

Christmas Message from His Majesty the King
24 December 2015

Good evening. On this Christmas Eve, the Queen and I, and our daughters Princess Leonor and Infanta Sofía, would especially like to wish you a very happy holiday season and all the best for the new year.

We also hope that the willingness to understand each other and the fraternal spirit which are an essential part of the season, will always remain present in our everyday lives.

Tonight I am speaking to you from the Royal Palace, where the Crown holds its Acts of State, official acts in which we express all the greatness and dignity of Spain.

This Palace belongs to all the people of Spain, and is a symbol of our history, open to all citizens who want to learn about our past and better understand it. Its ceilings and walls, its paintings and tapestries, in short, all its heritage, reflect century after century of our shared history.

And we should certainly learn about and remember this history, as it helps us to understand our present and guide our future; it also enables us to see our successes and mistakes more clearly, because history defines and explains our identity over time.

I sincerely believe that we are living in times when more than ever, we need to recognise in ourselves everything which unites us. We need to see the worth in what we have built together over the years with many great sacrifices, generosity and enormous dedication. We need to value everything we are, what makes us feel and be Spanish. In my proclamation speech, I expressed that a constitutional Spain has room for all shades of feelings and perceptions, for all the different ways of feeling Spanish; for being and feeling part of the same political and social community, the same past, present and future which our nation represents.

A great nation, defined by a culture stretching across eras and frontiers in the arts and a universal literature; enriched by our common language, together with the other languages of Spain, which also explain our identity.

A country which over the centuries has produced thinkers, scientists, creators, and countless other great men and women, many of whom have even given their lives to defend it.

And it is also a great State, whose solidity today is based on the constitutional values we all share, and the common rules of coexistence we have created and which unite us; a State which recognises our diversity in the self-government of our nationalities and regions; and whose respect for the democratic will of all Spaniards, expressed through the law, is the foundation of our life in freedom.

For all these reasons, we have - I have - many reasons for affirming tonight that to be and feel Spanish, to love, admire and respect Spain, is a deeply-held feeling, a sincere emotion, and a very justifiable source of pride.

With these reasons, and in sharing these feelings, we will honour our history, which we are now making, and for whose great legacy we are responsible; and we will strengthen our national cohesion, which is essential in driving our political, civic and moral progress, and driving our shared project of coexistence. Because now, what all of us should care about above all else is Spain and the general interests of the Spanish people.

After the general election held on 20 December, as always after each term of the Congress of Deputies and Senate, the procedure for the governance of our country established in our Constitution must begin.

In a constitutional and democratic parliamentary monarchy like ours, the Parliament, as the keepers of national sovereignty, hold the power to make decisions on the matters which concern and affect the Spanish people as a whole: this is the seat of power which, after debate and dialogue between the political forces, must approach and decide the essential matters of national life. Political plurality, as expressed at the ballot box, undoubtedly contributes different concerns, perceptions and viewpoints, and it involves a form of politics based on dialogue, agreement and compromise, in order to make the best decisions to solve the problems of the citizens.

Spain is beginning a new term of government which requires all the efforts, energy and will of our democratic institutions to safeguard and consolidate what has been achieved over recent decades, bringing our political progress into line with the reality of Spanish society today. Dynamic institutions which always move in step with the Spanish people they serve and represent, and which are sensitive to the demand for rigour, rectitude and integrity that citizens expect of public life.

Today's Spain is very different to the Spain of earlier centuries, thanks to the real and generous willingness to compromise of all its people, their sincere spirit of reconciliation and overcoming our historic differences, and the commitment of the political and social forces to serving all the people and the general interests of the nation, which must always be paramount. This is the great lesson of our most recent history, which we must never forget.

Nor must we forget that in our history, breaking from the law or imposing an idea or the project of a few against the will of other Spaniards has only ever brought us decline, impoverishment and isolation. This is an error from our past that we must not repeat.

Our path, from which there is no turning back, is that of understanding, peaceful coexistence and harmony in democracy and freedom. Therefore, respecting our constitutional order means defending the democratic coexistence approved by all the people of Spain; it means defending the rights and freedoms of all its citizens; and it also means defending our cultural and territorial diversity.

So tonight, I want to repeat a message of calm, of tranquillity and trust in the unity and continuity of Spain; a message of security in the primacy and defence of our Constitution.

And I would also like to send a message of hope that calm reflection, a sincere and honest comparison of opinions, and respect both for the reality of our history and for the shared affinities and interests of all Spaniards can keep our constitutional spirit strong.

Meanwhile, improving the economy is a priority for all of us. I believe all our institutions have a duty to the citizens, to families and especially to the young, to allow them to recover what should never have been lost: tranquillity and stability as they face the future, and inspiration in planning for their own lives. We all hope to see sustainable economic growth, growth which will make it possible to continue creating jobs - decent jobs - that will strengthen essential public services such as healthcare and education, and enable us to reduce the inequalities which have been accentuated by this tough economic crisis.

Europe is undoubtedly another major factor in our lives, and one which brings some serious challenges. We have all felt outrage and horror at the atrocities that have taken the lives of our compatriots, the crimes in Paris and elsewhere around the world, which are genuine attacks on our model of coexistence and the most fundamental human values. And we have all been moved by the tragedy of the refugees arriving at our borders fleeing from war, or the migrants escaping lives warped by poverty.

To face these challenges, and many more, such as the fight against climate change, the voice of Spain must be heard in the European Union and in international institutions on all matters affecting our convictions and our vital interests. Because today's world demands strong nations, responsible, united, supportive and faithful to their commitments to partners and allies, and to the international community as a whole.

Finally, before I say goodnight, I want to tell you, with complete conviction, that we Spaniards of today must continue to write the history of our time, and we are going to do so in the way we have already demonstrated:

By including everyone - men and women, young and old, born here or coming from abroad; all of us lending our strength together, with nobody left behind.

We must look ahead, because today's world will not wait for those who only look back. We must reject confrontation and grudges, and replace selfishness with generosity, pessimism with hope, and hardship with solidarity.

We must have faith and believe in our country. Spain has a toughness in the face of adversity, an ability to overcome obstacles and an inner strength which are much greater than we may sometimes think. The strength of Spain is in us; it is in our courage, our character and our talents. And of course, it is also in how we live, and how we understand life.

Spaniards have never given up in the face of hardships, however great, and we have always overcome them.

And we also know that we must continue moving forward with the willingness to cooperate and the spirit of togetherness that I spoke about before; with dialogue and commitment, with a sense of duty and responsibility; feeling and living, each of us, every day, the ethical commitment that makes a people great; uniting our hearts, because decades ago the Spanish people decided, once and for all, to offer their hand, not turn their backs. Let's do it with all the strength and trust of a people who are justly proud of what we have achieved together, and above all, what we will achieve together.

With this sentiment, with this trust in our future - the future of Spain I believe in - I wish you all a merry Christmas: Feliz Navidad, Eguberri on, Bon Nadal, Boas Festas and a prosperous new year in 2016.