

**POPE FRANCIS' PILGRIMAGE TO THE HOLY LAND
ON THE OCCASION OF THE 50TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE MEETING
BETWEEN POPE PAUL VI AND PATRIARCH ATHENAGORAS IN JERUSALEM**

24-26 MAY 2014



PROGRAM

Saturday, 24 May 2014

Rome

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| 08:15 | Departure from Rome's Fiumicino airport for Amman | |
| 13:00 | Arrival at the Amman Queen Alia International Airport | |
| 13:45 | Welcoming ceremony in the Al-Husseini Royal Palace in Amman
Courtesy visit to Their Majesties the King and Queen of Jordan | |
| 14:20 | Meeting with the Authorities of the Kingdom of Jordan | <i>Address of the Holy Father</i> |
| 16:00 | Holy Mass at the Amman International Stadium | <i>Homily of the Holy Father</i> |
| 19:00 | Visit to the Baptismal Site at Bethany beyond the Jordan | |
| 19:15 | Meeting with refugees and young people with disabilities in the Latin Church in Bethany beyond the Jordan | <i>Address of the Holy Father</i> |

Sunday, 25 May 2014

- 08:15 **Farewell from Jordan** at the Amman Queen Alia International Airport
- 08:30 Departure by helicopter for Bethlehem from the Amman Queen Alia International Airport
- 09:20 Arrival at the Bethlehem Heliport
- 09:30 **Welcoming ceremony** in the Presidential Palace in Bethlehem
Courtesy visit to the President of the State of Palestine
- 10:00 **Meeting with Palestinian Authorities** *Address of the Holy Father*
- 11:00 **Holy Mass** in Manger Square in Bethlehem *Homily of the Holy Father*
Regina Coeli Prayer *Address of the Holy Father*
- 13:30 **Lunch with Palestinian families** in the Franciscan Convent of Casa Nova in Bethlehem
- 15:00 **Private visit to the Grotto of the Nativity in Bethlehem**
- 15:20 **Greeting of the children from the Dheisheh, Aida and Beit Jibrin refugee camps** in the Phoenix Center of the Dheisheh refugee camp *Address of the Holy Father*
- 15:45 **Farewell from the State of Palestine** at the Bethlehem Heliport
- 16:00 Departure by helicopter from the Bethlehem Heliport for the Tel Aviv Ben Gurion International Airport
- 16:30 **Welcoming ceremony** at the Tel Aviv Ben Gurion International Airport *Address of the Holy Father*
- 17:15 Transfer by helicopter to Jerusalem
- 17:45 Arrival at the Jerusalem Helipad on Mount Scopus
- 18:15 **Private Meeting with the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople** at the Apostolic Delegation of Jerusalem *Signing of a joint declaration*
- 19:00 **Ecumenical Celebration on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the meeting in Jerusalem between Pope Paul VI and Patriarch Athenagoras** in the Basilica of the Holy Sepulchre *Address of the Holy Father*
- 20:15 **Dinner with the Patriarchs, Bishops and the Papal Entourage** at the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem

Monday, 26 May 2014

- 08:15 **Visit to the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem** in the building of the Great Council on the Esplanade of the Mosques *Address of the Holy Father*
- 09:10 **Visit to the Western Wall** in Jerusalem

- 09:45 **Laying of a wreath at Mount Herzl** in Jerusalem
- 10:00 **Visit to the Yad Vashem Memorial** in Jerusalem **Address of the Holy Father**
- 10:45 **Courtesy visit to the two chief rabbis of Israel** at Heichal Shlomo Center in Jerusalem, next to the Jerusalem Great Synagogue **Address of the Holy Father**
- 11:45 **Courtesy visit to the President of the State of Israel** in the Presidential Residence in Jerusalem **Address of the Holy Father**
- 13:00 **Private audience with the Prime Minister of Israel** at Notre Dame Center in Jerusalem
- 13:30 **Lunch with the Papal Entourage** at Notre Dame Center in Jerusalem
- 15:30 **Private visit to the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople** in the building next to the Orthodox Church of *Viri Galilei* on the Mount of Olives
- 16:00 **Meeting with priests, religious and seminarians** in the Church of Gethsemane at the foot of the Mount of Olives **Address of the Holy Father**
- 17:20 **Holy Mass with the Ordinaries of the Holy Land and the Papal Entourage** in the room of the Cenacle in Jerusalem **Homily of the Holy Father**
- 19:30 Transfer from the helipad of Mount Scopus in Jerusalem to the Tel Aviv Ben Gurion International Airport
- 20:00 **Farewell from the State of Israel** at the Tel Aviv Ben Gurion International Airport
- 20:15 Departure from Ben Gurion International Airport in Tel Aviv for Rome's Ciampino Airport
- 23:00 Arrival at Ciampino Airport in Rome

JORDAN

MEETING WITH THE AUTHORITIES OF THE KINGDOM OF JORDAN

ADDRESS OF POPE FRANCIS

Amman-Saturday, 24 May 2014

*Your Majesties,
Your Excellencies,
Dear Brother Bishops,
Dear Friends,*

I thank God for granting me this opportunity to visit the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan in the footsteps of my predecessors [Paul VI](#), [John Paul II](#) and [Benedict XVI](#). I am grateful to His Majesty King Abdullah II for his warm words of welcome, as I recall with pleasure our recent meeting in the Vatican. I also greet the members of the Royal Family, the government and the people of Jordan, this land so rich in history and with such great religious significance for Judaism, Christianity and Islam.

Jordan has offered a generous welcome to great numbers of Palestinian and Iraqi refugees, as well as to other refugees from troubled areas, particularly neighboring Syria, ravaged by a conflict which has lasted all too long. Such generosity merits, Your Majesty, the appreciation and support of the international community. The Catholic Church, to the extent of its abilities, has sought to provide assistance to refugees and those in need, especially through Caritas Jordan.

While acknowledging with deep regret the continuing grave tensions in the Middle East, I thank the authorities of the Kingdom for all that they are doing and I encourage them to persevere in their efforts to seek lasting peace for the entire region. This great goal urgently requires that a peaceful solution be found to the crisis in Syria, as well as a just solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

I take this opportunity to reiterate my profound respect and esteem for the Muslim community and my appreciation for the leadership of His Majesty the King in promoting a better understanding of the virtues taught by Islam and a climate of serene coexistence between the faithful of the different religions. You are known as a man of peace and a peacemaker: thank you! I am grateful that Jordan has supported a number of important initiatives aimed at advancing interreligious dialogue and understanding between Jews, Christians and Muslims. I think in particular of the Amman Message and the support given within the United Nations Organization to the annual celebration of World Interfaith Harmony Week.

I would also like to offer an affectionate greeting to the Christian communities welcomed by this Kingdom, communities present in this country since apostolic times, contributing to the common good of the society of which they are fully a part. Although Christians today are numerically a minority, theirs is a significant and valued presence in the fields of education and health care, thanks to their schools and hospitals. They are able to profess their faith peaceably, in a climate of respect for religious freedom. Religious freedom is in fact a fundamental human right and I cannot fail to express my hope that it will be upheld throughout the Middle East and the entire world. The right to religious freedom “includes on the individual and collective levels the

freedom to follow one's conscience in religious matters and, at the same time, freedom of worship... [it also includes] the freedom to choose the religion which one judges to be true and to manifest one's beliefs in public" (Benedict XVI, *Ecclesia in Medio Oriente*, 26). Christians consider themselves, and indeed are, full citizens, and as such they seek, together with their Muslim fellow citizens, to make their own particular contribution to the society in which they live.

Finally, I cordially invoke peace and prosperity upon the Kingdom of Jordan and its people. I pray that my visit will help to advance and strengthen good and cordial relations between Christians and Muslims. And may the Lord God preserve us from the fear of change which Your Majesty referred to.

I thank you for your courteous and warm welcome. May the Almighty and Merciful God grant happiness and long life to Your Majesties, and may he bless Jordan abundantly. Salaam!

