



Christmas Message from His Majesty the King

24 December 2023

Good evening.

Like every Christmas Eve, I have the opportunity to wish you a merry Christmas and, with my family, send you our best wishes. This is a tradition which I enjoy following, and which also allows me to share some thoughts with you about our present situation and the challenges facing us as a country.

The economic and social difficulties affecting the everyday life of many Spaniards are a concern for all of us. A concern which can especially be seen relating to employment, healthcare, the quality of education, and the price of basic services. And of course, also relating to unacceptable violence against women, and for young people, access to housing.

Thus, there are many specific subjects I would like to discuss with you today, although tonight I want to focus on others which also have a great deal to do with how our collective lives move forward. I refer to the Constitution and to Spain.

This year was the 45th anniversary of our Constitution. During these years of our life under democracy, the Constitution, to which the Princess of Asturias swore an oath on 31 October, has always been a presence in our lives. And it is undoubtedly the best example of unity and cohesion among Spaniards.

We cannot forget that one of our greatest assets as a democracy is that very cohesion based on shared feelings and the common search for well-being and prosperity for all.

In Asturias last October, I said —and it's what I believe— that unity, collective effort, and a sense of solidarity are what build great works, the works which go beyond the individual and remain with us over time. This is how a country moves forward.

Naturally, in Spain all citizens have a right to think, speak, and defend their ideas freely and with respect for others. But democracy also requires a

basic and broad consensus as to the principles we share and which have united us for generations.

And this unity, which has deep historical and cultural roots, must rest above all on the values governing all democratic coexistence: freedom, justice, equality, and political pluralism.

These are the values which bring us together, which give strength and permanence to a democratic system like ours.

And this is defined and established by our Constitution, which has been the greatest political success of our recent history, and was the culmination of a process which earned extraordinary international recognition and admiration.

Thanks to the Constitution, Spain was able to build and consolidate a full, open and inclusive democracy, a Social and Democratic State of Law, which has ensured our cohesion and enabled us to overcome various serious crises in recent years. This is the evident reality of our recent constitutional history.

Thanks to the Constitution we were able to overcome the division which has been the cause of many errors in our history; which opened wounds, fractured affections, and drew people apart. Overcoming this division, therefore, was our wisest choice nearly five decades ago. So preventing discord from ever taking root among us is a moral duty we all share. Because we can't let it happen.

And there is another dimension of the Constitution which is often ignored, and is certainly also very important: One that ensures our model of life, how we live and how we understand our lives. Expressing ourselves freely, receiving an education, having a job, and protecting ourselves from illness, are key elements in our everyday lives. So are access to housing, starting a family, or being able to rely on social support or a decent pension. All these everyday events, and many more, are safeguarded, guaranteed and protected by the Constitution.

That's why I want to defend the Constitution, not just as a democratic value for the present and the future, but also as an essential instrument and guarantee ensuring that Spanish lives can move forward with confidence, stability and certainty. So that we can freely enjoy a life in which each person, in their circumstances, can achieve a reasonable degree of satisfaction on their legitimate expectations, their ambitions, projects and needs.

But it is obvious that for the Constitution to fulfil its role, we must not just respect it, but also preserve its identity, what defines it, and what it means; its reason for existence as a collective agreement by and between all of us for a shared purpose.

And, finally, it requires us to preserve its integrity as a place of mutual recognition, acceptance and coming together approved by all Spaniards, as the legitimate holders of national sovereignty.

Thus, without respect for the Constitution there can be no democracy or cohesion; no freedoms, only impositions; no law, only despotism. Without the Constitution there is no Spain in peace and freedom.

And together with the Constitution, Spain.

We Spaniards set out on a new path nearly half a century ago; we took it together, democratically, as a common project. We approved a shared vision of Spain which recognises the right of all of us to feel and be respected as we are and with our culture; with our languages, traditions and institutions.

And today, Spain is a strong society, which has often shown the values which inform our direction as a political community:

We have shown solidarity to those suffering adversity;
We have shown exemplary civic behaviour in overcoming COVID;
We have shown courage, dignity, and principle when faced with terrorism;

And we have expressed and —above all— defended our constitutional values when they have been questioned or threatened.

And we have done all of this together and in accordance with the constitutional framework decided by all Spaniards.

The ultimate reason for our successes and progress in recent history is this very unity of our country, based on our democratic values and on cohesion, on the solid links between the State and the Autonomous Communities, and on the solidarity between all of them... And also based on our opening to the exterior with a deep-felt connection to Ibero-America and to Europe. In fact, Spain has held the Presidency of the Council of the EU for the last six months, in which it has reinforced the unity of Europe.

I have no doubt that unity will also be the key enabling us to successfully deal with the serious and complex future challenges now facing Spain.

To meet the challenge of this future, all the institutions of the State must conduct ourselves with maximum responsibility and always pursue the general interests of all Spaniards with loyalty to the Constitution. Every institution, starting with the King, must occupy the place corresponding to them in the Constitution, execute the functions it attributes to them, and meet the obligations and duties it sets out.

We must also respect the other institutions as they execute their own responsibilities and contribute to each others' strength and prestige. And finally, we must always safeguard the good name, dignity and respect of our country.

Over centuries of history, Spain has had the responsibility of influencing the course of humanity. It has also gone through periods of tragedy, silence, isolation, and pain. But the Spanish people have always risen above; they have been able to choose their path with fortitude and the pride of the peoples they are and want to be.

We must be more aware of the great country we have, so we can all feel it more and take care of it. In this way we can better meet the obligation I spoke about a few weeks ago in Parliament: the obligation to guarantee a legacy for younger generations of a united, cohesive Spain, which strives for understanding, and solid in its democratic, civic and moral convictions; the legacy of a respected Spain, a beloved nation, in which they can continue to live freely and safely, in an environment of stability and trust.

Spain will go on. With determination, with hope, we will do it together; aware of our historical and present reality, of our truth as a nation. The Crown will always be on that path with you; not just because it is my duty as King, but also because it is my conviction.

Thank you for your time this evening, and together with the Queen, Princess Leonor and Princess Sofía, we wish you a happy Christmas Eve, with a very special thought for those of you who at this time are working to keep us all safe and to keep public services running.

To all of you, Feliz Navidad, Eguberri on, Bon Nadal, Boas Festas, and Merry Christmas. A good night to all, and a happy and prosperous 2024.