



The Holy See

PILGRIMAGE
OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI
TO THE HOLY LAND
(8-15 MAY 2009)

COURTESY VISIT TO THE GRAN MUFTI

ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI

*Mount of the Temple - Jerusalem
Tuesday, 12 May 2009*

Dear Muslim Friends,

As-salámu 'aláikum! Peace upon you!

I cordially thank the Grand Mufti, Muhammad Ahmad Hussein, together with the Director of the Jerusalem Islamic Waqf, Sheikh Mohammed Azzam al-Khatib al-Tamimi, and the Head of the Awquaf Council, Sheikh Abdel Azim Salhab, for the welcome they have extended to me on your behalf. I am deeply grateful for the invitation to visit this sacred place, and I willingly pay my respects to you and the leaders of the Islamic community in Jerusalem.

The Dome of the Rock draws our hearts and minds to reflect upon the mystery of creation and the faith of Abraham. Here the paths of the world's three great monotheistic religions meet, reminding us what they share in common. Each believes in One God, creator and ruler of all. Each recognizes Abraham as a forefather, a man of faith upon whom God bestowed a special blessing. Each has gained a large following throughout the centuries and inspired a rich spiritual, intellectual and cultural patrimony.

In a world sadly torn by divisions, this sacred place serves as a stimulus, and also challenges men and women of goodwill to work to overcome misunderstandings and conflicts of the past and to set

out on the path of a sincere dialogue aimed at building a world of justice and peace for coming generations.

Since the teachings of religious traditions ultimately concern the reality of God, the meaning of life, and the common destiny of mankind – that is to say, all that is most sacred and dear to us – there may be a temptation to engage in such dialogue with reluctance or ambivalence about its possibilities for success. Yet we can begin with the belief that the One God is the infinite source of justice and mercy, since in him the two exist in perfect unity. Those who confess his name are entrusted with the task of striving tirelessly for righteousness while imitating his forgiveness, for both are intrinsically oriented to the peaceful and harmonious coexistence of the human family.

For this reason, it is paramount that those who adore the One God should show themselves to be both grounded in and directed towards the unity of the entire human family. In other words, fidelity to the One God, the Creator, the Most High, leads to the recognition that human beings are fundamentally interrelated, since all owe their very existence to a single source and are pointed towards a common goal. Imprinted with the indelible image of the divine, they are called to play an active role in mending divisions and promoting human solidarity.

This places a grave responsibility upon us. Those who honor the One God believe that he will hold human beings accountable for their actions. Christians assert that the divine gifts of reason and freedom stand at the basis of this accountability. Reason opens the mind to grasp the shared nature and common destiny of the human family, while freedom moves the heart to accept the other and serve him in charity. Undivided love for the One God and charity towards ones neighbor thus become the fulcrum around which all else turns. This is why we work untiringly to safeguard human hearts from hatred, anger or vengeance.

Dear friends, I have come to Jerusalem on a journey of faith. I thank God for this occasion to meet you as the Bishop of Rome and Successor of the Apostle Peter, but also as a child of Abraham, by whom “all the families of the earth find blessing” (Gen 12:3; cf. Rom 4:16-17). I assure you of the Church’s ardent desire to cooperate for the well-being of the human family. She firmly believes that the fulfillment of the promise made to Abraham is universal in scope, embracing all men and women regardless of provenance or social status. As Muslims and Christians further the respectful dialogue they have already begun, I pray that they will explore how the Oneness of God is inextricably tied to the unity of the human family. In submitting to his loving plan for creation, in studying the law inscribed in the cosmos and implanted in the human heart, in reflecting upon the mysterious gift of God’s self-revelation, may all his followers continue to keep their gaze fixed on his absolute goodness, never losing sight of the way it is reflected in the faces of others.

With these thoughts, I humbly ask the Almighty to grant you peace and to bless all the beloved people of this region. May we strive to live in a spirit of harmony and cooperation, bearing witness to the One God by generously serving one another. Thank you!

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