



The Holy See

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

***INTERVIEW OF THE HOLY FATHER BENEDICT XVI
DURING THE FLIGHT FROM THE HOLY LAND TO ROME***

Papal Flight
Friday, 15 May 2009

Dear Friends,

Thank you for your work. I can imagine how difficult it must have been in the midst of so many problems, multiple transfers, etc. and I want to thank you for accepting all these inconveniences in order to tell the world about this pilgrimage, thereby inviting others to go on pilgrimage to these Holy Places.

Since I already made a brief summary of my journey in my speech at the airport, I do not wish to add much. I could mention many, many more details: the moving descent to the most profound spot on earth, at the River Jordan, which for us is also a symbol of the descent of God, of the descent of Christ to the deepest points of human existence.

I could mention the Upper Room, in which the Lord gave us the Eucharist, in which Pentecost, the descent of the Holy Spirit, took place; the Holy Sepulchre too, and many other impressions, but it seems to me that this is not the moment to reflect on them.

Yet perhaps I could make a few brief comments on them. There are three fundamental impressions: the first is that I found everywhere, in every context, Muslim, Christian and Jewish, a determined readiness for interreligious dialogue, for encounter and collaboration among the

religions. And it is important that everyone see this not only as an action let us say inspired by political motives in the given situation but as a fruit of the very core of faith. Because believing in one God who has created us all, the Father of us all, believing in this God who created humanity as a family, believing that God is love and wants love to be the dominant force in the world, implies this encounter, this need for an encounter, for dialogue, for collaboration as a requirement of faith itself.

The second point: I also found a very encouraging ecumenical atmosphere. We had many meetings with the Orthodox world in great cordiality; I was also able to speak to a representative of the Anglican Church and two Lutheran representatives and it is clear that this atmosphere of the Holy Land itself also encourages ecumenism.

And the third point: there are enormous difficulties as we know, as we have seen and heard. But I also saw that there is a deep desire for peace on the part of all. The problems are more visible and we must not conceal them: they exist and need clarification. However, the common desire for peace, for brotherhood, is not so visible and it seems to me that we should also talk about this, and encourage in everyone the desire to find solutions to these problems that are certainly far from simple.

I came as a pilgrim of peace. Pilgrimage is an essential element of many religions and also of Islam, of the Jewish religion and of Christianity. It is also the image of our existence that is moving forward towards God and hence towards the communion of humanity.

I came as a pilgrim and I hope that many will follow in my footsteps and by so doing encourage the unity of the people of this Holy Land and in turn become their messenger of peace. Thank you!

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