



Christmas Message from His Majesty the King

24 December 2016

Good evening.

This Christmas Eve, the Queen and I and our daughters Leonor and Sofía would like to wish you all a happy holiday, and share our hope that 2017 will be a better year for all of us. And on this special evening, I would especially like to tell all the families who have suffered the recent floods in Spain, they are very much in our thoughts.

Christmas celebrates a birth, and to greet a new life with joy means we have faith in the future. At times like these, our personal and collective feelings of affection, friendship and brotherhood, which stem from living side by side, remind us of the great heritage we all share. A heritage which is worth all our care, and which we must all help to protect, as it is the best of what we have and what we are; the best of what brings us together.

As is traditional, tonight I would like to share with you some thoughts on our present and our future, and look at everything we have lived through together, especially during 2016, to find what will best help us go forward.

People have always said that the most difficult times in life are the best opportunities to discover our inner strength, to test our character, our true depths. Over this year, I have been in different places all over Spain. And I have to tell you that in all these visits to our cities, towns and villages, I have seen many Spaniards dealing with difficulties and problems; but I have also seen hard, honest, selfless work; a great deal of ability and talent; and above all, determination and the will to survive.

Once again, I have seen the value of family in our society, because family has helped many people get through the toughest times.

I have met workers and professionals, men and women who have kept calmly working over these long, difficult years, without despairing or giving up, whose great dignity and courage has supported their families, their lives and their jobs.

I have also seen many Spaniards decide to take a risk in order to create or defend jobs, and who have been brave enough to pick themselves up and start again after seeing the destruction of work they had put their heart and soul into.

And I could give you countless examples of solidarity. Many of you have generously contributed your skills, time and effort, and above all your compassion, to help others; you can respond to any emergency, proving again and again that wherever an encouraging word or a helping hand are needed,

there is a Spaniard ready to demonstrate with their actions the true greatness and generosity of our people.

And I have also seen, and continue to see, the work of so many public servants, with an extraordinary commitment to serving the community, who safeguard our freedoms, care for us in our hospitals, and educate our children; many compatriots inside and outside Spain who watch out for our safety, defend our values, and contribute to the advancement of science and the enrichment of culture. All of them are the image of our country, and they also make it possible for our State to function, so we can celebrate a day like today.

All of this, for me and for all of us, is a reason to feel truly proud; and is also a reason for hope, because a society which has this attitude, these convictions and these values cannot be afraid of the future. I am sure that our collective memory will reserve a place of honour in history for these times of sacrifice and selflessness; but also of generosity and overcoming obstacles.

But we must continue to look ahead, building our country, and also building Europe. We must keep working, step by step, day by day, with a positive spirit, to make prosperity and well-being the foundation of a harmonious society. For this reason, there are several subjects that I want to talk about more specifically tonight:

It is true that the crisis has forced us to make major sacrifices. However, today we are living with hope for the recovery which has already begun. We all want this recovery to be consolidated, which will make it possible to create many more quality jobs, to correct both the inequalities arising from such a deep crisis as this has been, and to strengthen social cohesion overall, which is how we can ensure stability and balance in our society.

It is very important for all of us for many families to recover their standard of living, and for our young people to have future opportunities, optimism and confidence; and above all, for the most disadvantaged or most vulnerable people to know they will not be left behind as Spain continues on its path through the 21st century.

Meanwhile, as you know, the recent complicated political situation has now been resolved. Now it's important for our society to get back on an even keel and for the citizens to have the certainty they need to get on with their life plans. And it's also essential, looking forward, for dialogue and understanding between political groups to preserve and promote the fundamental collective values that allow our society to function well.

And tonight, I would also like to emphasise the point that we must all protect and improve our harmonious coexistence. A harmonious society, first and foremost, always requires respect. Respect and consideration for others, for the elderly, between men and women, at school, at work; respect for the natural environment we share and which gives us life. Respect and consideration too, for ideas different to our own. There can be no place for intolerance and exclusion, negating other people and rejecting the value of other opinions, in today's Spain.

And we cannot accept attitudes or behaviour which ignore or denigrate the rights shared by everyone in Spain and which let us organise our lives together. Breaking the rules which guarantee our democracy and freedom can only lead, first, to useless tension and conflict that do not solve any problems, and then, to a poorer society, morally and materially.

Because progress, modernisation, well-being, always require a democratic coexistence based on respect for the law, a sincere determination to build rather than destroy, to make things better rather than worse, to make stronger rather than weaker.

Because now is the time to think of the Spain we want for the coming decades, the country which will belong to today's young people, and to build strong foundations for it. And to do this, we must concentrate our energy on looking at the world around us and seeing clearly where it is going.

The world is very uncertain, with major challenges in politics, society, development and security, for example. But here I want to focus on the advances in technology around the world which are having more and more influence on our everyday lives.

We are living in a new reality which has changed how we communicate and relate to each other; how we get the information we need for forming opinions and making decisions; which has become part of our companies, our factories and our industries, transforming the processes of production and changing the jobs we have always known. It is even transforming our schools, universities and training centres. In the history of Humanity, there have never been such huge changes in such a short time.

Today we know that this is not just a technological revolution: it goes much deeper. This is a new world view, across frontiers, societies, generations and faiths.

In this context, it is obvious that we must adapt to this new and unstoppable reality, and develop our skills to the limit so that we can seek success in the sciences, economy, culture, industry and security; but always preserving the human values that identify and define us. We cannot wait for this new reality to be forced on us; instead, we should have enough strength and initiative as a country to look ahead and take the lead, as we will need to do in this new era.

And in this task, education is the key factor, and undoubtedly will continue to be. An education which strengthens our knowledge and keeps it constantly updated, but which also teaches us languages and culture, citizenship and values; which prepares our young people to be citizens in this new world, with more freedom and more skills, and able to use and learn from the experience of older generations. An education which encourages research, fosters innovation, promotes creativity and the spirit of enterprise, as demanded by the society of the future, which is the society we are already living in.

I don't want to keep you much longer on an evening which should be a family celebration, but I do not want to finish without telling you that I believe sincerely

in a Spain which is conscious, caring, sure of its values, which rejects pessimism, despair and cynicism; I believe in a Spain which is determined to overcome its problems, which may be large, but can also be conquered.

And I have no doubt that we will be able to overcome them if we understand that these are not times to fence ourselves off, but to open ourselves up to the world; if we can see that this is no time for splits and internal divisions, but rather, we should emphasise the things that unite us, building on the foundation of our diversity; this is the time for our core values, a Spain of open arms and helping hands, where nobody awakens old resentments or reopens wounds which have healed. In sort, this is a time when we have very powerful motives and reasons for unity, for all of us to work together, from every place in this great country, with optimism, with ideals, and with projects for a better Spain.

This is what I feel and believe. And with this deep conviction, this evening, I wish each and every one of you and your families a very happy Christmas.

Feliz Navidad / Eguberri on / Bon Nadal / Boas festas.
Good night. And a happy and prosperous 2017.