

**The remarks of President Nishani at the ceremony of the
Sacred Military Constantinian Order of Saint George**

December 2nd, 2013

**Your Royal Highness,
Your Eminence,
Excellencies Ambassadors,
Honourable friends!**

Your visit today undoubtedly represents a special symbolic moment. It is taking place at the moment when Albanians, the descendants of ancient Illyrians who produced the distinguished Emperor Constantine are celebrating the one thousand and seventh hundred anniversary of Edict of Milan (*Edictum Mediolanense*) of tolerance.

Two monotheistic faiths, the Christian and Muslim one coexist for centuries in peace and harmony in our country – two religions distinguished in two separate ritual and doctrinal expressions. The state preserves and safeguards the freedom of conscience and belief as the most precious heritage as it does the freedom to not believe or to freely convert into a different religion. In a certain way, the Albanians so attached to the ecumenical figure of Great Constantine seem to have transformed his dream into a reality.

You, as descendants of the Sacred Military Constantinian Order of Saint George leaders that according to the legend was founded by the Emperor to preserve and safeguard the symbol of faith, you embody a historical tradition in front of which our people who so dearly loves and appreciates history, remains so deeply sensitive.

This sensitivity it's self-explanatory and understandable, especially if we recall the ancient ties connecting the Royal House of Two Sicilies to Albania and Albanians: there were the Drishti Angels (Engjëllorët), the co-fighters of Scanderbeg, those Albanian princes who revitalized in the Sixteenth Century the Order whose leaders you are at the present and the Anjou Princes from whom you originate founded the first Albanian Kingdom during the

Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries. Until the beginning of the Nineteenth Century, the Bourbons of Naples did not cease helping the *Arbëresh* population of Calabria and Sicily and for years maintained under their service the famous Albanian or Macedonian regiment composed by Albanian emigrants from the *Himara* and *Vlora* regions.

There is an old history of friendship among Your Family and the Albanians – a history which is little known, but not forgotten by the Albanian nation. I would like to thank you, Your Highness, Eminence for honouring this memory and this precious moment of reciprocal tolerance, friendship and appreciation between our peoples through your visit!