



The Holy See

JUBILEE PILGRIMAGE
OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II
TO THE HOLY LAND (MARCH 20-26, 2000)

***SPEECH OF THE HOLY FATHER JOHN PAUL II
AT THE WELCOME CEREMONY IN JORDAN***

*International Airport
"Queen Alia" in Amman*

March 20, 2000

*Your Majesties,
Members of the Government,*

1. In a spirit of profound respect and friendship, I offer greetings to all who live in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan: the members of the Catholic Church and the other Christian Churches, the Muslim people whom we followers of Jesus Christ hold in high esteem, and all men and women of good will.

My visit to your country and the entire journey which I am beginning today is part of the religious Jubilee Pilgrimage which I am making to commemorate the Two Thousandth Anniversary of the Birth of Jesus Christ. From the beginning of my ministry as Bishop of Rome, I have had a great desire to mark this event by praying in some of the places linked to salvation history – places that speak to us of that moment's long preparation through biblical times, places where our Lord Jesus Christ actually lived, or which are connected with his work of redemption. I have already been to Egypt and Mount Sinai, where God revealed his name to Moses and entrusted to him the tablets of the Law of the Covenant.

2. Today I am in Jordan, a land familiar to me from the Holy Scriptures: a land sanctified by the presence of Jesus himself, by the presence of Moses, Elijah and John the Baptist, and of saints and martyrs of the early Church. Yours is a land noted for its hospitality and openness to all. These are qualities of the Jordanian people which I have experienced many times in conversations with the late King Hussein, and which were confirmed anew in my meeting with Your Majesty at the Vatican in September last year.

Your Majesty, I know how deeply concerned you are for peace in your own land and in the entire region, and how important it is to you that all Jordanians – Muslims and Christians – should consider themselves as one people and one family. In this area of the world there are grave and urgent issues of justice, of the rights of peoples and nations, which have to be resolved for the good of all concerned and as a condition for lasting peace. No matter how difficult, no matter how long, the process of seeking peace must continue. Without peace, there can be no authentic development for this region, no better life for its peoples, no brighter future for its children. That is why Jordan's proven commitment to securing the conditions necessary for peace is so important and praiseworthy.

Building a future of peace requires an ever more mature understanding and ever more practical cooperation among the peoples who acknowledge the one true, indivisible God, the Creator of all that exists. The three historical monotheistic religions count peace, goodness and respect for the human person among their highest values. I earnestly hope that my visit will strengthen the already fruitful Christian-Muslim dialogue which is being conducted in Jordan, particularly through the Royal Interfaith Institute.

3. The Catholic Church, without forgetting that her primary mission is a spiritual one, is always eager to cooperate with individual nations and people of goodwill in promoting and advancing the dignity of the human person. She does this particularly in her schools and education programmes, and through her charitable and social institutions. Your noble tradition of respect for all religions guarantees the religious freedom which makes this possible, and which is in fact a fundamental human right. When this is so, all citizens feel themselves equal, and each one, inspired by his own spiritual convictions, can contribute to the building up of society as the shared home of all.

4. The warm invitation which Your Majesties, the Government and the people of Jordan have extended to me is an expression of our common hope for a new era of peace and development in this region. I am truly grateful, and with deep appreciation of your kindness I assure you of my prayers for you, for all the Jordanian people, for the displaced people in your midst, and for the young people who make up such a large part of the population.

May Almighty God grant Your Majesties happiness and long life!

May he bless Jordan with prosperity and peace!

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