

PILGRIMAGE MAY 8-15, 2009

BENEDICT XVI IN THE HOLY LAND

In this flyer, we offer a selection of passages from the Holy Father's addresses during his pilgrimages in the Holy Land. It is a contribution for whoever wants to discover the originality of the Christian proposal as an answer to the needs of everyone's heart, and a witness to the enormous value of the faith in the dramatic circumstances of life.

BROADENING REASON

AMMAN, SATURDAY, 9 MAY

■ Distinguished friends, today I wish to refer to a task which I have addressed on a number of occasions and which I firmly believe Christians and Muslims can embrace. (...) That task is the challenge to cultivate for the good, in the context of faith and truth, the vast potential of human reason. (...) as believers in the one God, we know that human reason is itself God's gift and that it soars to its highest plane when suffused with the light of God's truth. In fact, when human reason humbly allows itself to be purified by faith, it is far from weakened; rather, it is strengthened to resist presumption and to reach beyond its own limitations. In this way, human reason is emboldened to pursue its noble purpose of serving mankind, giving expression to our deepest common aspirations and extending, rather than manipulating or confining, public debate. Thus, genuine adherence to religion – far from narrowing our minds – widens the horizon of human understanding. It protects civil society from the excesses of the unbridled ego which tend to absolutize the finite and eclipse the infinite; it ensures that freedom is exercised hand in hand with truth, and it adorns culture with insights concerning all that is true, good and beautiful.

JERUSALEM, MONDAY, 11 MAY 2009

■ Religious belief presupposes truth. The one who believes is the one who seeks truth and lives by it. Although the medium by which we understand the discovery and communication of truth differs in part from religion to religion, we should not be deterred in our efforts to bear witness to truth's power. (...) Truth should be offered to all; it serves all members of society. It sheds light on the foundation of morality and ethics, and suffuses reason with the strength to reach beyond its own limitations in order to give expression

to our deepest common aspirations. Far from threatening the tolerance of differences or cultural plurality, truth makes consensus possible and keeps public debate rational, honest and accountable, and opens the gateway to peace. Fostering the will to be obedient to the truth in fact broadens our concept of reason and its scope of application, and makes possible the genuine dialogue of cultures and religions so urgently needed today.

JERUSALEM, TUESDAY, 12 MAY

■ In approaching the most urgent ethical questions of our day, our two communities are challenged to engage people of good will at the level of reason, while simultaneously pointing to the religious foundations which best sustain lasting moral values.

NAZARETH, THURSDAY, 14 MAY

■ What happened here in Nazareth, far from the gaze of the world, was a singular act of God, a powerful intervention in history, through which a child was conceived who was to bring salvation to the whole world. The wonder of the Incarnation continues to challenge us to open up our understanding to the limitless possibilities of God's transforming power.

EDUCATING A NEW SUBJECT

MADABA, SATURDAY, 9 MAY

■ I commend the promoters of this new institution for their courageous confidence in good education as a stepping-stone for personal development and for peace and progress in the region. In this context the University of Madaba (...) by transmitting knowledge and instilling in students a love of truth, it will greatly enhance their adherence to sound values and their personal freedom. Finally, this same intellectual formation will sharpen their critical skills, dispel ignorance and prejudice,

and assist in breaking the spell cast by ideologies old and new. (...)In fact, belief in God does not suppress the search for truth; on the contrary it encourages it. Saint Paul exhorted the early Christians to open their minds to “all that is true, all that is noble, all that is good and pure, all that we love and honor, all that is considered excellent or worthy of praise” (Phil 4:8). (...)Indeed, when we promote education, we proclaim our confidence in the gift of freedom.

BETHLEHEM, WEDNESDAY, 13 MAY

■ Your homeland needs not only new economic and community structures, but most importantly, we might say, a new “spiritual” infrastructure, capable of galvanizing the energies of all men and women of good will in the service of education, development and the promotion of the common good.

JERUSALEM, FRIDAY, 15 MAY

■ Some two thousand years ago, along these same streets, a group of Greeks put this request to Philip: “Sir, we should like to see Jesus” (Jn 12:21). It is a request made again of us today, here in Jerusalem, in the Holy Land, in the region and throughout the world. How do we respond? (...)It seems to me that the greatest service the Christians of Jerusalem can offer their fellow citizens is the upbringing and education of a further generation of well-formed and committed Christians, earnest in their desire to contribute generously to the religious and civic life of this unique and holy city.

LIFE AS WITNESS

AMMAN, SUNDAY, 10 MAY

■ As the Successor of Saint Peter, to whom the Lord entrusted the care of his flock (cf. Jn 21:15-17), I have long awaited this opportunity to stand before you as a witness to the Risen Savior, and to encourage you to persevere in faith, hope and love, in fidelity to the ancient traditions and the distinguished history of Christian witness which you trace back to the age of the Apostles. (...)May the courage of Christ our shepherd inspire and sustain you daily in your efforts to bear witness to the Christian faith and to maintain the Church’s presence in the changing social fabric of these ancient lands. Fidelity to your Christian roots, fidelity to the Church’s mission in the Holy Land, demands of each of you a particular kind of courage: the courage of conviction, born of personal faith, not mere social convention or family tradition.

JERUSALEM, TUESDAY, 12 MAY

■ I hope my presence here is a sign that you are not forgotten, that your persevering presence and witness are indeed precious in God’s eyes and integral to the future of these lands. (...)My prayer for you today is that you continue, day by day, to “see and believe” in the signs of God’s providence and unfailing mercy, to “hear” with renewed faith and hope the consoling words of the apostolic preaching, and to “touch” the sources of grace in the sacraments, and to incarnate for others their pledge of new beginnings, the freedom born of forgiveness, the interior light and peace which can bring healing and hope to even the darkest of human realities.

BETHLEHEM, WEDNESDAY, 13 MAY

■ Christ brought a Kingdom which is not of this world, yet a Kingdom which is capable of changing this world, for it has the power to change hearts, to enlighten minds and to strengthen wills. By taking on our flesh, with all its weaknesses, and transfiguring it by the power of his Spirit, Jesus has called us to be witnesses of his victory over sin and death. And this is what the message of Bethlehem calls us to be: witnesses of the triumph of God’s love over the hatred, selfishness, fear and resentment which cripple human relationships and create division where brothers should dwell in unity, destruction where men should be building, despair where hope should flourish!

“In hope we were saved”, the Apostle Paul says (Rom 8:24).

Are these not the virtues required of men and women who live in hope? First, the constant conversion to Christ which is reflected not only in our actions but also in our reasoning.

JERUSALEM, FRIDAY, 15 MAY

■ I pray that the Church in the Holy Land will always draw new strength from its contemplation of the empty tomb of the Savior. In that tomb it is called to bury all its anxieties and fears, in order to rise again each day and continue its journey through the streets of Jerusalem, Galilee and beyond, proclaiming the triumph of Christ’s forgiveness and the promise of new life. As Christians, we know that the peace for which this strife-torn land yearns has a name: Jesus Christ. “He is our peace”, who reconciled us to God in one body through the Cross, bringing an end to hostility (cf. Eph 2:14). Into his hands, then, let us entrust all our hope for the future, just as in the hour of darkness he entrusted his spirit into the Father’s hands.