



BOLLETTINO

SALA STAMPA DELLA SANTA SEDE

N. 0664

Giovedì 10.11.2011

Pubblicazione: Immediata

Sommario:

◆ **UDIENZA ALLA DELEGAZIONE DELL'"ISRAELI RELIGIOUS COUNCIL"**

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Alle ore 11.45 di questa mattina, nella Sala dei Papi del Palazzo Apostolico, il Santo Padre Benedetto XVI riceve in Udienza una Delegazione dell'"Israeli Religious Council", il Consiglio dei Capi religiosi di Israele.

Riportiamo di seguito il saluto che il Papa rivolge ai presenti nel corso dell'Udienza:

● **SALUTO DEL SANTO PADRE**

Your Beatitude,
Your Excellencies,
Dear Friends,

It is a great pleasure for me to welcome you, the members of the Israeli Religious Council, representing as you do the religious communities present in the Holy Land, and I thank you for the kind words addressed to me in the name of all present.

In our troubled times, dialogue between different religions is becoming ever more important in the generation of an atmosphere of mutual understanding and respect that can lead to friendship and solid trust in each other. This is pressing for the religious leaders of the Holy Land who, while living in a place full of memories sacred to our traditions, are tested daily by the difficulties of living together in harmony.

As I remarked in my recent meeting with religious leaders at Assisi, today we find ourselves confronted by two kinds of violence: on the one hand, the use of violence in the name of religion and, on the other, the violence

that is the consequence of the denial of God which often characterises life in modern society. In this situation, as religious leaders we are called to reaffirm that the rightly lived relationship of man to God is a force for peace. This is a truth that must become ever more visible in the way in which we live with each other on a daily basis. Hence, I wish to encourage you to foster a climate of trust and dialogue among the leaders and members of all the religious traditions present in the Holy Land.

We share a grave responsibility to educate the members of our respective religious communities, with a view to nurturing a deeper understanding of each other and developing an openness towards cooperation with people of religious traditions other than our own. Unfortunately, the reality of our world is often fragmentary and flawed, even in the Holy Land. All of us are called to commit ourselves anew to the promotion of greater justice and dignity, in order to enrich our world and to give it a fully human dimension. Justice, together with truth, love and freedom, is a fundamental requirement for lasting and secure peace in the world. Movement towards reconciliation requires courage and vision, as well as the trust that it is God himself who will show us the way. We cannot achieve our goals if God does not give us the strength to do so.

When I visited Jerusalem in May 2009, I stood in front of the Western Wall and, in my written prayer placed between the stones of the Wall, I asked God for peace in the Holy Land. I wrote: "God of all ages, on my visit to Jerusalem, the 'City of Peace', spiritual home to Jews, Christians and Muslims alike, I bring before you the joys, the hopes and the inspirations, the trials, the suffering and the pain of all your people throughout the world. God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, hear the cry of the afflicted, the fearful, the bereft; send your peace upon this Holy Land, upon the Middle East, upon the entire human family; stir the hearts of all who call upon your name to walk humbly in the path of justice and compassion. 'The Lord is good to those who wait for him, to the soul that seeks him!'" (*Lam 3:25*).

May the Lord hear my prayer for Jerusalem today and fill your hearts with joy during your visit to Rome. May he hear the prayer of all men and women who ask him for the peace of Jerusalem. Indeed, let us never cease praying for the peace of the Holy Land, with confidence in God who himself is our peace and consolation. Entrusting you and those whom you represent to the Almighty's merciful care, I willingly invoke upon all of you divine blessings of joy and peace.

[01581-02.01] [Original text: English]

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