



Christmas Message from His Majesty the King

Royal Palace, Madrid, 24 December 2024



Good evening and thank you for allowing me to accompany you for a few moments on this special night of gathering and celebration. The Queen, Princess Leonor, Infanta Sofía and I all wish you a happy, peaceful evening.

This Christmas Eve the first thing I want to talk about, as I'm sure you will understand, is the terrible weather event almost two months ago that devastated several areas of eastern and southern Spain, especially Valencia.

Those who lost their lives or who are missing deserve all our respect and we must never forget the pain and sadness their loss has caused for their families. Thousands of people saw their village, their neighbourhood, their home, their work, their business, their school, reduced to rubble or destroyed. It is hard to get over such an event, but we can all learn some important lessons that will strengthen us as a society and help us grow.

We must never forget those first images of the flood that swept away everything in its path, and the people who had to be rescued, including the sick, aged, and exhausted, trapped in their cars or climbing onto rooftops. We also saw those who welcomed the most vulnerable into their homes, opposing the relentless force of water and mud with the overwhelming strength of solidarity and humanity. Neighbours, volunteers, civil protection teams, firemen, security forces, armed forces, NGOs, and also companies that organised collections and gifts, even mobilizing their personnel and machinery... the efforts of all of these groups are gradually restoring some degree of normality to the lives of those affected - more than 800,000 people. And this care must continue over the medium and long term to ensure a real recovery.



Day after day, we have seen this solidarity in its purest and most concrete form in the huge efforts of anonymous volunteers and workers in the public services; and we have also seen - and understood - people's frustration, pain, and impatience, and their demands for administrations to work together more effectively. Because all these emotions - the drive to help and comfort and the feelings of pain and grief - come from the same root: awareness of the common good, expression of the common good, or demand for the common good.

Although we may differ and disagree at times, Spanish society has a clear idea of what is the right thing to do and what benefits all of us, and this gives us the motivation and responsibility to protect and reinforce it. This is something that the Queen and I have seen and appreciated more and more in the ten years of our reign. It is the responsibility of all institutions, of all public administrations, that this concept of the common good continues to be clearly reflected in any political speech or decision. A consensus on what is essential, not only in results but also as a constant practice, should always guide the public sphere. Not to avoid a diversity of opinions, which is legitimate and necessary in a democracy, but to prevent that diversity leading to a denial of the existence of a shared space.

This agreement on what is essential is the starting point for addressing the issues that concern us and affect our lives as a collective in different ways. Growing international instability, the frequent tone of our public debate, difficulties in access to housing, and managing immigration are some of the issues that deserve our attention and that I also want to address this evening.

Immigration is a complex phenomenon with many different causes and a high impact on society. Population movements throughout history



have been fundamental in building our present-day open and interconnected societies. So while migrations are part of daily life, without appropriate management, they can lead to a tension that erodes social cohesion.

Working towards integration, which corresponds to all of us; respect, from all of us, for the basic laws and rules of coexistence and civility; and recognition of the dignity that every human being deserves, are the pillars that should guide us when dealing with immigration. Without ever forgetting the firmness required for combating people-trafficking networks and gangs. How we tackle immigration - which also needs good coordination with our European partners, as well as countries of origin and transit - will say a lot in the future about our principles and the quality of our democracy.

Another issue worrying many, especially young people, is the difficulty of accessing housing. Towns, and especially large cities, attract population growth and generate a demand that outstrips supply. It is important, again, that all the actors involved reflect, listen to each other, and examine the different options, and that this dialogue leads to solutions that facilitate access to affordable housing, especially for young people and the most vulnerable, as this is the foundation for security and well-being in so many lives. And we can really do it.

Our lives are also affected by an increasingly complex, fast-changing, and even turbulent international scenario. All too often we see defiance of international law, the use of violence, denial of the universality of human rights, and a rejection of a multilateral approach to the global challenges of our time, such as the climate and environmental crises, pandemics, energy



transition, trade, and the lack of natural resources. We even see some debating the validity of democracy itself as a system of government.

In this context, Spain and the other member states of the European Union, along with our international partners, must continue our strong defence of and belief in the foundations of liberal democracy, human rights, and the social welfare gains on which our great political project is based. Because Europe - the idea of Europe - is an essential part of our shared identity, the legacy we owe to generations to come. In a world in need of strong and cohesive actors, and above all behaviour inspired by principles and values, Europe is still our most valuable touchstone.

And if we look inwards, our great touchstone in Spain is the 1978 Constitution, its letter and its spirit. A consensus on what is essential agreement was the fundamental principle that inspired it. Working for the common good means preserving this great pact of coexistence where our democracy is affirmed and our rights and freedoms are enshrined, pillars of our social and democratic rule of law. Despite the passage of time, the agreement that made it possible is still our strong foundation. Nurturing that spirit of agreement is necessary to strengthen our institutions and ensure that all of society can trust them.

A coexistence pact is protected by dialogue; a high-minded and generous dialogue which must always contribute to the definition of common will and state action. That is why political debate, legitimate but sometimes deafening, must not prevent us hearing an even more clamorous demand: a demand for calm. Calm in the public sphere and daily life, to face collective or individual and family projects, to thrive, care for and protect those who need it most. The recent amendment to Article 49 of the Constitution, referring to people with disabilities, is a good example of what we can achieve together. And we cannot allow discord to become a



constant background noise that prevents us hearing the voice of the citizens.

You have heard me say it so many times and I would like to repeat it again: Spain is a great country. A nation with an extraordinary history, despite its dark chapters, and a model of democratic development in recent decades, defeating even the terrorist assaults that left so many victims. A country with a present that, while we still have much to do to tackle poverty and social exclusion, for example, is promising when looking at our economy - in terms of growth, employment, exports, and so on - and the general level of our social well-being. And in the face of the future, I sincerely believe that we Spaniards have a huge potential that must give us hope, both at the national level and on the international scene.

That future lies primarily in our young people, who have given us so much to be proud of in the Olympic and Paralympic Games and the latest European Championship, who start businesses despite the difficulties, and who make us leaders in science; the young people who respect our elders and their valuable experience; who believe strongly in equal rights; who are now studying in our schools, universities, and vocational training centres to start strong in the job market, despite the youth unemployment figures; in short, our young people, who look for opportunities and overcome obstacles through merit and hard work. But above all, so many young people who have filled us with pride by going to volunteer in the streets of the towns affected by the floods.

And this public-spirited commitment to what we all share, the common good, brings me back to where I began. Back to all the towns and villages affected by the floods, where there is still so much to do and the needs of local people seem overwhelming, but where hope still prevails.



Hope that the solidarity that has brought us together in the most difficult moments continues in every action and every decision. Hope that aid reaches everyone who needs it, so they can rebuild the future they have fought for so much, facing with courage and dignity the challenges of a present that sometimes seems relentless. The earlier we can make this happen, the more we will reinforce our sense of community, our feeling of nationhood. Because the memory of the road we have travelled, trust in the present, and hope in the future are an essential part of our common good, perhaps the most valuable, but also the most fragile.

Let us hope the spirit of these days of peaceful gathering remains in the new year, and with the Queen and our daughters, Princess Leonor and Infanta Sofía, I wish you all a very happy Christmas.

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