HOLY MASS, HOMILY OF POPE FRANCIS

International Stadium (Amman)

Saturday, 24 May 2014

In today's Gospel, we hear Jesus promise the disciples: "I will pray the Father, and he will give you another Paraclete, to be with you forever" (*Jn 14:16*). The first Paraclete is Jesus himself; the *other* is the Holy Spirit.

We are not far from where the Holy Spirit descended with power on Jesus of Nazareth after his baptism by John in the River Jordan (cf. *Mt 3:16*) and today I will go there. Today's Gospel, and this place to which, by God's grace, I have come as a pilgrim, invite us to meditate on the Holy Spirit and on all that he has brought about in Christ and in us. In a word, we can say that the Holy Spirit carries out three actions – he *prepares*, he *anoints* and he *sends*.

At the baptism, the Holy Spirit descended upon Jesus to *prepare* him for his mission of salvation, the mission of one who is a Servant, humble and meek, ready to share and give himself completely. Yet the Holy Spirit, present from the beginning of salvation history, had already been at work in Jesus from the moment of his conception in the virginal womb of Mary of Nazareth, by bringing about the wondrous event of the Incarnation: "the Holy Spirit will come upon you, will overshadow you – the Angel said to Mary – and you will give birth to a son who will be named Jesus" (cf. *Lk 1:35*). The Holy Spirit had then acted in Simeon and Anna on the day of the presentation of Jesus in the Temple (cf. *Lk 2:22*). Both were awaiting the Messiah, and both were inspired by the Holy Spirit. Simeon and Anna, upon seeing the child, knew immediately that he was the one long awaited by the people. They gave prophetic expression to the joy of encountering the Redeemer and, in a certain sense, served as a *preparation* for the encounter between the Messiah and the people.

These various works of the Holy Spirit are part of a harmonious action, a sole divine plan of love. The mission of the Holy Spirit, in fact, is *to beget harmony* – he is himself harmony – and *to create peace* in different situations and between different people. Diversity of ideas and persons should not trigger rejection or prove an obstacle, for variety always enriches. So today, with fervent hearts, we invoke the Holy Spirit and ask him *to prepare* the path to peace and unity.

The Holy Spirit also *anoints*. He anointed Jesus inwardly and he anoints his disciples, so that they can have the mind of Christ and thus be disposed to live lives of peace and communion. Through the anointing of the Spirit, our human nature is sealed with the holiness of Jesus Christ and we are enabled to love our brothers and sisters with the same love which God has for us. We ought, therefore, to show concrete signs of humility, fraternity, forgiveness and reconciliation. These signs are the prerequisite of a true, stable and lasting peace. Let us ask the Father to anoint us so that we may fully become his children, ever more conformed to Christ, and may learn to see one another as brothers and sisters. Thus, by putting aside our grievances and divisions, we can show fraternal love for one another. This is what Jesus asks of us in the Gospel: “If you love me, you will keep my commandments. And I will pray the Father, and he will give you another Paraclete, to be with you for ever” (Jn 14:15-16).

Lastly, the Holy Spirit *sends*. Jesus is the one who is sent forth, filled with the Spirit of the Father. Anointed by the same Spirit, we also *aresent* as messengers and witnesses of peace. The world has much need of us as messengers of peace, witnesses of peace! The world needs this. The world asks us to bring peace and to be a sign of peace!

Peace is not something which can be bought or sold; peace is a gift to be sought patiently and to be “crafted” through the actions, great and small, of our everyday lives. The way of peace is strengthened if we realize that we are all of the same stock and members of the one human family; if we never forget that we have the same Father in heaven and that we are all his children, made in his image and likeness.

It is in this spirit that I embrace all of you: the Patriarch, my brother bishops and priests, the consecrated men and women, the lay faithful, and the many children who today make their First Holy Communion, together with their families. I also embrace with affection the many Christian refugees; let us all earnestly turn our attention to them, to the many Christian refugees from Palestine, Syria and Iraq: please bring my greeting to your families and communities, and assure them of my closeness.

Dear friends! Dear brothers and sisters! The Holy Spirit descended upon Jesus in the Jordan and thus inaugurated his work of redemption to free the world from sin and death. Let us ask the Spirit *to prepare* our hearts to encounter our brothers and sisters, so that we may overcome our differences rooted in political thinking, language, culture and religion. Let us ask him *to anoint* our whole being with the oil of his mercy, which heals the injuries caused by mistakes, misunderstandings and disputes. And let us ask him for the grace *to send* us forth, in humility and meekness, along the demanding but enriching path of seeking peace.

MEETING WITH REFUGEES AND DISABLED YOUNG PEOPLE

ADDRESS OF POPE FRANCIS

Latin Church, Bethany beyond the Jordan

Saturday, 24 May 2014

*Distinguished Authorities,
Your Eminences, Excellencies,
Dear Brothers and Sisters,*

As part of my pilgrimage I have greatly desired to meet with you who have had to leave your homes and your country as a result of violence and conflict. Here in Jordan you have found welcome and refuge. I have wanted also to meet with you, dear young people who bear the burden of physical disabilities.

The place where we are meeting commemorates Jesus' baptism. Coming here to the Jordan to be baptized by John, Jesus showed his humility and his participation in our human condition. He stooped down to us and by his love he restored our dignity and brought us salvation. Jesus' humility never fails to move us, the fact that he bends down to wounded humanity in order to heal us: he bends down to heal all our wounds! For our part, we are profoundly affected by the tragedies and suffering of our times, particularly those caused by ongoing conflicts in the Middle East. I think particularly of our beloved Syria, rent by nearly three years of civil strife which has led to countless deaths and forced millions to flee and seek exile in other countries. All of us want peace! But as we observe this tragic conflict, seeing these wounds, seeing so many people who have left their homeland, forced to do so, I ask myself: who is selling arms to these people to make war? Behold the root of evil! Hatred and financial greed in the manufacturing and sale of arms. This should make us think about who is responsible for this situation, for providing arms to those in conflict and thereby sustaining such conflict. Let us think about this and with sincere hearts let us call upon these poor criminals to change their ways.

I thank the Jordanian authorities and people for the generous welcome they have extended to the immense number of refugees from Syria and Iraq. I also thank all those who offer them assistance and solidarity. I think too of the charitable work undertaken by Church institutions such as Caritas Jordan and others, who assist the needy regardless of their religious beliefs, ethnic origin or politics; in this way they reveal the radiant face of Jesus, full of kindness and love. May the Almighty and Merciful God bless all of you and every effort you make to alleviate the sufferings caused by war!

I urge the international community not to leave Jordan, who is so welcoming and so courageous, alone in the task of meeting the humanitarian emergency caused by the arrival of so great a number of refugees, but to continue and even increase its support and assistance. I renew my heartfelt appeal for peace in Syria. May the violence cease and may humanitarian law be respected, thus ensuring much needed assistance to those who are suffering! May all parties abandon the attempt to resolve issues by the use of arms and return to negotiations. A solution will only be found through dialogue and restraint, through compassion for those who suffer, through the search for a political solution and through a sense of fraternal responsibility.

Dear young people, I ask you to join me in praying for peace. You can do this by offering your daily efforts and struggles to God; in this way your prayer will become particularly precious and effective. I also encourage you to assist, through your generosity and sensitivity, in building a society which is respectful of the vulnerable, the sick, children and the elderly. Despite your difficulties in life, you are a sign of hope. You have a place in God's heart, you are in my prayers. I am grateful that so many of you are here, and for your warmth, joy and enthusiasm. Thank you!

As our meeting concludes, I pray once more that reason and restraint will prevail and that, with the help of the international community, Syria will rediscover the path of peace. May God change the hearts of the violent. May God change the hearts of those who seek war. May God change the hearts of those who manufacture and

sell arms and may he strengthen the hearts and minds of peacemakers and grant them every blessing. May God bless you all!

