does not stop insisting on the principles, Christian and international, which in the time after the Second World War became mandatory for the behavior of all nations and governments:

»It is the desire of today's people, in Europe and the whole world, to make it possible to arrange the coexistence of people in respecting their rights and legitimate aspirations. Today, one can no longer tolerate the supremacy of one nation over another, nor one nation over the minority of another nation. Today, the rights of peoples and the rights of minorities are increasingly recognized, respected and guaranteed. Today, the borders of a country cannot be changed by the use of force« (Nagy, 157).

He puts it in the heart of the shepherds: »In order to effectively contribute to the building of lasting peace, even in such a difficult moment, be tireless creators of forgiveness and reconciliation« (Nagy, 157). In the continuation of the letter to the Croatian bishops, he notes that he appreciates their meeting with representatives of the Orthodox Church. Despite everything, on the other hand, the Holy Father always points out that the Holy See insists on the principles that nations have the right to self-determination.

»He especially supports the Peace Conference in The Hague, and is doing everything to reach an international consensus for the recognition of the independence of Slovenia, Croatia and other republics; they requested this in accordance with the principles of the Final Helsinki Charter signed by the member states of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe« (Nagy, 158).

In October 1991, in view of increasingly dire news from Croatia, John Paul II makes increasingly loud and increasingly powerful appeals to international political circles. Thus, at the general audience on October 23, 1991, he called on the international community to step up efforts to stop the war, appealing to conscience:

»The bloody war being waged in Croatia, as well as the very serious tensions in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo, also impose questions for Christians who cannot avoid the serious duty to effectively contribute to the solution of the existing crisis and to mitigate the tragic consequences« (Nagy, 158).

After a few days, he expresses his condolences and encourages the hope of the Croatian mothers who came to seek help for their sons, and mentions the efforts of the Holy See at political forums in efforts for peace (Nagy, 159). At the general audience on November 13, the Holy Father again mentions the horrors of war, especially in Vukovar and Dubrovnik.

»I join my voice of condemnation and cry with the entire nation that is suffering and dying, and with the voice of all those in the world who mourn with horror

the war atrocities in Croatia. (...) It is necessary to put an end to this tragedy that dishonors Europe and the world« (Nagy, 159).

On November 7, 1991, the Diocese of Rome itself held a day of prayer for peace for the Croats and other peoples of Yugoslavia, and on that occasion, joining the aforementioned prayer, John Paul II, enumerating the many efforts of the Holy See for peace, asked: »But how to remain silent in the face of the duration of that war which sows so many dead in the dear Croatian land?« (Nagy, 160). Furthermore, he is deeply moved by the refugees and wounded, some of whom come from Vukovar (Nagy, 160). He convinces representatives of the Croatian National Theater from Split of his closeness to the Croatian people (Nagy, 161). He calls for a prayer for peace in the areas on the other side of the Adriatic in a spontaneous address during a visit to a Roman parish (Nagy, 161). Truly impressive was the Pope's Christmas message on December 25, 1991, in which in one part he invited the entire human race:

»Come, o scattered and frightened humanity, to ask for peace, a gift and a task for every man of noble and generous feeling. Enough with hatred and violence! Let there be no more war in Yugoslavia, let there be no more war in the dear country of Croatia and in the surrounding areas where passions and violence challenge reason and good will. No more indifference and silence towards the one who seeks understanding and solidarity, towards the moan of the one who continues to die of hunger in the midst of extravagance and abundance of goods« (Nagy, 161-162).

On New Year's Day 1992, when the World Day of Peace is normally celebrated, the Pope expressed his closeness to all those affected by the war, and told the public: »The whole of Europe must feel affected and humiliated by such cruelty!« (Nagy, 163) and put in the heart of the international politicians new necessary steps for the establishment of peace. He said: »All nations have the right to be respected in their specificity and in their legitimate choices! All nations have the right to live in peace! Attacking a nation is always immoral! Let us entrust these burning longings and our wishes for the New Year to Mary« (Nagy, 163).

On January 11, John Paul II received the diplomatic corps and again pointed out the fact of many initiatives and efforts undertaken by the Holy See in order to achieve peace in the area of the countries of the former Yugoslavia. None of that helped though. Therefore, the right to self-determination remains:

»You are well acquainted with the position of the Holy See on the recognition of states that arise anew from changes in European circumstances. I will limit myself today to stressing that nations have the right to choose their way of thinking and collective life. It belongs to them to provide themselves with the means that will enable them to realize their own legitimate aspirations, which are freely and democratically determined. It is certain that the future of a country or a continent cannot be built with bombs« (Nagy, 164).

What was foreshadowed, came true in the announcement of the State Secretariat of the Holy See – Department for Relations with States of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Croatia, in which it states that »The State Secretariat has the honor to announce that the Holy See recognizes the sovereignty and independence of the Republic of Croatia« (Nagy, 164). On the same day, upon receiving the news about the revived Croatian independence, the President of the Republic Dr. Franjo Tuđman thanked the Holy Father, and on the part of the church, Franjo Cardinal Kuharić (Nagy, 165).

Looking at these political efforts for the Republic of Croatia, Croats today about John Paul II rightly assert: »If it weren't for Him, we wouldn't even exist!« It is precisely on the basis of this insight that it is possible to interpret all the emotion of the people, all the tears of joy – often completely incomprehensible to foreign media reporters – with which Croats welcomed Pope John Paul II, especially during his first visit to Croatia in 1994. How many spiritual fruits that visit brought forth in the believers, the writer of these lines, who spent hours and hours in the confessional in those days, can testify to that!

Conclusion

Based on the messages, which for the most part stemmed from meetings with Croats in the period covered by the given framework, it can be concluded that the Holy Father John Paul II knew very well the ecclesiastical and political history of the Croatian people, including the most recent one, which covers the time of the existence of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and its communist regime.

Messages of St. John Paul II during his pontificate given by this topic, can be divided into those he uttered from the beginning of the papal appointment up until those that he delivered after the introduction of democracy in Croatia. The messages of that first period can be simplified and reduced to the common denominator of fidelity to Christ, the Roman High Priest, and devotion to the Mother of God. These are the values that adorned the Croats throughout their entire history and became a tradition, to which one should remain faithful, but not as if according to some petrified greatness, and should be constantly deepened in the sense of a personal relationship with Christ and Our Lady. The messages were therefore intended to personify the faith, and not simply to preserve some devotional content.

The Pope's messages to Croats in the time that includes the introduction of democracy, the creation of an independent state, as well as the attack on the Republic of Croatia exude sympathy for their immense suffering and terrible victims of aggression, as well as a sense of justice. He does everything to stop the war and achieve a just peace. In this effort, John Paul II refers to natural and

supernatural means. Natural resources include his appeals to the international community and its political factors that the dignity, rights and legitimate aspirations of everyone, including the Croatian people for independence in a sovereign state, must be respected at all costs. Furthermore, the Pope points out that the defense of freedom and democracy is completely legal. In addition, Peter's successor insists on mutual respect, honest dialogue, avoiding supremacy, as well as effective cooperation in solving problems. All of these are messages that bind both the holders of political power in Croatia and ordinary citizens. In any case, those supernatural means include prayer to Almighty God, as well as intercession to the Blessed Virgin Mary, whom Croats also honor as the Queen of Peace.