



The Holy See

PILGRIMAGE TO THE HOLY LAND ON THE OCCASION OF THE 50th ANNIVERSARY
OF THE MEETING BETWEEN POPE PAUL VI AND PATRIARCH ATHENAGORAS IN JERUSALEM

(24-26 MAY 2014)

COURTESY VISIT TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE STATE OF ISRAEL

ADDRESS OF POPE FRANCIS

Presidential Residence (Jerusalem)

Monday, 26 May 2014

Video

I thank you, Mr President, for your words of greeting and your welcome. With a touch of imagination, I would like to invent a new Beatitude, one I can apply to myself today: "Blessed is he who enters the house of a wise and good man". I feel blessed. Thank you most sincerely.

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*Mr President,
Your Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,*

I am grateful to you, Mr President, for your kind and sage words of greeting and your warm welcome. I am happy to be able to meet you once again, this time in Jerusalem, the city which preserves the Holy Places dear to the three great religions which worship the God who called Abraham. The Holy Places are not monuments or museums for tourists, but places where communities of believers daily express their faith and culture, and carry out their works of charity.

Precisely for this reason, their sacred character must be perpetually maintained and protection given not only to the legacy of the past but also to all those who visit these sites today and to those who will visit them in the future. May Jerusalem be truly the City of Peace! May her identity and her sacred character, her universal religious and cultural significance shine forth as a treasure for all mankind! How good it is when pilgrims and residents enjoy free access to the Holy Places and can freely take part in religious celebrations.

Mr President, you are known as a man of peace and a peacemaker. I appreciate and admire the approach you have taken. Peacemaking demands first and foremost respect for the dignity and freedom of every human person, which Jews, Christians and Muslims alike believe to be created by God and destined to eternal life. This shared conviction enables us resolutely to pursue peaceful solutions to every controversy and conflict. Here I renew my plea that all parties avoid initiatives and actions which contradict their stated determination to reach a true agreement and that they tirelessly work for peace, with decisiveness and tenacity.

There is likewise need for a firm rejection of all that is opposed to the cultivation of peace and respectful relations between Jews, Christians and Muslims. We think, for example, of recourse to violence and terrorism, all forms of discrimination on the basis of race or religion, attempts to impose one's own point of view at the expense of the rights of others, anti-Semitism in all its possible expressions, and signs of intolerance directed against individuals or places of worship, be they Jewish, Christian or Muslim.

A variety of Christian communities live and work in the State of Israel. They are an integral part of society and participate fully in its civic, political and cultural affairs. Christians wish, as such, to contribute to the common good and the growth of peace; they wish to do so as full-fledged citizens who reject extremism in all its forms and are committed to fostering reconciliation and harmony.

The presence of these communities and respect for their rights – as for the rights of all other religious groups and all minorities – are the guarantee of a healthy pluralism and proof of the vitality of democratic values as they are authentically embodied in the daily life and workings of the State.

Mr President, you know that I pray for you and I know that you are praying for me, and I assure you of my continued prayers for the institutions and the citizens of the State of Israel. I likewise assure you of my constant prayer for the attainment of peace and all the inestimable goods which accompany it: security, tranquillity, prosperity and - the most beautiful of all - fraternity. Finally, my thoughts turn to all those afflicted by the continuing crises in the Middle East. I pray that their sufferings may soon be alleviated by an honourable resolution of hostilities. Peace be upon Israel and the entire Middle East! *Shalom!*

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