

Saint George's Day speech 2014 by President Mas

“We offer the world a grand exhibition of Catalan society, actively taking part, incorporating diversity whilst, at the same time, rejoicing in that which brings us together.”

Hello and welcome,

It is with great pleasure that I greet you in wishing everyone a happy Saint George's Day. Especially to those who carry this name. I do not believe I am exaggerating when saying that today is Catalonia's greatest festival. It would be difficult to find one quite like it. As Catalans, we have made the Day of Love to represent a celebration of culture, beauty and harmony. We celebrate the beginning of spring by giving a book, a rose or even both, to the people we love. We walk around the streets stopping at book stalls, finding one another, again and again.

I would encourage everyone to find some time to share with those you love, to go out for a walk and to stop at the stalls that sell books and roses. I would also encourage you to find a little something for yourself, something special and from the heart. The best way to celebrate this festivity is by sharing it and by giving a gift which can be in any measure you can allow yourself, no matter how small or simple it may be: a rose, a book, or even just spending some time with the people who are most near us.

The festivity of Saint George, not unlike our institutions, has a very long history. The Diary of the Government of Catalonia dates it as far back as April 17th 1459, where it began as a public appeal on the streets and was made public so that in the 15th century everyone could celebrate the Day of Saint George. This is what was established by the Catalan Courts, which, incidentally, is one of the most ancient parliaments in the world. Hence, the red rose has been given since the 15th century. The Cross of Saint George also appears repeatedly in this very same Palace of the Government of Catalonia. In addition, the Day of Saint George was also celebrated during the 1714 siege of Barcelona, three hundred years ago. And it was the Commonwealth of Catalonia, celebrating its centenary this year, which began to encourage the festival once again, incorporating the book component at the end of the 1920s.

It is also very pleasing, that the representative element of Saint George's consists in giving, as we offer a little bit of ourselves. This says a lot about our nation, about our way of being and about our way of doing things. The red rose, symbol of our passion and the book, a compendium of our culture. In this sense, we have a passion for culture, and take enjoyment out of sharing. The streets will flow with thousands of people, peacefully, in good harmony and civic in spirits. Thousands of us will take part in all sorts of activities related with today's celebrations. We will offer to the world a grand exhibition of Catalan society, actively taking part, incorporating diversity whilst at the same time rejoicing in that which brings us together. This is how we are and

this is how we like to do things. We have done them this way and will continue do so.

Once again, I would encourage you to experience this beautiful day with all your strength. Furthermore, let us not forget those less fortunate, our thoughts, and the thoughts of all who ensure this day is made special, are with them.

To all of you, I would encourage you not to stay at home, that before you leave the house, hang our flag on the balcony, if you wish. I would encourage you to give a rose, buy books and safeguard Catalan literature, for our authors and our bookshops alike. And if you are able to, share a courtesy with the entities helping those who are less fortunate... and with the students as well! Feel part of such a lively and cheerful nation, which it is and which wants to be.

I wish you all a happy Saint George's Day.

Long live Catalonia!

Palau de la Generalitat, Barcelona, April 23rd 2014