MEETING WITH PALESTINIAN AUTHORITIES

ADDRESS OF POPE FRANCIS

Bethlehem, Sunday, 25 May 2014

Mr President,

Dear Friends,

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

I thank President Mahmoud Abbas for his kind welcome and I offer cordial greetings to the representatives of the government and the entire Palestinian people. I thank the Lord for the opportunity to be here with you today in the birthplace of Jesus, the Prince of Peace. I thank all of you for your warm reception.

For decades the Middle East has known the tragic consequences of a protracted conflict which has inflicted many wounds so difficult to heal. Even in the absence of violence, the climate of instability and a lack of mutual understanding have produced insecurity, the violation of rights, isolation and the flight of entire communities, conflicts, shortages and sufferings of every sort.

In expressing my closeness to those who suffer most from this conflict, I wish to state my heartfelt conviction that the time has come to put an end to this situation which has become increasingly unacceptable. For the good of all, there is a need to intensify efforts and initiatives aimed at creating the conditions for a stable peace based on justice, on the recognition of the rights of every individual, and on mutual security. **The time has come for everyone to find the courage to be generous and creative in the service of the common good**, the courage to forge a peace which rests on the acknowledgment by all of the right of two States to exist and to live in peace and security within internationally recognized borders.

To this end, I can only express my profound hope that all will refrain from initiatives and actions which contradict the stated desire to reach a true agreement, and that peace will be pursued with tireless determination and tenacity. Peace will bring countless benefits for the peoples of this region and for the world as a whole. And so it must resolutely be pursued, even if each side has to make certain sacrifices.

I pray that the Palestinian and Israeli peoples and their respective leaders will undertake this promising journey of peace with the same courage and steadfastness needed for every journey. Peace in security and mutual trust will become the stable frame of reference for confronting and resolving every other problem, and thus provide an opportunity for a balanced development, one which can serve as a model for other crisis areas.

Here I would like to say a word about the active Christian community which contributes significantly to the common good of society, sharing in the joys and sufferings of the whole people. Christians desire to continue in this role as full citizens, along with their fellow citizens, whom they regard as their brothers and sisters.

Mr President, you are known as a man of peace and a peacemaker. Our recent meeting in the Vatican and my presence today in Palestine attest to the good relations existing between the Holy See and the State of Palestine. I trust that these relations can further develop for the good of all. In this regard, I express my appreciation for the efforts being made to draft an agreement between the parties regarding various aspects of the life of the Catholic community in this country, with particular attention to religious freedom. Respect for this fundamental human right is, in fact, one of the essential conditions for peace, fraternity and harmony. It tells the world that it is possible and necessary to build harmony and understanding between different cultures and religions. It also testifies to the fact that, since the important things we share are so many, it is possible to find a means of serene, ordered and peaceful coexistence, accepting our differences and rejoicing that, as children of the one God, we are all brothers and sisters.

Mr President, dear brothers and sisters gathered here in Bethlehem: may Almighty God bless you, protect you and grant you the wisdom and strength needed to continue courageously along the path to peace, so that swords will be turned into ploughshares and this land will once more flourish in prosperity and concord. Salaam!

HOLY MASS

HOMILY OF POPE FRANCIS

Manger Square (Bethlehem)

Sunday, 25 May 2014

“This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger” (Lk 2:12).

What a great grace it is to celebrate the Eucharist in the place where Jesus was born! I thank God and I thank all of you who have welcomed me on my pilgrimage: President Mahmoud Abbas and the other civil authorities; Patriarch Fouad Twal and the other bishops and ordinaries of the Holy Land, the priests, the good Franciscans, the consecrated persons and all those who labor to keep faith, hope and love alive in these lands; the faithful who have come from Gaza and Galilee, and the immigrants from Asia and Africa. Thank you for your welcome!

The Child Jesus, born in Bethlehem, is the *sign* given by God to those who awaited salvation, and he remains forever the sign of God’s tenderness and presence in our world. The angel announces to the shepherds: “This will be a sign for you: you will find a child...”.

Today too, *children are a sign*. They are a sign of hope, a sign of life, but also a “*diagnostic*” *sign*, a marker indicating the health of families, society and the entire world. Wherever children are accepted, loved, cared for and protected, the family is healthy, society is more healthy and the world is more human. Here we can think of the work carried out by the Ephpheta Paul VI institute for hearing and speech impaired Palestinian children: it is a very real sign of God’s goodness. It is a clear sign that society is healthier.

To us, the men and women of the twenty-first century, God today also says: “This will be a sign for you”, look to the child...

The Child of Bethlehem is frail, like all newborn children. He cannot speak and yet he is the Word made flesh who came to transform the hearts and lives of all men and women. This Child, like every other child, is vulnerable; he needs to be accepted and protected. Today too, children need to be welcomed and defended, from the moment of their conception.

Sadly, in this world, with all its highly developed technology, great numbers of children continue to live in inhuman situations, on the fringes of society, in the peripheries of great cities and in the countryside. All too many children continue to be exploited, maltreated, enslaved, prey to violence and illicit trafficking. Still too many children live in exile, as refugees, at times lost at sea, particularly in the waters of the Mediterranean. Today, in acknowledging this, we feel shame before God, before God who became a child.

And we have to ask ourselves: Who are we, as we stand before the Child Jesus? Who are we, standing as we stand before today's children? Are we like Mary and Joseph, who welcomed Jesus and care for him with the love of a father and a mother? Or are we like Herod, who wanted to eliminate him? Are we like the shepherds, who went in haste to kneel before him in worship and offer him their humble gifts? Or are we indifferent? Are we perhaps people who use fine and pious words, yet exploit pictures of poor children in order to make money? Are we ready to be there for children, to "waste time" with them? Are we ready to listen to them, to care for them, to pray for them and with them? Or do we ignore them because we are too caught up in our own affairs?

"This will be a sign for us: you will find a child...". Perhaps that little boy or girl is crying. He is crying because he is hungry, because she is cold, because he or she wants to be picked up and held in our arms... Today too, children are crying, they are crying a lot, and their crying challenges us. In a world which daily discards tons of food and medicine there are children, hungry and suffering from easily curable diseases, who cry out in vain. In an age which insists on the protection of minors, there is a flourishing trade in weapons which end up in the hands of child-soldiers, there is a ready market for goods produced by the slave labor of small children. Their cry is stifled: the cry of these children is stifled! They must fight, they must work, they cannot cry! But their mothers cry for them, as modern-day Rachels: they weep for their children, and they refuse to be consoled (cf. *Mt 2:18*).

"This will be a sign for you": you will find a child. The Child Jesus, born in Bethlehem, every child who is born and grows up in every part of our world, is a diagnostic sign indicating the state of health of our families, our communities, our nation. Such a frank and honest diagnosis can lead us to a new kind of lifestyle where our relationships are no longer marked by conflict, oppression and consumerism, but fraternity, forgiveness and reconciliation, solidarity and love.

Mary, Mother of Jesus,
you who accepted, teach us how to accept;
you who adored, teach us how to adore;
you who followed, teach us how to follow. Amen.

POPE FRANCIS

REGINA CAELI

Bethlehem

Sunday, 25 May 2014

In this, the birthplace of the Prince of Peace, I wish to invite you, President Mahmoud Abbas, together with President Shimon Peres, to join me in heartfelt prayer to God for the gift of peace. I offer my home in the Vatican as a place for this encounter of prayer.

All of us want peace. Many people build it day by day through small gestures and acts; many of them are suffering, yet patiently persevere in their efforts to be peacemakers. All of us – especially those placed at the service of their respective peoples – have the duty to become instruments and artisans of peace, especially by our prayers.

Building peace is difficult, but living without peace is a constant torment. The men and women of these lands, and of the entire world, all of them, ask us to bring before God their fervent hopes for peace.

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

As we prepare to conclude our celebration, our thoughts turn to Mary Most Holy, who here, in Bethlehem, gave birth to Jesus her Son. Our Lady is the one who, more than any other person, contemplated God in the human face of Jesus. Assisted by Saint Joseph, she wrapped him in swaddling clothes and laid him in the manger.

