

Speech by HE Cardinal Martino On the occasion of the receiving the Gratitude of Tirana

Monday 2nd December 2013

Your Excellency Mr Lulzim Basha, Mayor of Tirana,

Thank you for your expressions of friendship and solidarity. May I offer you and the Municipality my heartfelt appreciation for considering me worthy to receive this Gratitude of Tirana.

I am conscious of the importance of this civic honour and of the eminent past recipients.

As Grand Prior of the Constantinian Order I join with the Prince and Grand Master in expressing my delight to be back in Tirana and Albania – home to two of your nation's greatest spiritual exports - Skanderbeg and the Blessed Mother Teresa of Calcutta.

I am pleased Mr Mayor that this visit will allow me to visit both new and restored places of worship. This is felt especially so knowing of the great lengths in times thankfully long pasted and destroy the spiritual heart of your people.

My delegation appreciates the opportunity afforded to us during this visit to meet and exchange opinions with Christian and Muslim leaders of Tirana's diverse faith communities.

It is very much expected that we can continue to develop mutually beneficial areas of cooperation and partner with the City in Tirana in this regard.

Mr Mayor, honourable Deputy Mayors, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I extend to you the blessing of the Holy Father, His Holiness Pope Francis, and my own prayers to you Mr Mayor and the citizens of Tirana. Thank you.