



Christmas Message from His Majesty the King

24 December 2022

Good evening.

I am very glad to be able to be in your homes and continue this tradition of sending you my best wishes, especially of peace, on Christmas Eve, and also to share with you some thoughts on the most notable events of the year now ending.

2022 has been, and still is, complicated and difficult. Just as no recent years have been easy. Just when we thought the worst of the pandemic was over — certainly the best news of the year — in February Russia invaded Ukraine, and since then we have witnessed ten months of a war which has caused levels of destruction and ruin hard to imagine in our everyday reality. We have felt the suffering of the Ukrainian people, and we still feel great sadness for the loss of thousands of human lives.

To the Ukrainian refugees in our country and all their compatriots, you are in our hearts, especially today.

We are here, with a new war in Europe, at the borders of some of our European partners and allies, and therefore close to us; and which affects not only Ukraine, but has a global impact.

And this has also affected our security. As well as strengthening our collective defensive capacity with our allies, Spain has joined the vast majority of the international community in supporting Ukraine, and restating our commitment that the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of States are essential principles of an international order based on law and which must always seek peace.

Spain's NATO summit, which was held here in Madrid, helped reinforce the unity of all members of the Alliance, and of the European Union.

This war, together with the effects of the pandemic, is obviously having a profound impact on the economy; it has led to an energy crisis with serious consequences for industry, trade, transport, and particularly, household economies.

Rising prices, especially of food, have meant insecurity in our homes. Everyday actions like turning on the heating or the light, or refuelling the car, have become a cause for concern, and in many cases have meant important personal and family sacrifices. Because there are families who cannot deal with a situation like this for long, and need continuous government support to mitigate its economic and social effects.

All of this new scenario we are living through - the war, the economic and social situation, instability and tensions in international relations, are naturally causing great concern and uncertainty in our society. We cannot ignore the seriousness of these problems, but we also cannot give up the possibility that things can change and improve.

First, once again, we must trust in ourselves as a nation. The transformation and modernisation of Spain over the last four decades, thanks to the success of our transition to democracy and the approval of our Constitution, justifies that trust. As does the way we have overcome our other economic, social and institutional crises; most recently, that of Covid. We are a country which has always rallied, even through difficulty and sacrifice, to cope with all its challenges, which have been many over the years.

As well as believing in ourselves, in our capability, more than ever in these difficult times we need everyone to be more committed than ever to our democracy and to Europe, the European Union, the two pillars on which our present and future rest.

- The world's democracies are exposed to many dangers, which are not new; but the risks of today have a particular intensity. And Spain is no exception. But there are three dangers I want to examine, because I think they are very important: one is division; another is the deterioration of cohesion; the third is the erosion of institutions.

A country or a society which is divided or in conflict cannot advance or make progress, resolve its problems properly, or create trust. Division makes democracies more fragile, but unity strengthens them.

In Spain we know this from experience. Our Constitution, the fruit of dialogue and understanding, represents the unity achieved by the people of Spain, as a commitment to the future, to diversity and harmony, for a young democracy. Today, after all these years, our constitutional values are firmly rooted in our society, and are now the point of reference where Spaniards must find the unity which ensures stability, cohesion and progress, and the harmonious coexistence which, as I have often said, is our greatest heritage.

A coexistence which requires our collective life to fully recognise our freedoms alongside respect and consideration for other people, their beliefs and their dignity. It must be guided by reason; it demands putting the will to integrate above the desire to exclude.

In this task, we need to strengthen our institutions. Robust institutions which protect the people, respond to their concerns, guarantee their rights, and support families and young people in overcoming many of their everyday problems. Institutions which reflect the public interest and perform their tasks with dedication, with respect for the Constitution and the law, and are an example of integrity and honesty. And this is the standard to which all our institutions must always be committed.

I think that at this time, we must all take personal responsibility and think constructively about the possible consequences of ignoring these dangers for our unity, our cohesion, and our institutions.

We cannot take everything we have built for granted. Nearly 45 years have gone by since the Constitution was passed, and of course many things have changed and are still changing. But the spirit that created it, its principles and its foundation, which are the work of all of us, must not be undermined or forgotten. They are a unique value in our constitutional and political history which we must protect, because they are the place where the people of Spain recognise ourselves and accept each other, despite our differences; the place where we have lived and continue living in freedom.

- Europe is the second commitment I wanted to talk about. For Spain, Europe has always represented freedom. It contributed to the consolidation of our democracy, strengthening our economic growth and social development.

Today, we share many of its problems and we contribute to its decisions with our own personality and our own interests. The shared challenges we face, from healthcare to finance or those relating to our energy and environmental models, receive solutions which form part of the common framework of the European Union. So the decisions made in the Union every day can be felt in the everyday life of everyone in Spain. This is reality.

We are Europe, but we also need Europe, our major political, economic and social framework, which also offers us certainty and security. I am sure that Spain's commitment will be reinforced when we take up the rotating Presidency of the Union next year.

I said at the beginning that these are times of uncertainty. But if the success of a nation depends on the character of its citizens, and on the personality and spirit which drive its society, we must have reasons to look to the future with hope.

We are one of the world's great nations, with many centuries of history, and the people of Spain must continue deciding our destiny, our future, together. Taking care of our democracy; protecting our cohesion; strengthening our institutions.

We must continue sharing goals, always with a spirit of renewal and adapting to changing times. With confidence in our country, in a Spain which I know well, brave and open to the world: a Spain that seeks serenity, peace, tranquillity; a Spain which is responsible, creative, vital, and generous. That Spain is what I see, what I hear, what I feel in many of you; and it is what, once again, will move forward. It's up to all of you.

And finally, on this special night, thank you so much for listening. 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.