



The Holy See

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

VISIT TO AL-MAGHTAS
SPEECH OF THE HOLY FATHER

Wednesday, 22 March 2000

*Your Excellency,
Dear Friends,*

I am grateful for this chance to visit a place so steeped in history. For many thousands of years, this area around Jericho has been a human habitat. It is near here that we find the remains of the oldest city yet discovered. But its memory becomes still richer when we turn to Holy Scripture, which shows Jericho as a place which bears the footprint not only of man but of God himself.

In my mind I see Jesus coming to the waters of the River Jordan not far from here to be baptized by John the Baptist (cf. *Mt* 3:13); I see Jesus passing on his way to the Holy City where he would die and rise again; I see him opening the eyes of the blind man as he passes by (cf. *Lk* 18:35-43).

Today Jericho has become a flourishing oasis in the desert. May the city which is so rich in memory also be rich in promise. May its progress announce the hope of the more peaceful future which the inhabitants of this place and all the peoples of this Land have desired for so long.

God bless you all!

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