

BISHOPS' CONFERENCE OF SLOVENIA

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Address by Chairman of the Bishops' Conference, Bishop Andrej Glavan on the occasion of laying the foundation stone for the new mosque in Ljubljana

Esteemed Mufti Dr. Nedžad Grabus,
Esteemed representatives of the Church and other religious communities,
Esteemed representatives of the state and civil society,
Distinguished guests,
Esteemed Muslim believers,
Dear friends,

On behalf of Catholics in the Republic of Slovenia it is a real pleasure to be present today at this historical event to lay the foundation stone for the new mosque and cultural centre in Ljubljana. On this occasion we are realizing the birth of the very thing we have in reality been experiencing at the relational level between our two religious communities. As you are no doubt well aware, the significance of laying the foundation stone of the new mosque and cultural centre which is to be built on this spot is of a dual nature: first, Muslims will get their place for prayer and culture, and second you as a religious community will acquire, on a symbolic level, a permanent residence in Slovenia.

In the Slovenian Church we are convinced that every religious community is entitled to the adequate space required for liturgy and prayer, where believers are able to turn to their God. This is a fundamental religious and human right that should be provided by the state to its religious citizens by not merely allowing them religious freedom, but also by actively supporting and protecting such freedom. Where people engage in prayer and form relationships, they create a space for dialogue, friendly relations, and peaceful mutual co-existence. For that reason we believe that your place of prayer will further contribute towards a thriving and peaceful cohabitation in our society and in our state.

As a nation, we Slovenians have good reason to rejoice that you, the Muslims in Slovenia, will acquire a religious and cultural centre, since the presence of different religions and free professing of faith in all of its dimensions is an important indicator of democracy and tolerance. The mosque that is to be built here shall serve as a place of faith and culture, and at the same time it will also represent a symbol of mutual respect, dialogue, cooperation, and friendship for future generations.

Dear Muslim friends, as you start the construction of your spiritual home and thereby acquiring a new status in our society on the symbolic level, I wish to congratulate you with all my heart on behalf of Catholics everywhere.

Msgr. Andrej Glavan
Bishop of Novo mesto and
Apostolic Administrator of
Archdiocese of Ljubljana
Chairman of *Bishops'*
Conference of Slovenia