To Mary we entrust this land and all who dwell here, that they may live in justice, peace and fraternity. We entrust also the pilgrims who come here to draw from the sources of the Christian faith – so many of them are also present at this Holy Mass.

Mary, watch over our families, our young people and our elderly. Watch over those who have lost faith and hope. Comfort the sick, the imprisoned and all who suffer. Watch over the Church's Pastors and the entire community of believers; may they may be "salt and light" in this blessed land. Sustain all educational initiatives, particularly Bethlehem University.

Contemplating the Holy Family here in Bethlehem, my thoughts turn spontaneously to Nazareth, which I hope to visit, God willing, on another occasion. From this place I embrace with affection the Christian faithful living in Galilee and I express my support for the building of the International Centre for the Family in Nazareth.

We entrust the future of our human family to Mary Most Holy, that new horizons may open in our world, with the promise of fraternity, solidarity and peace.

WELCOMING CEREMONY

ADDRESS OF POPE FRANCIS

Ben Gurion International Airport (Tel Aviv)

Sunday, 25 May 2014

Mr President,

Mr Prime Minister,

Your Eminences, Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen, Brothers and Sisters,

I thank you most heartily for your welcome to the State of Israel, which I have the joy of visiting on this pilgrimage. I am grateful to President Shimon Peres and to Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu for their kind words and I willingly recall my meetings with them in the Vatican. As you know, I have come on pilgrimage to mark the fiftieth anniversary of the [historic visit of Pope Paul VI](#). Since then, much has changed in the relationship between the Holy See and the State of Israel: diplomatic relations, established some twenty years ago, have favored the development of good relations, as witnessed by the two Agreements already signed and ratified, and a third which is in the process of being finalized. In this spirit I greet all the people of Israel with prayerful good wishes that their aspirations of peace and prosperity will achieve fulfillment.

In the footsteps of my predecessors, I have come as a pilgrim to the Holy Land, rich in history and home to the principal events in the origin and growth of the three great monotheistic religions, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. As such, it is of immense spiritual significance for a great part of humanity. So I express my hope and prayer that this blessed land may be one which has no place for those who, by exploiting and absolutizing the value of their own religious tradition, prove intolerant and violent towards those of others.

During my pilgrimage to the Holy Land I will visit some of the most significant places in Jerusalem, a city of universal importance. Jerusalem, of course, means “city of peace”. This is what God wills it to be, and such is the desire of all people of good will. Yet sadly Jerusalem remains deeply troubled as a result of longstanding conflicts. We all know how urgent is the need for peace, not only for Israel but also for the entire region. May efforts and energies be increasingly directed to the pursuit of a just and lasting solution to the conflicts which have caused so much suffering. In union with all men and women of good will, I implore those in positions of responsibility to leave no stone unturned in the search for equitable solutions to complex problems, so that Israelis and Palestinians may live in peace. The path of dialogue, reconciliation and peace must constantly be taken up anew, courageously and tirelessly. There is simply no other way. And so I renew the appeal made in this place by [Pope Benedict XVI](#): the right of the State of Israel to exist and to flourish in peace and security within internationally recognized borders must be universally recognized. At the same time, there must also be a recognition of the right of the Palestinian people to a sovereign homeland and their right to live with dignity and with freedom of movement. The “Two State Solution” must become reality and not remain merely a dream.

A particularly moving part of my stay will be my visit to the Yad Vashem Memorial to the six million Jews who were victims of the Shoah, a tragedy which is the enduring symbol of the depths to which human evil can sink when, spurred by false ideologies, it fails to recognize the fundamental dignity of each person, which merits

unconditional respect regardless of ethnic origin or religious belief. I beg God that there will never be another such crime, which counted among its victims Jews above all, but also numerous Christians and others. Ever mindful of the past, let us promote an education in which exclusion and confrontation give way to inclusion and encounter, where there will be no place for anti-Semitism in any of its forms or for expressions of hostility, discrimination or intolerance towards any individual or people.

With a heavy heart I think of those who have lost their lives in the atrocious attack yesterday in Brussels. While reiterating my condemnation for this criminal act of anti-Semitic hatred, I entrust the victims of this crime to the God of mercy and invoke upon the wounded his gift of healing.

Although my brief visit makes it impossible to meet everyone, I would like even now to greet all Israel's citizens and to express my closeness to them, particularly those living in Nazareth and in Galilee, where many Christian communities are found.

To the Bishops and the Christian faithful I offer a warm and fraternal greeting. I encourage them to persevere in their quiet witness of faith and hope in the service of reconciliation and forgiveness, following the teaching and example of the Lord Jesus, who gave his life to bring about peace between God and man, and between brothers. May you always be a leaven of reconciliation, bringing hope to others, bearing witness to charity! Know that you are constantly in my prayers.

I wish to invite you, Mr President, together with President Mahmoud Abbas, to join me in heartfelt prayer to God for the gift of peace. I offer my home in the Vatican as a place for this encounter of prayer. All of us want peace. Many people build it day by day through small gestures and acts; many of them are suffering, yet patiently persevere in their efforts to be peacemakers. All of us – especially those placed at the service of their respective peoples – have the duty to become instruments and artisans of peace, especially by our prayers. Building peace is difficult, but living without peace is a constant torment. The men and women of these lands, and of the entire world, all of them, ask us to bring before God their fervent hopes for peace.

Mr President, Mr Prime Minister, Ladies and Gentlemen, I thank you once again for your kind welcome.

May peace and prosperity descend in abundance upon Israel. And may God bless his people with peace! Shalom!

PRIVATE MEETING WITH THE ECUMENICAL PATRIARCH OF CONSTANTINOPLE

COMMON DECLARATION OF POPE FRANCIS AND THE ECUMENICAL PATRIARCH BARTHOLOMEW I

Apostolic Delegation (Jerusalem)

Sunday, 25 May 2014

1. Like our venerable predecessors [Pope Paul VI](#) and Ecumenical Patriarch Athenagoras who met here in Jerusalem fifty years ago, we too, [Pope Francis](#) and Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, were determined to meet in the Holy Land “where our common Redeemer, Christ our Lord, lived, taught, died, rose again, and

ascended into Heaven, whence he sent the Holy Spirit on the infant Church” (*Common communiqué of Pope Paul VI and Patriarch Athenagoras*, published after their meeting of 6 January 1964). Our meeting, another encounter of the Bishops of the Churches of Rome and Constantinople founded respectively by the two Brothers the Apostles Peter and Andrew, is a source of profound spiritual joy for us. It presents a providential occasion to reflect on the depth and the authenticity of our existing bonds, themselves the fruit of a grace-filled journey on which the Lord has guided us since that blessed day of fifty years ago.

2. Our fraternal encounter today is a new and necessary step on the journey towards the unity to which only the Holy Spirit can lead us, that of communion in legitimate diversity. We call to mind with profound gratitude the steps that the Lord has already enabled us to undertake. The embrace exchanged between Pope [Paul VI](#) and Patriarch Athenagoras here in Jerusalem, after many centuries of silence, paved the way for a momentous gesture, the removal from the memory and from the midst of the Church of the acts of mutual excommunication in 1054. This was followed by an exchange of visits between the respective Sees of Rome and Constantinople, by regular correspondence and, later, by the decision announced by Pope [John Paul II](#) and Patriarch Dimitrios, of blessed memory both, to initiate a theological dialogue of truth between Catholics and Orthodox. Over these years, God, the source of all peace and love, has taught us to regard one another as members of the same Christian family, under one Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, and to love one another, so that we may confess our faith in the same Gospel of Christ, as received by the Apostles and expressed and transmitted to us by the Ecumenical Councils and the Church Fathers. While fully aware of not having reached the goal of full communion, today we confirm our commitment to continue walking together towards the unity for which Christ our Lord prayed to the Father so “that all may be one” (Jn 17:21).

