

Honorable representatives of the Maximilian Kolbe Foundation,

Dear friends, family, and fellow sufferers,

Ladies and gentlemen,

I stand before you today with a mixture of feelings that I can hardly describe in words: with deep humility, with a burden of memories, and with immense gratitude. This award, which bears the name of the great saint of human sacrifice, Maximilian Kolbe, is not just a medal to me. It is much more. It is a light that pierces the darkness of oblivion.

When I hear the name Maximilian Kolbe, I am reminded of Auschwitz. And when I think of Auschwitz, I cannot help but think of my Spaç, of our Spaç. Of course, the places, times, and circumstances were different, but the goal of those systems was the same: to strip us of our humanity, to turn us into numbers without names or histories, and to take from us the most precious thing: our soul.

I am not here today as an individual. I am here as a voice. The voice of those 16 years of my life that were left behind the barbed wires, in the dark galleries, and in the cold rooms of Spaç. I am the voice of my friends who did not live to see this day, but who died with the name of Albania and God on their lips. I am the voice of the fathers, brothers, and sons whose bones have not yet been found.

In that hell, they took our freedom, they tortured our bodies, they denied us food and sunlight. But there was something they could never take from us: faith. Faith in God, faith in man, and the faith that truth and justice, however late, would triumph. In the most inhumane conditions, we found the greatest humanity in each other: we shared a bite of bread, a warm word, a silent hope. That was our resistance.

Therefore, I do not accept this great honor for myself alone.

I accept this award and dedicate it to:

- **All the martyrs** who did not survive the prisons and camps of the dictatorship. This award belongs to them more than it does to me.
- **All my fellow sufferers**, wherever they are today, who bear the same wounds on their bodies and in their souls as I do. We are the living witnesses of that history.

- **Our beloved families**, our wives, mothers, and children, who suffered another prison outside the walls—the prison of absence, of fear, and of prejudice—but who never stopped hoping and praying for us.

I want to thank the Maximilian Kolbe Foundation and of them, who prosed my name from the bottom of my heart. By honoring me, you are not just honoring a survivor. You are keeping memory alive. And memory is our strongest weapon against the repetition of history. The new generations must know the price of the freedom they enjoy today. They must know that freedom is not a gift, but a responsibility that must be protected every day.

I have forgiven. I have forgiven my persecutors, not because they deserve it, but because I deserve peace. But forgiveness does not mean forgetting. To forget would be the greatest betrayal to those who sacrificed everything.

God bless their memory!

Thank you!