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# Benedict XVI In Israel

A selection of the addresses and homilies by the Holy Father in his visit to Israel.

05/12/2009

*Link to website with video coverage of Papal trip and detailed itinerary*  
**PRAYER OF THE HOLY FATHER BENEDICT XVI AT THE WESTERN WALL Jerusalem**

Tuesday, 12 May 2009

God of all the ages,

on my visit to Jerusalem, the “City of Peace”,

spiritual home to Jews, Christians and Muslims alike,

I bring before you the joys, the hopes and the aspirations,

the trials, the suffering and the pain of all your people throughout the world.

God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob,

hear the cry of the afflicted, the fearful, the bereft;

send your peace upon this Holy Land, upon the Middle East,

upon the entire human family;

stir the hearts of all who call upon your name,

to walk humbly in the path of justice and compassion.

“The Lord is good to those who wait for him,

to the soul that seeks him” (*Lam* 3:25)!

**COURTESY VISIT TO THE TWO  
CHIEF RABBIS OF JERUSALEM  
ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS  
BENEDICT XVI Hechal Shlomo  
Centre - Jerusalem**

Tuesday, 12 May 2009

*Distinguished Rabbis,*

Dear Friends,

I am grateful for the invitation to visit Heichal Shlomo and to meet with you during this trip of mine to the Holy Land as Bishop of Rome. I thank Sephardi Rabbi Shlomo Amar and Ashkenazi Rabbi Yona Metzger for their warm words of welcome and the desire they have expressed to continue strengthening the bonds

of friendship which the Catholic Church and the Chief Rabbinate have labored so diligently to forge over the past decades. Your visits to the Vatican in 2003 and 2005 are a sign of the good will which characterizes our developing relations.

Distinguished Rabbis, I reciprocate by expressing my own respect and esteem for you and your communities. I assure you of my desire to deepen mutual understanding and cooperation between the Holy See, the Chief Rabbinate of Israel and Jewish people throughout the world.

A great source of satisfaction for me since the beginning of my pontificate has been the fruit yielded by the ongoing dialogue between the Delegation of the Holy See's Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews and the Chief Rabbinate of Israel's Delegation for

Relations with the Catholic Church. I wish to thank the members of both delegations for their dedication and hard work in implementing this initiative, so earnestly desired by my esteemed predecessor Pope John Paul II, as he said during the Great Jubilee Year of 2000.

Our encounter today is a most fitting occasion to give thanks to the Almighty for the many blessings which have accompanied the dialogue conducted by the Bilateral Commission, and to look forward with expectation to its future sessions. The willingness of the delegates to discuss openly and patiently not only points of agreement, but also points of difference, has already paved the way to more effective collaboration in public life. Jews and Christians alike are concerned to ensure respect for the sacredness of human life, the centrality of the family, a sound

education for the young, and the freedom of religion and conscience for a healthy society. These themes of dialogue represent only the initial phases of what we trust will be a steady, progressive journey towards an enhanced mutual understanding.

An indication of the potential of this series of meetings is readily seen in our shared concern in the face of moral relativism and the offences it spawns against the dignity of the human person. In approaching the most urgent ethical questions of our day, our two communities are challenged to engage people of good will at the level of reason, while simultaneously pointing to the religious foundations which best sustain lasting moral values. May the dialogue that has begun continue to generate ideas on how Christians and Jews can work together to heighten society's appreciation of the distinctive contribution of our

religious and ethical traditions. Here in Israel, given that Christians constitute only a small portion of the total population, they particularly value opportunities for dialogue with their Jewish neighbors.

Trust is undeniably an essential element of effective dialogue. Today I have the opportunity to repeat that the Catholic Church is irrevocably committed to the path chosen at the Second Vatican Council for a genuine and lasting reconciliation between Christians and Jews. As the Declaration Nostra Aetate makes clear, the Church continues to value the spiritual patrimony common to Christians and Jews and desires an ever deeper mutual understanding and respect through biblical and theological studies as well as fraternal dialogues. May the seven Bilateral Commission meetings which have already taken place between the Holy See and the Chief

Rabbinate stand as evidence! I am thus grateful for your reciprocal assurance that the relationship between the Catholic Church and the Chief Rabbinate will continue to grow in respect and understanding in the future.

My friends, I express again my deep appreciation for the welcome you have extended to me today. I am confident that our friendship will continue to set an example of trust in dialogue for Jews and Christians throughout the world. Looking at the accomplishments achieved thus far, and drawing our inspiration from the Holy Scriptures, we can confidently look forward to even stronger cooperation between our communities – together with all people of good will – in decrying hatred and oppression throughout the world. I pray that God, who searches our hearts and knows our thoughts (Ps 139:23), will continue to



enlighten us with his wisdom, so that we may follow his commandments to love him with all our heart, soul and strength (cf. Dt 6:5), and to love our neighbor as ourselves (Lev 19:18). Thank you.