3. Well aware that unity is manifested in love of God and love of neighbour, we look forward in eager anticipation to the day in which we will finally partake together in the Eucharistic banquet. As Christians, we are called to prepare to receive this gift of Eucharistic communion, according to the teaching of Saint Irenaeus of Lyon (*Against Heresies*, IV,18,5, PG 7,1028), through the confession of the one faith, persevering prayer, inner conversion, renewal of life and fraternal dialogue. By achieving this hoped for goal, we will manifest to the world the love of God by which we are recognized as true disciples of Jesus Christ (cf. Jn 13:35).

4. To this end, the theological dialogue undertaken by the Joint International Commission offers a fundamental contribution to the search for full communion among Catholics and Orthodox. Throughout the subsequent times of Popes [John Paul II](#) and [Benedict XVI](#), and Patriarch Dimitrios, the progress of our theological encounters has been substantial. Today we express heartfelt appreciation for the achievements to date, as well as for the current endeavours. This is no mere theoretical exercise, but an exercise in truth and love that demands an ever deeper knowledge of each other’s traditions in order to understand them and to learn from them. Thus we affirm once again that the theological dialogue does not seek a theological lowest common denominator on which to reach a compromise, but is rather about deepening one’s grasp of the whole truth that Christ has given to his Church, a truth that we never cease to understand better as we follow the Holy Spirit’s promptings. Hence, we affirm together that our faithfulness to the Lord demands fraternal encounter and true dialogue. Such a common pursuit does not lead us away from the truth; rather, through an exchange of gifts, through the guidance of the Holy Spirit, it will lead us into all truth (cf. Jn 16:13).

5. Yet even as we make this journey towards full communion we already have the duty to offer common witness to the love of God for all people by working together in the service of humanity, especially in defending the dignity of the human person at every stage of life and the sanctity of family based on marriage, in promoting peace and the common good, and in responding to the suffering that continues to afflict our world. We acknowledge that hunger, poverty, illiteracy, the inequitable distribution of resources must constantly be addressed. It is our duty to seek to build together a just and humane society in which no-one feels excluded or emarginated.

6. It is our profound conviction that the future of the human family depends also on how we safeguard – both prudently and compassionately, with justice and fairness – the gift of creation that our Creator has entrusted to us. Therefore, we acknowledge in repentance the wrongful mistreatment of our planet, which is tantamount to sin before the eyes of God. We reaffirm our responsibility and obligation to foster a sense of humility and moderation so that all may feel the need to respect creation and to safeguard it with care. Together, we pledge our commitment to raising awareness about the stewardship of creation; we appeal to all people of goodwill to consider ways of living less wastefully and more frugally, manifesting less greed and more generosity for the protection of God’s world and the benefit of His people.

7. There is likewise an urgent need for effective and committed cooperation of Christians in order to safeguard everywhere the right to express publicly one’s faith and to be treated fairly when promoting that which Christianity continues to offer to contemporary society and culture. In this regard, we invite all Christians to promote an authentic dialogue with Judaism, Islam and other religious traditions. Indifference and mutual ignorance can only lead to mistrust and unfortunately even conflict.

8. From this holy city of Jerusalem, we express our shared profound concern for the situation of Christians in the Middle East and for their right to remain full citizens of their homelands. In trust we turn to the almighty and merciful God in a prayer for peace in the Holy Land and in the Middle East in general. We especially pray for the Churches in Egypt, Syria, and Iraq, which have suffered most grievously due to recent events. We encourage all parties regardless of their religious convictions to continue to work for reconciliation and for the just recognition of peoples’ rights. We are persuaded that it is not arms, but dialogue, pardon and reconciliation that are the only possible means to achieve peace.

9. In an historical context marked by violence, indifference and egoism, many men and women today feel that they have lost their bearings. It is precisely through our common witness to the good news of the Gospel that we may be able to help the people of our time to rediscover the way that leads to truth, justice and peace. United in our intentions, and recalling the example, fifty years ago here in Jerusalem, of Pope Paul VI and Patriarch Athenagoras, we call upon all Christians, together with believers of every religious tradition and all people of good will, to recognize the urgency of the hour that compels us to seek the reconciliation and unity of the human family, while fully respecting legitimate differences, for the good of all humanity and of future generations.

10. In undertaking this shared pilgrimage to the site where our one same Lord Jesus Christ was crucified, buried and rose again, we humbly commend to the intercession of the Most Holy and Ever Virgin Mary our future steps on the path towards the fullness of unity, entrusting to God’s infinite love the entire human family. “ May

the Lord let his face shine upon you, and be gracious to you! The Lord look upon you kindly and give you peace!" (Num 6:25-26).

**ECUMENICAL CELEBRATION ON THE OCCASION OF THE 50th ANNIVERSARY OF THE MEETING BETWEEN
POPE PAUL VI AND PATRIARCH ATHENAGORAS IN JERUSALEM**

ADDRESS OF POPE FRANCIS

Basilica of the Holy Sepulchre (Jerusalem)

Sunday, 25 May 2014

Your Holiness,

Dear Brother Bishops,

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

In this Basilica, which all Christians regard with the deepest veneration, my pilgrimage in the company of my beloved brother in Christ, His Holiness Bartholomaios, now reaches its culmination. We are making this pilgrimage in the footsteps of our venerable predecessors, Pope [Paul VI](#) and Patriarch Athenagoras, who, with courage and docility to the Holy Spirit, made possible, fifty years ago, in this holy city of Jerusalem, an [historic meeting](#) between the Bishop of Rome and the Patriarch of Constantinople. I cordially greet all of you who are present. In a special way I express my heartfelt gratitude to those who have made this moment possible: His Beatitude Theophilos, who has welcomed us so graciously, His Beatitude Nourhan Manoogian and Father Pierbattista Pizzaballa.

It is an extraordinary grace to be gathered here in prayer. The empty tomb, that new garden grave where Joseph of Arimathea had reverently placed Jesus' body, is the place from which the proclamation of the resurrection begins: "Do not be afraid; I know that you are looking for Jesus who was crucified. He is not here, for he has been raised, as he said. Come, see the place where he lay. Then go quickly and tell his disciples, 'He has been raised from the dead'" (*Mt 28:5-7*). This proclamation, confirmed by the testimony of those to whom the risen Lord appeared, is the heart of the Christian message, faithfully passed down from generation to generation, as the Apostle Paul, from the very beginning, bears witness: "I handed on to you as of first importance what I in turn had received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, and that he was buried, and that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures" (*1 Cor 15:3-4*). This is the basis of the faith which unites us, whereby together we profess that Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of the Father and our sole Lord, "suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried; he descended into hell; on the third day he rose again from the dead" (*Apostles' Creed*). Each of us, everyone baptized in Christ, has spiritually risen from this tomb, for in baptism all of us truly became members of the body of the One who is the Firstborn of all creation; we were buried together with him, so as to be raised up with him and to walk in newness of life (cf. *Rom 6:4*).

Let us receive the special grace of this moment. We pause in reverent silence before this empty tomb in order to rediscover the grandeur of our Christian vocation: we are men and women of resurrection, and not of death. From this place we learn how to live our lives, the trials of our Churches and of the whole world, in the light of Easter morning. Every injury, every one of our pains and sorrows, has been borne on the shoulders of the Good

Shepherd who offered himself in sacrifice and thereby opened the way to eternal life. His open wounds are like the cleft through which the torrent of his mercy is poured out upon the world. Let us not allow ourselves to be robbed of the basis of our hope, which is this: *Christòs anesti!* Let us not deprive the world of the joyful message of the resurrection! And let us not be deaf to the powerful summons to unity which rings out from this very place, in the words of the One who, risen from the dead, calls all of us “my brothers” (cf. *Mt 28:10; Jn 20:17*).

