



Christmas Message from His Majesty the King

24 December 2020

Good evening.

I'm speaking to you on a Christmas Eve when we are living through truly exceptional circumstances due to the pandemic.

Many of you were not able to gather tonight as you would have liked because of the healthcare restrictions, and in thousands of homes there is an empty place that can never be filled due to the loved ones who have been lost, whom I want to remember now with sadness and respect. A memory which fills all our hearts with very deep feelings. And right now, many of you are fighting the disease or its after-effects, at home, in hospitals, or in care homes. To all of you especially, I send my encouragement and care today.

2020 has been a tough and difficult year. The virus swept over our lives, bringing suffering, grief and fear; it changed how we live and work, and has seriously affected our economy, closing down or even destroying many companies.

Many people and families are experiencing the distress of unemployment or job insecurity; the anxiety of struggling to cover their basic needs; or the sadness of having to give up a business they had dedicated their lives to. For all these reasons, it's natural and understandable that feelings of despondency and distrust are so widespread.

But the response to a crisis as severe as this one cannot come from a place of discouragement and distrust. The situation is serious. But even so, we must face the future with determination and belief in ourselves, in what we can do if we join forces, with hope and determination; with confidence in our country and our democratic way of life.

We have reason to do so, because over recent decades, we have faced other serious difficulties, and we have always overcome them. And this situation we're going through won't be any different, because neither the virus nor the economic crisis is going to defeat us.

In the healthcare situation, it's clear that we will beat this disease thanks to science and research. The new vaccines and viral treatments that have been developed are already bringing hope to the world. But meanwhile, we still have a lot to do.

Individual responsibility is still essential, and it is an effective weapon in the fight against the virus. That's why it's so important to keep taking precautions and not let our guard down.

Once again, we must thank healthcare workers for their huge efforts, their extraordinary professionalism and their great kindness to their patients. They faced down the first wave of the virus in extreme situations, even when some of our hospitals were overwhelmed. Today they continue to lead this fight, despite the huge emotional and physical strain on them. We ask them to please keep their spirits and their strength up so they can continue to look after everyone's health.

The other major problem and challenge is the economic crisis, and especially, to stop it becoming a social crisis. Every person matters a great deal. That's why people and families must be our main concern. Especially our young people; their unemployment level is very high, and we cannot let them be the losers in this situation. Our youngsters deserve the best education for them to grow personally and professionally, and be able to carry out their projects. Spain can't afford to have a lost generation.

Protecting the most vulnerable and combating the inequities that the pandemic has created or increased is a matter of human dignity for all of us who form a single political community. But it will also be essential to recover our economy.

And to do that, it is vital that we strengthen the fabric of business, production, industry, and services. Recognition and support for our companies, protection for our self-employed workers and business owners, so hard-hit over these months, will be essential for creating the jobs that Spain needs so badly. So we need to consolidate the foundations that help us look to the future, give us economic stability and confidence, encourage investment and create jobs.

The challenges facing our healthcare, our economy and our society may be enormous, but they are not impossible. Beating these challenges is the great national objective that has to unite us all, where we come together in commitment and mutual obligation; to ourselves, to others, and to our country.

And this requires a great collective effort, a great effort in which we all keep doing our best according to our responsibilities and our abilities.

For this great national effort, first of all, we have what's most important: people. With the example of the thousands of citizens who have done their jobs out of service to others, who have given of themselves over these last few months in self-sacrifice, commitment, and great generosity. People who spur us on to meet every challenge, and who make us justly proud.

Over this time, the Queen and I have seen this for ourselves, in person. In the countryside and by the sea, in villages and cities, in markets and factories, we have seen the courage and resolution of this country. We have felt the pulse of our society, which despite everything has kept Spain standing.

Both of us hold in our memories the living image of thousands of citizens representing a society which has felt more united than ever in its fight and endurance against such a difficult situation; a society with the effective organisations and solidarity that ensure nobody feels alone or abandoned; a society which has come through these hard months with integrity, responsibility, and resolve.

So we know we can count on a strong society as well as a robust State. Throughout this time, basic public services and companies in essential industries have kept running smoothly, making use of all the resources within their reach. The pandemic has revealed aspects of ourselves that need to be improved and reinforced, but it has also shown us our strengths as a modern State. We have seen it, for example, in the effectiveness and dedication of our armed forces, our security forces, civil protection and emergency services, and many more public servants, who have shown by their service that they are an essential part of our society.

And Europe is also very important for dealing with this crisis. We can count on the European Union, which is firmly committed to economic sustainability and recovery in the face of this pandemic. The European Union offers us a historic opportunity to move forward and make progress; to begin a new era in which Spain joins in a shared project to modernise our economy; to adapt our structures of production to the new industrial, technological and environmental revolution we are living through. And to assume, with ambition and cohesion, our collective role as members of the EU in the wider world.

And above all, we can count on our system of democratic unity. In a time when the pandemic and its economic and social consequences are causing such uncertainty, our Constitution guarantee our way of understanding life, our vision of society and human beings; their dignity, their rights and freedoms. A Constitution which we all have the duty to respect; it is now the foundation of our social and political cohesion, and in our history it represents a triumph of and for democracy and freedom.

Let's not forget that the advances and progress made in democracy are the result of Spaniards coming together and forming a pact after a long period of confrontation and division. They are the result of wanting to look towards the future together, united in democratic values; united in a spirit which always strives for integration, in respect for plurality and differences, and in a capacity for dialogue and consensus. These are principles which remain just as relevant over time.

And along with our democratic principles and compliance with the law, we also need to preserve the ethical values which are at the roots of our society.

In 2014, in my Proclamation to Parliament, I referred to the moral and ethical principles which citizens demand from us. Principles which all of us must follow, without exceptions, and which outweigh all other considerations, even personal or family ties.

This is how I have always understood it, in line with my convictions and how I understand my responsibilities as Head of State, and with the spirit of renewal which has inspired my reign from the first day.

I have always thought that Spain is an extraordinary country, with enormous cultural wealth and diversity, built over the centuries thanks to the hard work of many generations of Spaniards, and with a long history which at one time was also the history of the world.

We are not a people who give up or resign themselves to a bad situation. It will not be easy to overcome this situation, as all of you know only too well. But I am sure we are going to make it through this. With hard work, unity, and solidarity, Spain will pull through. With everyone and for everyone. And as King, I will be with everyone and for everyone, not only because this is my duty and my conviction, but also because it is my commitment to all of you: to Spain.

It will not be difficult for 2021 to be a better year than 2020. As far as possible, we will eventually get back to normal at work, at school, in the street and the neighbourhood; in shops, markets, and bars; in cinemas and theatres; in the everyday life that shapes the character of a society like ours.

This is what we all want. And in the confidence that this will happen, the Queen, the Princess of Asturias, Princess Sofía and I give you our most sincere thanks for all the messages of love and support you have sent us this year, and we wish you a Happy Christmas and all the best for a 2021 especially full of hope.

Eguberri on, Bon Nadal and Boas festas.