**SHORT VISIT TO THE CO-  
CATHEDRAL OF THE LATIN  
ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS  
BENEDICT XVI Jerusalem**

Tuesday, 12 May 2009

*Your Beatitude,*

I thank you for your words of welcome. I also greet the Patriarch Emeritus and I assure you both of my fraternal good wishes and prayers.

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, I am happy to be here with you today in this Co-Cathedral, where the Christian community in Jerusalem continues to gather, as it has been doing for centuries, ever since the

earliest days of the Church. Here in this city, Peter first preached the Good News of Jesus Christ on the day of Pentecost, when about three thousand souls were added to the number of the disciples. Here too the first Christians “devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers” (Acts 2:42). From Jerusalem, the Gospel has gone out “to all the earth ... to the ends of the world” (Ps 19:4), yet all the time, the Church’s missionary effort has been sustained by the prayers of the faithful, gathered around the altar of the Lord, invoking the mighty power of the Holy Spirit upon the work of preaching.

Above all, it is the prayers of those whose vocation, in the words of Saint Thérèse of Lisieux, is to be “love, deep down in the heart of the Church” (*Letter to Sister Marie of the Sacred Heart*) that sustains the work

of evangelization. I want to express a particular word of appreciation for the hidden apostolate of the contemplatives who are present here, and to thank you for your generous dedication to lives of prayer and self-denial. I am especially grateful for the prayers you offer for my universal ministry, and I ask you to continue to commend to the Lord my work of service to God's people all over the world. In the words of the Psalmist, I ask you also to "pray for the peace of Jerusalem" (*Ps 122:6*), to pray without ceasing for an end to the conflict that has brought so much suffering to the peoples of this land. And now, I give you my blessing.

VISIT TO THE CARITAS CHILDREN'S  
HOSPITAL ***ADDRESS OF HIS  
HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI***  
*Bethlehem*

Wednesday, 13 May 2009

*Dear Friends,*

I affectionately greet you in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ “who died, was raised from the dead, and now sits at the right hand of God to intercede for us” (cf. Rom 8:34). May your faith in his Resurrection and his promise of new life through Baptism fill your hearts with joy in this Easter season!

I am grateful for the warm welcome extended to me on your behalf by Father Michael Schweiger, President of the KinderhilfeAssociation, Mr. Ernesto Langensand, who is completing his term as Chief Administrator of the Caritas Baby Hospital, and Mother Erika Nobs, Superior of this local community of the Elizabettine Franciscan Sisters of Padua. I also cordially greet Archbishop Robert Zollitsch and Bishop Kurt Koch, representing respectively the German and Swiss

Episcopal Conferences, which have advanced the mission of Caritas Baby Hospital by their generous financial assistance.

God has blessed me with this opportunity to express my appreciation to the administrators, physicians, nurses and staff of Caritas Baby Hospital for the invaluable service they have offered – and continue to offer – to children in the Bethlehem region and throughout Palestine for over fifty years. Father Ernst Schnydrig founded this facility upon the conviction that innocent children deserve a safe haven from all that can harm them in times and places of conflict. Thanks to the dedication of Children's Relief Bethlehem, this institution has remained a quiet oasis for the most vulnerable, and has shone as a beacon of hope that love can prevail over hatred and peace over violence.

To the young patients and the members of their families who benefit from your care, I wish simply to say: “the Pope is with you”! Today he is with you in person, but he spiritually accompanies you each and every day in his thoughts and prayers, asking the Almighty to watch over you with his tender care.

Father Schnydrig described this place as “one of the smaller bridges built for peace”. Now, having grown from fourteen cots to eighty beds, and caring for the needs of thousands of children each year, this bridge is no longer small! It brings together people of different origins, languages and religions, in the name of the Reign of God, the Kingdom of Peace (cf. Rom14:17). I heartily encourage you to persevere in your mission of showing charity to all the sick, the poor and the weak.