Clearly we cannot deny the divisions which continue to exist among us, the disciples of Jesus: this sacred place makes us even more painfully aware of how tragic they are. And yet, fifty years after the embrace of those two venerable Fathers, we realize with gratitude and renewed amazement how it was possible, at the prompting of the Holy Spirit, to take truly significant steps towards unity. We know that much distance still needs to be travelled before we attain that fullness of communion which can also be expressed by sharing the same Eucharistic table, something we ardently desire; yet our disagreements must not frighten us and paralyze our progress. We need to believe that, just as the stone before the tomb was cast aside, so too every obstacle to our full communion will also be removed. This will be a grace of resurrection, of which we can have a foretaste even today. Every time we ask forgiveness of one another for our sins against other Christians and every time we find the courage to grant and receive such forgiveness, we experience the resurrection! Every time we put behind us our longstanding prejudices and find the courage to build new fraternal relationships, we confess that Christ is truly risen! Every time we reflect on the future of the Church in the light of her vocation to unity, the dawn of Easter breaks forth! Here I reiterate the hope already expressed by my predecessors for a continued dialogue with all our brothers and sisters in Christ, aimed at finding a means of exercising the specific ministry of the Bishop of Rome which, in fidelity to his mission, can be open to a new situation and can be, in the present context, a service of love and of communion acknowledged by all (cf. JOHN PAUL II, [*Ut Unum Sint*](#), 95-96).

Standing as pilgrims in these holy places, we also remember in our prayers the entire Middle East, so frequently and lamentably marked by acts of violence and conflict. Nor do we forget in our prayers the many other men and women who in various parts of our world are suffering from war, poverty and hunger, as well as the many Christians who are persecuted for their faith in the risen Lord. When Christians of different confessions suffer together, side by side, and assist one another with fraternal charity, there is born an ecumenism of suffering, an ecumenism of blood, which proves particularly powerful not only for those situations in which it occurs, but also, by virtue of the communion of the saints, for the whole Church as well. Those who kill, persecute Christians out of hatred, do not ask if they are Orthodox or Catholics: they are Christians. The blood of Christians is the same.

Your Holiness, beloved brother, dear brothers and sisters all, let us put aside the misgivings we have inherited from the past and open our hearts to the working of the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of love (cf. *Rom 5:5*), in order to hasten together towards that blessed day when our full communion will be restored. In making this journey, we feel ourselves sustained by the prayer which Jesus himself, in this city, on the eve of his passion, death and resurrection, offered to the Father for his disciples. It is a prayer which we ourselves in humility never tire to make our own: “that they may all be one... that the world may believe” (*Jn 17:21*). And when disunity makes us pessimistic, distrusting, fearful, let us all commend ourselves to the protection of the Holy Mother of God.

When there is spiritual turmoil in the Christian soul, it is only by seeking refuge under her mantle that we can find peace. May the Holy Mother of God help us on this journey.

VISIT TO THE GRAN MUFTI OF JERUSALEM

ADDRESS OF POPE FRANCIS

Building of the Great Council on the Esplanade of the Mosques (Jerusalem)

Monday, 26 May 2014

*Your Excellency,
Dear Muslim Faithful,
Dear Friends,*

I am grateful for the opportunity to meet with you in this sacred place. I thank you for the courteous invitation you have extended to me and, in particular, I wish to thank the Grand Mufti and the President of the Supreme Muslim Council.

Following in the footsteps of my predecessors, and in particular the [historic visit of Pope Paul VI](#) fifty years ago, the first visit of a Pope to the Holy Land, I have greatly desired to come as a pilgrim to the places which witnessed the earthly presence of Jesus Christ. But my pilgrimage would not be complete if it did not also include a meeting with the people and the communities who live in this Land. I am particularly happy, therefore, to be with you, dear Muslim faithful, brothers.

At this moment I think of Abraham, who lived as a pilgrim in these lands. Muslims, Christians and Jews see in him, albeit in different ways, a father in faith and a great example to be imitated. He became a pilgrim, leaving his own people and his own house in order to embark on that spiritual adventure to which God called him.

A pilgrim is a person who makes himself poor and sets forth on a journey. Pilgrims set out intently toward a great and longed-for destination, and they live in the hope of a promise received (cf. *Heb* 11:8-19). This was how Abraham lived, and this should be our spiritual attitude. We can never think ourselves self-sufficient, masters of our own lives. We cannot be content with remaining withdrawn, secure in our convictions. Before the mystery of God we are all poor. We realize that we must constantly be prepared to go out from ourselves, docile to God's call and open to the future that he wishes to create for us.

In our earthly pilgrimage we are not alone. We cross paths with other faithful; at times we share with them a stretch of the road and at other times we experience with them a moment of rest which refreshes us. Such is our meeting today, for which I am particularly grateful. It is a welcome and shared moment of rest, made possible by your hospitality, on the pilgrimage of our life and that of our communities. We are experiencing a fraternal dialogue and exchange which are able to restore us and offer us new strength to confront the common challenges before us.

Nor can we forget that the pilgrimage of Abraham was also a summons to righteousness: God wanted him to witness his way of acting and to imitate him. We too wish to witness to God's working in the world, and so,

precisely in this meeting, we hear deep within us his summons to work for peace and justice, to implore these gifts in prayer and to learn from on high mercy, magnanimity and compassion.

Dear brothers, dear friends, from this holy place I make a heartfelt plea to all people and to all communities who look to Abraham: may we respect and love one another as brothers and sisters! May we learn to understand the sufferings of others! May no one abuse the name of God through violence! May we work together for justice and peace! *Salaam!*

VISIT TO THE YAD VASHEM MEMORIAL

ADDRESS OF POPE FRANCIS

Jerusalem

Monday, 26 May 2014

“Adam, where are you?” (cf. Gen 3:9). Where are you, o man? What have you come to? In this place, this memorial of the Shoah, we hear God’s question echo once more: “Adam, where are you?” This question is charged with all the sorrow of a Father who has lost his child. The Father knew the risk of freedom; he knew that his children could be lost... yet perhaps not even the Father could imagine so great a fall, so profound an abyss! Here, before the boundless tragedy of the Holocaust, That cry – “Where are you?” – echoes like a faint voice in an unfathomable abyss...

Adam, who are you? I no longer recognize you. Who are you, o man? What have you become? Of what horror have you been capable? What made you fall to such depths?

Certainly it is not the dust of the earth from which you were made. The dust of the earth is something good, the work of my hands. Certainly it is not the breath of life which I breathed into you. That breath comes from me, and it is something good (cf. Gen 2:7).

No, this abyss is not merely the work of your own hands, your own heart... Who corrupted you? Who disfigured you? Who led you to presume that you are the master of good and evil? Who convinced you that you were god? Not only did you torture and kill your brothers and sisters, but you sacrificed them to yourself, because you made yourself a god.

Today, in this place, we hear once more the voice of God: “Adam, where are you?”

From the ground there rises up a soft cry: “Have mercy on us, O Lord!” To you, O Lord our God, belongs righteousness; but to us confusion of face and shame (cf. Bar 1:15).

A great evil has befallen us, such as never happened under the heavens (cf. Bar 2:2). Now, Lord, hear our prayer, hear our plea, save us in your mercy. Save us from this horror.

Almighty Lord, a soul in anguish cries out to you. Hear, Lord, and have mercy! We have sinned against you. You reign for ever (cf. Bar 3:1-2). Remember us in your mercy. Grant us the grace to be ashamed of what we men

have done, to be ashamed of this massive idolatry, of having despised and destroyed our own flesh which you formed from the earth, to which you gave life with your own breath of life. Never again, Lord, never again!

“Adam, where are you?” Here we are, Lord, shamed by what man, created in your own image and likeness, was capable of doing. Remember us in your mercy.

OURTESY VISIT TO THE TWO CHIEF RABBIS OF ISRAEL

ADDRESS OF POPE FRANCIS

Heichal Shlomo Center next to the Jerusalem Great Synagogue (Jerusalem)

Monday, 26 May 2014

Distinguished Chief Rabbis of Israel,

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

I am particularly pleased to be here with you today. I am grateful for your warm reception and your kind words of welcome.

