

Address by President of Latvia Egils Levits at the main Sacred Mass of the Festival of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary

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[Egils Levits](#)



Residents of Aglona, Pilgrims,

Dear friends,

I

My sincerest greetings to you at this beautiful and inspiring Aglona Festival.

It is a great pleasure for me to be here with you, last night at the people's walk of the cross and today — at the Sacred Mass.

II

I am certain that each and every one of us truly appreciates the opportunity to be here in Aglona, to be together in person and meet with each other in lively, personal conversation.

Every year we are moved by the many pilgrims that line roads throughout Latvia on their way to Aglona to celebrate. They inspire us to take a moment out of our daily lives and routines to think about our true values and priorities.

Being here in the Basilica Square we discover how important and necessary each and every one of us is to Latvia. We are not left all alone and forgotten.

There are a great many helpful, kind and loving people who, unobserved, take care of others on a daily basis and promote our general well-being. Our Latvia is rich with kind people, and many of them can be met here in Aglona over the course of these couple of days.

I believe that meeting at the Aglona Festival lets all of us reinforce our faith and gain inspiration take with us in our daily lives, reminiscing about the losses and falls we have endured, as well as the success and joy we have experienced.

Let us keep the positive thoughts with us as long as possible and spread the good in our lives and work.

III

Dear friends,

The COVID-19 pandemic has made the world remember the true value of things often taken for granted.

It turns out that, after all, there is no substitute for being together with your loved ones, meeting in person and celebrating together. Only when this option is taken from us or restricted do we really understand how important real life is to us, without distancing and the agency of screens.

This time teaches us solidarity, reminding us how much we actually depend on one another. At decisive moments our nation is unified, and today, too, no one will be forgotten, no one will be left behind. Safety precautions are necessary not only for us to protect ourselves and not contract the virus, but also to take care of those around us and not endanger their health and life.

I sincerely thank everyone who has gotten the vaccine. Thank you to everyone who has urged or helped someone get vaccinated.

I would like to remind you that our decisions affect not only our own health and life, but also that of many other people. We are responsible for overcoming this crisis together.

Thank you to the clergy for urging their parishes to vaccinate and for setting an example and reminding the faithful that vaccination means truly caring for the well-being of others and one's neighbour.

IV

Mr Bulis, Your Excellency,

30 years ago you became bishop at the Liepāja diocese. Today, you have already spent 25 years serving as bishop at the Rēzekne – Aglona diocese.

Your sacred service has fostered abundant results and strengthened many a soul in their faith.

I have had the opportunity to get to know you, and I highly appreciate your patriotism to Latvia and Latgale.

You have done an immense amount of work to promote sincere friendship among various nationalities and faiths in our land, to promote maintaining the Latgalian identity and to enhance Latvianism in our nation and loyalty to Latvia.

You are an opinion leader who is listened to and whose words are taken to heart; you have always used your influence honestly for the good of Latvia and its people.

Today, I would like to especially congratulate you and present you with the President's Certificate of Merit and the Presidential Medal of Honour!

I wish you good health, and many more inspiring years of service and good deeds for Latvia!

V

Dear audience,

This year we mark a century since having established diplomatic relations between Latvia and the Holy See. To commemorate this

important anniversary, in May I had the honour of meeting with His Holiness Pope Francis.

During our meeting His Holiness expressed genuine interest in the situation in Latvia, highly appreciated our ecumenical traditions and the friendly collaboration among various religious creeds. He remembered well his visit to Latvia and especially his visit here in Aglona in the autumn of 2018.

However, the relationship between the Catholic church and our people dates back much longer than just one century. The Roman religion has shaped our belonging to the European cultural space and affected our national identity, especially here in Latgale.

VI

Throughout the ages, the Catholic Church and its clergy have always stood with their people. Together with their people, clergymen have walked roads to Golgatha, and they have suffered for their faith and for Latvia.

The service motto once coined by Bishop Boļeslavs Sloškāns "Sacrifice for brothers" aptly and fully reflects the experience endured by our clergy together with their people under two totalitarian regimes.

This year we mark 80 years since the perpetration of the cruelest, most inhuman crimes in our land with our people by the Soviet and Nazi occupation regimes. During that dark time, the clergy did not stay silent as to injustices, they inspired others to keep their faith and remained morally unbroken in their creed.

Today, after the Sacred Mass, I will visit Višķi to honour priest and martyr Vladislavs Litaunieks at his final resting place in the garden of Višķi Church. I will thank him and his brothers and sisters in fate who remained faithful to their service and never betrayed those closest to them.

VII

Ladies and gentlemen,

At the end of the Festival, I would like to sincerely thank all our clergy for their service to our nation, bringing peace, forgiveness and compassion to people's hearts and minds.

A sincere thank you to everyone whose volunteer work and good thoughts made this festival possible.

Thank you to everyone who was here in Aglona this year, and will take with them the resolution to promote goodness so that all people of Latvia can be safe in their daily lives and become morally richer.

Let us all unite today in a common prayer for our land, our state and our people!

God Bless Latvia!

<https://www.president.lv/en/article/address-president-latvia-egils-levits-main-sacred-mass-festival-assumption-blessed-virgin-mary>