

Speech by the President of the Government of Catalonia on the occasion of Sant Jordi 2016

Welcome,

It is very much a privilege to address myself to you and convey my most cordial and sincere greeting on the occasion of Sant Jordi, especially to all the Jordis and Jordines, whom today celebrate their Saint's day.

This is one of the most anticipated days of the year in Catalonia and one of the most beautiful and enjoyable to experience, to be a part of and to let ourselves be carried away by the magic that stems from the books and roses.

Without any doubt, the feeling is complicated to describe and I invite everyone – people from here and from abroad– to enjoy it in person.

Walk around, wander, ask for authors or books, read the covers or choose the rose that will be given to your loved one. These are some of the activities on a day like today. It is a day that comes from within, we live and feel it, it is not imposed on us, and given its virtues it should be present beyond Catalonia. If we have been sharing our patron saint with many countries –neighbours close and afar– we can also feel very proud of being the place of origin of a festivity that has been internationalized and is now being celebrated in many parts of the world.

This year we commemorate the Year of Llull, as it coincides with the seventh centenary of the death of the Palma-born writer and philosopher, one of the greatest advocates of culture and thought in Europe and probably the most important figure in Catalan culture of all time. We find ourselves, therefore, with the perfect excuse to rediscover one of the principal authors of our history and delve into his Art, learn of the life of the hero Blanquerna or the pilgrim Felix in *Book of Wonders*.

Sant Jordi also serves to vindicate the Catalan language and culture, to having our voices heard and respected in light of the fierce dragons –and there are many of them– that want us in their grasps. Our language clearly still needs protection, but this protection must come from arguments, proposals, dialogue, understanding and a regard for everyone.

The essence of a day like today is the one of sharing, the one of participating in the collective joy that comes from the combination of reading, the scent and colour of

roses and the purest of feelings that each of us carry within. Few countries in the world are as fortunate of having a day like today, where everyone is welcome, well received and that represents us a nation in the eyes of the world. We must know how to seize this opportunity and show the way we are, far from the stereotypes or clichés that have been contrived in bad faith.

I also believe that we must take into consideration those who are going through difficult times, both those who are close to us and those who have come here to flee from wars or unjust circumstances. Solidarity is a value that we must also apply today more than ever towards the people who are calling on the gates of Europe in search of decent life. It would be good if all of us together, as far as our possibilities allow us, contribute to it.

Take full advantage of this day and revel in it with joy, civility and a respect for everyone.

Have a very happy Sant Jordi!

Long live Catalonia!

Barcelona, April 23, 2016