As you know, from the time I was Archbishop of Buenos Aires, I have counted many Jews among my friends. Today two friends who are rabbis are here with us. Together we organized rewarding occasions of encounter and dialogue; with them I also experienced significant moments of sharing on a spiritual level. In the first months of my pontificate, I was able to receive various organizations and representatives from the Jewish community worldwide. As was the case with my predecessors, there have been many requests for such meetings. Together with the numerous initiatives taking place on national and local levels, these testify to our mutual desire to know one another better, to listen to each other and to build bonds of true fraternity.

This journey of friendship represents one of the fruits of the [Second Vatican Council](#), and particularly of the Declaration [Nostra Aetate](#), which proved so influential and whose fiftieth anniversary we will celebrate next year. I am convinced that the progress which has been made in recent decades in the relationship between Jews and Catholics has been a genuine gift of God, one of those great works for which we are called to bless his holy name: “Give thanks to the Lord of lords, for his love endures forever; who alone has wrought marvellous works, for his love endures forever” (*Ps 135/136:3-4*).

A gift of God, yes, but one which would not have come about without the efforts of so many courageous and generous people, Jews and Christians alike. Here I would like to mention in particular the growing importance of the dialogue between the Chief Rabbinate of Israel and the Holy See’s Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews. Inspired by the visit of Pope [John Paul II](#) to the Holy Land, this dialogue was inaugurated in 2002 and is already in its twelfth year. I would like to think that, in terms of the Jewish tradition of the *Bar Mitzvah*, it is just coming of age. I am confident that it will continue and have a bright future in years to come.

We need to do more than simply establish reciprocal and respectful relations on a human level: we are also called, as Christians and Jews, to reflect deeply on the spiritual significance of the bond existing between us. It

is a bond whose origins are from on high, one which transcends our own plans and projects, and one which remains intact despite all the difficulties which, sadly, have marked our relationship in the past.

On the part of Catholics, there is a clear intention to reflect deeply on the significance of the Jewish roots of our own faith. I trust that, with your help, on the part of Jews too, there will be a continued and even growing interest in knowledge of Christianity, also in this holy land to which Christians trace their origins. This is especially to be hoped for among young people.

Mutual understanding of our spiritual heritage, appreciation for what we have in common and respect in matters on which we disagree: all these can help to guide us to a closer relationship, an intention which we put in God's hands. Together, we can make a great contribution to the cause of peace; together, we can bear witness, in this rapidly changing world, to the perennial importance of the divine plan of creation; together, we can firmly oppose every form of anti-Semitism and all other forms of discrimination. May the Lord help us to walk with confidence and strength in his ways. *Shalom!*

COURTESY VISIT TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE STATE OF ISRAEL

ADDRESS OF POPE FRANCIS

Presidential Residence (Jerusalem)

Monday, 26 May 2014

I thank you, Mr President, for your words of greeting and your welcome. With a touch of imagination, I would like to invent a new Beatitude, one I can apply to myself today: "Blessed is he who enters the house of a wise and good man". I feel blessed. Thank you most sincerely.

Mr President,

Your Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am grateful to you, Mr President, for your kind and sage words of greeting and your warm welcome. I am happy to be able to meet you once again, this time in Jerusalem, the city which preserves the Holy Places dear to the three great religions which worship the God who called Abraham. **The Holy Places are not monuments or museums for tourists, but places where communities of believers daily express their faith and culture, and carry out their works of charity.** Precisely for this reason, their sacred character must be perpetually maintained and protection given not only to the legacy of the past but also to all those who visit these sites today and to those who will visit them in the future. May Jerusalem be truly the City of Peace! May her identity and her sacred character, her universal religious and cultural significance shine forth as a treasure for all mankind! How good it is when pilgrims and residents enjoy free access to the Holy Places and can freely take part in religious celebrations.

Mr President, you are known as a man of peace and a peacemaker. I appreciate and admire the approach you have taken. Peacemaking demands first and foremost respect for the dignity and freedom of every human person, which Jews, Christians and Muslims alike believe to be created by God and destined to eternal life. This

shared conviction enables us resolutely to pursue peaceful solutions to every controversy and conflict. Here I renew my plea that all parties avoid initiatives and actions which contradict their stated determination to reach a true agreement and that they tirelessly work for peace, with decisiveness and tenacity.

There is likewise need for a firm rejection of all that is opposed to the cultivation of peace and respectful relations between Jews, Christians and Muslims. We think, for example, of recourse to violence and terrorism, all forms of discrimination on the basis of race or religion, attempts to impose one's own point of view at the expense of the rights of others, anti-Semitism in all its possible expressions, and signs of intolerance directed against individuals or places of worship, be they Jewish, Christian or Muslim.

A variety of Christian communities live and work in the State of Israel. They are an integral part of society and participate fully in its civic, political and cultural affairs. Christians wish, as such, to contribute to the common good and the growth of peace; they wish to do so as full-fledged citizens who reject extremism in all its forms and are committed to fostering reconciliation and harmony.

The presence of these communities and respect for their rights – as for the rights of all other religious groups and all minorities – are the guarantee of a healthy pluralism and proof of the vitality of democratic values as they are authentically embodied in the daily life and workings of the State.

Mr President, you know that I pray for you and I know that you are praying for me, and I assure you of my continued prayers for the institutions and the citizens of the State of Israel. I likewise assure you of my constant prayer for the attainment of peace and all the inestimable goods which accompany it: security, tranquillity, prosperity and - the most beautiful of all - fraternity. Finally, my thoughts turn to all those afflicted by the continuing crises in the Middle East. I pray that their sufferings may soon be alleviated by an honourable resolution of hostilities. Peace be upon Israel and the entire Middle East! *Shalom!*

MEETING WITH PRIESTS, RELIGIOUS AND SEMINARIANS

ADDRESS OF POPE FRANCIS

Church of Gethsemane at the foot of the Mount of Olives (Jerusalem)

Monday, 26 May 2014

“He came out and went... to the Mount of Olives; and the disciples followed him” (Lk 22:39).

At the hour which God had appointed to save humanity from its enslavement to sin, Jesus came here, to Gethsemane, to the foot of the Mount of Olives. We now find ourselves in this holy place, a place sanctified by the prayer of Jesus, by his agony, by his sweating of blood, and above all by his “yes” to the loving will of the Father. We dread in some sense to approach what Jesus went through at that hour; we tread softly as we enter that inner space where the destiny of the world was decided.

In that hour, Jesus felt the need to pray and to have with him his disciples, his friends, those who had followed him and shared most closely in his mission. But here, at Gethsemane, following him became difficult and uncertain; they were overcome by doubt, weariness and fright. As the events of Jesus' passion rapidly

unfolded, the disciples would adopt different attitudes before the Master: attitudes of closeness, distance, hesitation.

Here, in this place, each of us – bishops, priests, consecrated persons, and seminarians – might do well to ask: Who am I, before the sufferings of my Lord?

Am I among those who, when Jesus asks them to keep watch with him, fall asleep instead, and rather than praying, seek to escape, refusing to face reality?

Or do I see myself in those who fled out of fear, who abandoned the Master at the most tragic hour in his earthly life?

Is there perhaps duplicity in me, like that of the one who sold our Lord for thirty pieces of silver, who was once called Jesus' "friend", and yet ended up by betraying him?

Do I see myself in those who drew back and denied him, like Peter? Shortly before, he had promised Jesus that he would follow him even unto death (cf. *Lk 22:33*); but then, put to the test and assailed by fear, he swore he did not know him.

Am I like those who began planning to go about their lives without him, like the two disciples on the road to Emmaus, foolish and slow of heart to believe the words of the prophets (cf. *Lk 24:25*)?

Or, thanks be to God, do I find myself among those who remained faithful to the end, like the Virgin Mary and the Apostle John? On Golgotha, when everything seemed bleak and all hope seemed pointless, only love proved stronger than death. The love of the Mother and the beloved disciple made them stay at the foot of the Cross, sharing in the pain of Jesus, to the very end.

Do I recognize myself in those who imitated their Master to the point of martyrdom, testifying that he was everything to them, the incomparable strength sustaining their mission and the ultimate horizon of their lives?