On this Feast of Our Lady of Fatima, I would like to conclude by invoking Mary's intercession as I impart my Apostolic Blessing to the children and all of you. Let us pray:

*Mary, Health of the Sick, Refuge of Sinners, Mother of the Redeemer: we join the many generations who have called you "Blessed". Listen to your children as we call upon your name. You promised the three children of Fatima that "in the end, my Immaculate Heart will triumph". May it be so! May love triumph over hatred, solidarity over division, and peace over every form of violence! May the love you bore your Son teach us to love God with all our heart, strength and soul. May the Almighty show us his mercy, strengthen us with his power, and fill us with every good thing (cf. Lk 1:46-56). We ask your Son Jesus to bless these children and all children who suffer throughout the world. May they receive health of*

*body, strength of mind, and peace of soul. But most of all, may they know that they are loved with a love which knows no bounds or limits: the love of Christ which surpasses all understanding (cf. Eph 3:19). Amen.*

**FAREWELL CEREMONY ADDRESS  
OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI**

"Ben Gurion" International Airport -  
Tel Aviv

Friday, 15 May 2009

Mr President,

Mr Prime Minister,

Your Excellencies, Ladies and  
Gentlemen,

As I prepare to return to Rome, may I share with you some of the powerful impressions that my pilgrimage to the Holy Land has left with me. I had fruitful discussions with the civil authorities both in Israel and in the



Palestinian Territories, and I witnessed the great efforts that both governments are making to secure people's well-being. I have met the leaders of the Catholic Church in the Holy Land, and I rejoice to see the way that they work together in caring for the Lord's flock. I have also had the opportunity to meet the leaders of the various Christian Churches and ecclesial communities as well as the leaders of other religions in the Holy Land. This land is indeed a fertile ground for ecumenism and inter-religious dialogue, and I pray that the rich variety of religious witness in the region will bear fruit in a growing mutual understanding and respect.

Mr President, you and I planted an olive tree at your residence on the day that I arrived in Israel. The olive tree, as you know, is an image used by Saint Paul to describe the very close relations between Christians

and Jews. Paul describes in his Letter to the Romans how the Church of the Gentiles is like a wild olive shoot, grafted onto the cultivated olive tree which is the People of the Covenant (cf. 11:17-24). We are nourished from the same spiritual roots. We meet as brothers, brothers who at times in our history have had a tense relationship, but now are firmly committed to building bridges of lasting friendship.

The ceremony at the Presidential Palace was followed by one of the most solemn moments of my stay in Israel – my visit to the Holocaust Memorial at Yad Vashem, where I paid my respects to the victims of the Shoah. There also I met some of the survivors. Those deeply moving encounters brought back memories of my visit three years ago to the death camp at Auschwitz, where so many Jews - mothers, fathers, husbands, wives, sons, daughters,

brothers, sisters, friends - were brutally exterminated under a godless regime that propagated an ideology of anti-Semitism and hatred. That appalling chapter of history must never be forgotten or denied. On the contrary, those dark memories should strengthen our determination to draw closer to one another as branches of the same olive tree, nourished from the same roots and united in brotherly love.

Mr President, I thank you for the warmth of your hospitality, which is greatly appreciated, and I wish to put on record that I came to visit this country as a friend of the Israelis, just as I am a friend of the Palestinian people. Friends enjoy spending time in one another's company, and they find it deeply distressing to see one another suffer. No friend of the Israelis and the Palestinians can fail to be saddened by the continuing tension between

your two peoples. No friend can fail to weep at the suffering and loss of life that both peoples have endured over the last six decades. Allow me to make this appeal to all the people of these lands: No more bloodshed! No more fighting! No more terrorism! No more war! Instead let us break the vicious circle of violence. Let there be lasting peace based on justice, let there be genuine reconciliation and healing. Let it be universally recognized that the State of Israel has the right to exist, and to enjoy peace and security within internationally agreed borders. Let it be likewise acknowledged that the Palestinian people have a right to a sovereign independent homeland, to live with dignity and to travel freely. Let the two-state solution become a reality, not remain a dream. And let peace spread outwards from these lands, let them serve as a “light to the nations” (Is 42:6), bringing hope to

the many other regions that are affected by conflict.

One of the saddest sights for me during my visit to these lands was the wall. As I passed alongside it, I prayed for a future in which the peoples of the Holy Land can live together in peace and harmony without the need for such instruments of security and separation, but rather respecting and trusting one another, and renouncing all forms of violence and aggression. Mr President, I know how hard it will be to achieve that goal. I know how difficult is your task, and that of the Palestinian Authority. But I assure you that my prayers and the prayers of Catholics across the world are with you as you continue your efforts to build a just and lasting peace in this region.

It remains only for me to express my heartfelt thanks to all who have

contributed in so many ways to my visit. To the Government, the organizers, the volunteers, the media, to all who have provided hospitality to me and those accompanying me, I am deeply grateful. Please be assured that you are remembered with affection in my prayers. To all of you, I say: thank you, and may God be with you. Shalom!

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