



Christmas Message from His Majesty the King

24 December 2021

Good evening.

This Christmas Eve, I want to direct my first words to the people living on the island of La Palma, who have been going through such a painful and difficult situation over the last three months. The volcano left many of you homeless, without any means of support, and has filled all of us with sadness.

Today our heart and thoughts are still with you. We feel very close to you, and you know you have our solidarity, and you can count on the hard work and commitment of every part of Government to help you rebuild your lives and your economy as soon as possible, and restart all your projects with optimism.

In last year's Christmas message, I shared with all of you the need for a great collective effort which would enable us to overcome COVID-19, with our hopes pinned on science, and especially on vaccines.

A year later, although we still need to be very careful, the situation is different. We have made substantial progress in combating the pandemic thanks to the discovery and approval of the vaccines, the great many Spaniards who have been vaccinated, and the vaccination process itself in Spain, which we can feel particularly proud of.

Even so, we are seeing that the virus is still capable of doing harm in many ways. Once again it is spreading very fast, and the risk has not disappeared. Quite the reverse. So we must continue being careful, protecting ourselves, and acting with the greatest individual and collective responsibility. We all have to do everything we can to hold onto the progress made in this healthcare crisis which has caused so much suffering, and whose victims we remember, especially at this time of year. And once again, we give immense thanks to healthcare personnel, with all our support and encouragement.

Also this last year, many citizens have still been suffering the social, economic, and emotional consequences of the pandemic. On one hand, our economy is now growing again and most of the jobs that had to be temporarily suspended are now coming back, and employment figures are changing at a really positive speed. But on the other, there are now more people in situations of vulnerability, and today many households are worrying about rising prices, energy costs, or the difficulty of finding stable jobs, especially for young people.

And alongside all this, we are seeing it is true that in today's world, all countries depend on each other more and more, and worldwide solutions are needed for many of the challenges we share, as is the case in healthcare, which demands more effective and stronger international collaboration.

Also, new technologies are changing companies' traditional modes of production, which is impacting the concept of work itself, as we have always known it; science moves forward, to our benefit, but it is changing many aspects of our personal lives and communities. At the same time, we see how sometimes our deeply held beliefs and values are put to the test, or how the principles which govern how we live together in freedom are affected.

These are a few examples of the challenges facing us now, and which show how complicated these times are; times which require us to stay very alert in a situation which is full of uncertainties and contrasts.

In this situation, what do we do? Do we have to become pessimistic? Should we just put up with things, waiting for problems to sort themselves out? I don't think so.

On the contrary, I think we should react: We must understand and accept the new transformations that we are experiencing at such high speed, take the initiative and try to get ahead of events; and we must also adapt quickly to change, while always having a clear view of our major goals and priorities as a country. Because this is also a time of new projects, of new ideas and opportunities; of ambitious initiatives for improvement and progress.

We all want a society which is economically and socially advanced, with stable, decent jobs, and a solid Welfare State; we want a society which continues working towards gender equality, and which favours individual and social progress; and of course, we aspire to a society which is at the forefront in technology and innovation, which leads in combating climate change, and is fully committed to our planet's sustainability and environmental stability.

I sincerely believe that for Spain, as for many other nations, the challenges facing us are a real crossroads; but without doubt, they represent a historic opportunity, even an alarm call for us to catch up with events, to update and modernise our country, while holding firm to our democratic principles and the values which inspire our national cohesion. Because what we do or decide from now on affects whether we can continue progressing alongside the most advanced nations, or if we will fall behind.

And in this great task, the institutions have the greatest responsibility. We must always bear in mind the common good and think of the citizens, their concerns and worries; we must always be at their service and attend to their problems. We must be in the place which corresponds to us according to the constitution; each of us must take on the obligations assigned to us, respect and comply with the law, and be an example of public integrity and morality.

For all of this, mutual understanding and collaboration are necessary attitudes which dignify the institutions; indeed, they strengthen them, because they inspire trust among the citizens. And differences of opinion should not prevent consensus agreements which ensure greater stability, more well-being among households, and the peace of mind families need as they face their future.

But undoubtedly, society also has an essential part to play in these times of change. The circumstances we have lived through, many of which have not been easy, especially over the last 40 years, have made us a strong, responsible society, and an enormously public-spirited one, as we have seen from the beginning of this pandemic. These are our civic values, alongside the talent, vitality and energy of our industry, services, and the rural world, which must all be very much a part of the construction of our future.

If we know where we want to go, we must also be aware of where we come from:

the very profound changes in Spain in over four decades of democracy and freedom have been extraordinary, and not by chance. They are based on the hard work and sacrifice of many people, of millions of Spaniards. And this is due to many reasons: our sense of history, far-reaching agreements, generosity, responsibility, and foresight.

This great transformational project is symbolised and represented by our Constitution, which makes us fully part of modern western democracy, and whose spirit calls us to unity rather than division, to dialogue rather than conflict, to respect instead of rancour, and integrating spirit instead of exclusion; it calls us always to a civic, peaceful and free coexistence.

The Constitution has been and is the mainstay which has enabled our progress, sustaining our democratic cohesion in the face of the serious crises of different kinds we have gone through, and for that it deserves our respect, recognition and loyalty.

And our future as a country is closely linked to the European Union, as most Spaniards see it. Europe was an aspiration and a goal, and now it is a great political, economic, social and cultural reality, where we share with our partner European nations the same democratic values which offer us an institutional framework of stability, security, and trust. And also, new opportunities.

We have seen how the fight against the pandemic, with all its difficulties, has strengthened the Union itself, which has taken on very important, unprecedented commitments in healthcare, the economy, and employment. And now the Union presents the opportunity to invest European funds in the modernisation of our country and our companies, and in an economy which must become more digital, greener, and more inclusive. This is a unique moment which we must not let slip away.

This time is certainly difficult, but not moving forward today means falling behind; it means going backwards. We must keep moving forward, because history has shown us that we Spaniards can respond to adversity and overcome it. A future is opening up to us which demands - of all of us - responsibility, willingness to work together, and mutual understanding; and that future needs us to have more trust in our own strengths as a nation. And I have no doubts about our commitment, and our abilities; and that with resolution, spirit and strength of character, we can do it.

As I end this talk, let us remember that tonight there are still many people working to safeguard our health, safety, and peace of mind, and ensuring public services keep running. All of them deserve our recognition, and we should give them special consideration at this time of year.

Thank you for your attention, and with the peace and good cheer which this night represents, the Queen, our daughters Princess Leonor and Infanta Sofía, and I wish you all a very merry Christmas and a happy New Year.

Feliz Navidad, Eguberri On, Bon Nadal, Boas Festas.