



The Holy See

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

VISIT TO THE CARITAS BABY 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 Kinderhilfe Association, 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 Elizabethine 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. Rom 14:17). 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.