

Christmas Message from His Majesty the King

La Zarzuela Palace. Madrid, 24 December 2013

Good evening.

I would like to wish everyone a happy Christmas and a prosperous New Year, and to share with you my thoughts about the year which is now ending, and my convictions about our shared future.

Spain is still suffering the effects of an economic and financial crisis. It is one that is bigger and that has lasted longer than any in the recent history of the European Union, and it has had very adverse effects on people, families and businesses.

For this reason, I would like to begin with an especially affectionate greeting to those who have been hit hardest by the crisis: those who have not been able to find work or who have lost their jobs in the year now ending; those who for different reasons cannot have their own home; the young people who have not yet been able to find work in their chosen field; to all of you who have endured hard sacrifices courageously, and those who are striving to achieve their legitimate aspirations.

I also acknowledge those of you who are putting the best of your creativity and talent into overcoming your difficulties. I am thinking particularly of everyone in business; the small and medium enterprises which form the productive fabric of the Nation; self-employed workers; immigrants, who we must thank unreservedly for their contributions; public sector workers; and those of you working outside Spain.

And I am thinking of you, the elderly and pensioners, whom many families are now financially dependent on. Thank you for your help. It is extraordinary how strong the family is in Spain, and it is playing a major role in this grave crisis. I would also thank civil society, which has shown a truly exemplary level of solidarity in its care for millions of people in difficulties. Thank you, in short, to all the members of the public for the example of responsibility and civic duty you set in these truly difficult times.

Allow me to dedicate a very special and emotional memory to the victims of terrorism, to whom society continues to owe a debt of gratitude. Individuals and families who for decades have suffered cruelly from the violence and terror of totalitarian criminals. I know you are going through an especially difficult time.

Today, I want to share your pain with renewed solidarity and express my full support for you, as I have done in the past and always will do.

It is indisputable that the economic crisis Spain is going through has made people feel disheartened, and that the difficulty of finding quick solutions and cases displaying a lack of exemplary behaviour in public life have affected the prestige of politics and institutions.

I know that Spanish society today is calling for a profound change in attitude and an ethical commitment in all spheres of politics, the economy and society in order to fulfil the essential requirements of a democracy. It is a fact that there are voices in our society who want to update the co-existence agreements.

I am convinced that all these issues can be addressed with realism, with hard work, with a properly functioning democracy and with the generosity of the representative political and social forces.

Realism to acknowledge that the moral health of a society is defined by the level of ethical behaviour of each of its citizens, beginning with its leaders, as we are all jointly responsible for how our society develops.

Hard work so that the economy can consolidate the signs of recovery which are beginning to appear and which must become more robust, because we cannot accept as normal the anguish of the millions of Spanish people who are out of work. For me, we will start to emerge from the crisis when the unemployed have an opportunity to work.

A State of Law in which our institutions are managed in an exemplary manner, so that the Constitution and laws are complied with and enforced, and so that differences and disputes may be resolved according to the universally approved rules of democracy. Respect for these rules is what safeguards our peaceful coexistence and the strength of our democracy. This is an unquestionable truth which we need to keep foremost in our minds.

And, as always, generosity to yield when necessary, to understand the motives of the other side and to make dialogue the first and most effective method for resolving collective problems.

My position has allowed me see the many changes in fortune that have affected Spain, the nation to which I have devoted my life. I have seen good and bad times, and we Spaniards have always been able to overcome the bad times together, and to build on the good times together.

This experience allows me to say that the political system that came into force with the Constitution of 1978 has given us the longest period of freedom, peaceful co-existence and prosperity in our history, and effectively recognises the diversity which makes up the whole. This is something we should be very aware of, as it is often ignored or forgotten when it is claimed that our society and our institutions are declining.

Defending the aforementioned historic achievement is not incompatible, as I have just said, with admitting the need for improvement in many aspects of the quality of our democracy.

This crucial task of modernisation and regeneration is not only the responsibility of political leaders: economic and social agents and society as a whole through its organisational structures must also contribute.

For many years, we have built our democracy together; together we have resolved problems no easier than those facing us today, and we have always done so with the goal of achieving a common objective.

Well, now we must continue to build our future together, because there are many things which unite us and must continue to unite us:

We are united by the desire to ensure a solid, fair future, one that is full of opportunities.

We are united by the intensity of our historic ties and bonds, the cultures we share, the co-existence of our languages, the acceptance of differences.

We are united by the extraordinary wealth of a varied country, one with different cultures and sensibilities.

We are united by the solidarity we have always shown when faced with great adversity, with social and territorial inequalities, or with the needs of our neighbours.

And we are united, and must continue to be united, by the sense of community recently expressed by the Prince of Asturias: Spain is a great nation which is worth living in and loving, and which is worth fighting for.

The Crown promotes and encourages this model of nation. It believes in a free, fair country, united within its diversity. It believes in the open Spain where there is a place for all of us. And it believes that this Spain is the one we must all continue to build.

Therefore, I invite the political forces, without renouncing their ideas, to overcome their differences and reach agreements which will benefit all of us, and to make possible the necessary reforms to face a future of prosperity, justice and equal opportunities for all.

I invite political leaders and social partners to use their position of leadership to combat conformist attitudes, discouragement and victimhood.

I invite the intellectual community to interpret the changes that are taking place and to guide us through this new world which is emerging in geopolitics, economics, society and culture.

I invite public institutions, businesses and investors to champion research and innovation, in order to improve competitiveness and thus contribute to job creation.

And I invite all of you to recover your self-confidence and your belief in our ability to make real our most dearly-held wishes as Spaniards.

This evening, as I deliver this message, I want to convey to you, as the King of Spain:

Firstly, my determination to continue encouraging civic co-existence, while faithfully complying with the mandate and responsibilities assigned to me by the Constitution, in accordance with the principles and values that drive our progress as a society.

And, secondly, the assurance that I accept the requirements of exemplary conduct and transparency which society now demands.

Finally, as I leave you, I would like to thank you for the generous expressions of encouragement I have received during the year. I hope that this Christmas will be an opportunity for families to get together, and that 2014 will fulfil all our brightest hopes.

Happy Christmas, once again, and good night.