

Deputy Prime Minister, Ladies and Gentlemen,

May I thank you, Sir, for your generous and warm words which I appreciate most sincerely.

It is a great pleasure to be here today on this auspicious occasion for my family and me

- meeting as do within this magnificent building which so well embodies not only the beating heart of Hungarian democracy
- but also of the long and distinguished history of ancient land.

My first pleasurable duty is to extend through you, Deputy Prime Minister, my sincere thanks and appreciation to His Excellency Janos Ader, President of the Republic, for granting me the honour and dignity of an Officer's Cross of the Order of Merit of the Republic of Hungary.

May I also express my thanks to the high authorities within the Hungarian Government and its diplomatic missions abroad for proposing me to the President for this state recognition.

Deputy Prime Minister, having also received the approval from Her Majesty's Government in London to accept this worthy award, I want you to know that I do so with great humility and in the spirit of friendship and international understanding.

As someone who has enjoyed a 25-year association with Hungary having lived, worked and studied here, I cannot fail to reflect on the warm hospitality, valued memories and countless friendships that have been the hallmarks of my journey from university student, to businessman, to charity worker and interfaith campaigner. All these experiences I must tell you have forever engrained Hungary and its people in my heart.

I also count myself fortunate to have been able to witness, sometimes at first hand, some key moments in modern Hungarian history.

And much like elsewhere in the region I have no doubt that faith played a significant part in empowering the Hungarian People to stand up against totalitarian oppression and dictatorship which in turn

led to the long awaited rebirth of democracy and freedom in this great country of yours. It is also very pleasing for me to see our Cathedrals and Churches and other important monuments is such fine repair thanks to the support of the Government.

Deputy Prime Minister

2013 is a very important year for Christians across the world as it marks the 1700th anniversary of Emperor Constantine's famous Edict of Milan which in 313 granted Christians and indeed others the freedom to practice their faith without fear of persecution.

This decree marks in many ways the beginning of the Christian foundation of European civilization.

This anniversary is also an appropriate time when those of us of faith should reflect on the centuries old Christian foundations of our society.

This is felt all the more at a time when for many across Europe there is a strong sense that our Christian and wider faith values are being tested and challenged by an increasingly intolerant secular society.

Through my various charitable, cultural, inter-religious and educational organisations I wish to assure you, Sir that I look forward to developing further initiatives abroad which will focus on

- the role of faith in public policy,
- the Christian values in Europe,
- promoting more deeper inter-religious and cultural understanding

between the followers of all faiths and none and between Hungary and wider the international community.

To conclude, may I thank you Deputy Prime Minister once again for your warm words and for finding time in your busy schedule to personally decorate me today.

Long Live Hungary and may God Bless its noble people. Thank you.