Jesus' friendship with us, his faithfulness and his mercy, are a priceless gift which encourages us to follow him trustingly, notwithstanding our failures, our mistakes, also our betrayals.

But the Lord's goodness does not dispense us from the need for vigilance before the Tempter, before sin, before the evil and the betrayal which can enter even into the religious and priestly life. We are all exposed to sin, to evil, to betrayal. We are fully conscious of the disproportion between the grandeur of God's call and of our own littleness, between the sublimity of the mission and the reality of our human weakness. Yet the Lord in his great goodness and his infinite mercy always takes us by the hand lest we drown in the sea of our fears and anxieties. He is ever at our side, he never abandons us. And so, let us not be overwhelmed by fear or disheartened, but with courage and confidence let us press forward in our journey and in our mission.

You, dear brothers and sisters, are called to follow the Lord with joy in this holy land! It is a gift and also a responsibility. Your presence here is extremely important; the whole Church is grateful to you and she sustains you by her prayers. From this holy place, I wish to extend my heartfelt greetings to all Christians in Jerusalem: I

would like to assure them that I remember them affectionately and that I pray for them, being well aware of the difficulties they experience in this city. I urge them to be courageous witnesses of the passion of the Lord but also of his resurrection, with joy and hope.

Let us imitate the Virgin Mary and Saint John, and stand by all those crosses where Jesus continues to be crucified. This is how the Lord calls us to follow him: this is the path, there is no other!

“Whoever serves me must follow me, and where I am, there will my servant be also” (*Jn 12:26*).

HOLY MASS WITH THE ORDINARIES OF THE HOLY LAND AND THE PAPAL ENTOURAGE

HOMILY OF POPE FRANCIS

The Upper Room (Jerusalem)

Monday, 26 May 2014

It is a great gift that the Lord has given us by bringing us together here in the Upper Room for the celebration of the Eucharist. I greet you with fraternal joy and I wish to express my affection to the Oriental Catholic Patriarchs who have taken part in my pilgrimage during these days. I want to thank them for their significant presence, particularly dear to me and I assure them of a special place in my heart and in my prayers. Here, where Jesus shared the Last Supper with the apostles; where, after his resurrection, he appeared in their midst; where the Holy Spirit descended with power upon Mary and the disciples, here the Church was born, and she was born *to go forth*. From here she *set out*, with the broken bread in her hands, the wounds of Christ before her eyes, and the Spirit of love in her heart.

In the Upper Room, the risen Jesus, sent by the Father, bestowed upon the apostles his own Spirit and with his power he sent them forth to renew the face of the earth (cf. *Ps 104:30*).

To go forth, to set out, does not mean to forget. The Church, in her going forth, preserves the *memory* of what took place here; *the Spirit, the Paraclete, reminds her* of every word and every action, and reveals their true meaning.

The Upper Room speaks to us of *service*, of Jesus giving the disciples an example by washing their feet. Washing one another's feet signifies welcoming, accepting, loving and serving one another. It means serving the poor, the sick and the outcast, those whom I find difficult, those who annoy me.

The Upper Room reminds us, through the Eucharist, of *sacrifice*. In every Eucharistic celebration Jesus offers himself for us to the Father, so that we too can be united with him, offering to God our lives, our work, our joys and our sorrows... offering everything as a spiritual sacrifice.

The Upper Room also reminds us of *friendship*. “No longer do I call you servants – Jesus said to the Twelve – but I have called you friends” (*Jn 15:15*). The Lord makes us his friends, he reveals God's will to us and he gives us his very self. This is the most beautiful part of being a Christian and, especially, of being a priest: becoming a friend of the Lord Jesus, and discovering in our hearts that he is our friend.

The Upper Room reminds us of the Teacher's *farewell* and his *promise* to return to his friends: "When I go... I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also" (Jn 14:3). Jesus does not leave us, nor does he ever abandon us; he precedes us to the house of the Father, where he desires to bring us as well.

The Upper Room, however, also reminds us of *pettiness*, of *curiosity* – "Who is the traitor?" – and of *betrayal*. We ourselves, and not just others, can reawaken those attitudes whenever we look at our brother or sister with contempt, whenever we judge them, whenever by our sins we betray Jesus.

The Upper Room reminds us of *sharing*, *fraternity*, *harmony* and *peace* among ourselves. How much love and goodness has flowed from the Upper Room! How much charity has gone forth from here, like a river from its source, beginning as a stream and then expanding and becoming a great torrent. All the saints drew from this source; and hence the great river of the Church's holiness continues to flow: from the Heart of Christ, from the Eucharist and from the Holy Spirit.

Lastly, the Upper Room reminds us of the birth of the *new family*, the Church, our holy Mother the hierarchical Church established by the risen Jesus; a family that has a Mother, the Virgin Mary. Christian families belong to this great family, and in it they find the light and strength to press on and be renewed, amid the challenges and difficulties of life. All God's children, of every people and language, are invited and called to be part of this great family, as brothers and sisters and sons and daughters of the one Father in heaven.

These horizons are opened up by the Upper Room, the horizons of the Risen Lord and his Church.

From here the Church goes forth, impelled by the life-giving breath of the Spirit. Gathered in prayer with the Mother of Jesus, the Church lives in constant expectation of a renewed outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Send forth your Spirit, Lord, and renew the face of the earth (cf. Ps 104:30)!

***INTERVIEW OF POPE FRANCIS WITH JOURNALISTS
DURING THE RETURN FLIGHT FROM THE HOLY LAND***

Papal Flight

Monday, 26 May 2014

(Father Lombardi)

We thank the Pope very much for being here. After so exhausting a journey, he has been willing to meet us. So we're very grateful to him.

We have organized ourselves – the journalists worked this out on their own – in some of the major language groups, which will present a few people to ask questions. I have not put any limits on them, because I know that you are willing to give them free scope... unless you yourself would like to say something first by way of introduction... Let us go to the questions.

The first question is from the Italian group:

Q. Holy Father, in these days you performed gestures which made the rounds of the whole world: putting your hand on the wall in Bethlehem, making the sign of the cross, embracing the survivors today at Yad Vashem, but also kissing the Holy Sepulchre yesterday with Bartholomaios, and so forth. We wanted to ask you if you had thought beforehand about all these gestures, decided on them. Why did you choose them and what do you think will be the effect of these gestures, in addition, naturally, to the grandiose gesture of inviting Peres and Abu Mazen to the Vatican...

R. Gestures, the most authentic gestures, are not those you think about beforehand, but the ones that come naturally, no? I thought: "Something might be done", but the concrete gestures, none of these was planned as such. Some things, for example inviting the two Presidents to pray, we had thought of doing there, but there were so many logistical problems, so very many, since they also have to take account of the territory, where it would take place, and that is not easy. So we thought of a meeting... but in the end we came up with this invitation which I hope will turn out well. But [the gestures] weren't thought out beforehand and .. I don't know, I get the idea of doing something, but it's spontaneous, that's the way it is. At least, to tell the truth, an idea that "something could be done", but the concrete [gesture] did not come to me. For example, at Yad Vashem, nothing [came]; and then it did. That is what happened.

(Father Lombardi)

Good. Now a second question comes from the English language group.

Q. You have spoken out forcefully against the sexual abuse of minors by the clergy, by priests. You created a special commission to improve the way this problem is handled at the level of the universal Church. Practically speaking: we now know that in all the local Churches there are norms which impose a serious moral and often legal duty to cooperate with local civil authorities, in one way or another. What would you do in the case of a bishop who clearly did not respect, didn't follow, these obligations?

R. In Argentina, we say that people who get special treatment are "Daddy's little baby". As far as this problem is concerned, there will be no such "little babies". Right now three bishops are under investigation. Three, and one has already been convicted and his punishment is being decided. There is no special treatment. The abuse of minors is truly a horrible crime... We know that it is a serious problem everywhere, but my concern is about the Church. A priest who does this betrays the body of the Lord, because this priest is supposed to lead this boy or girl, this young man or woman, to holiness. And these young people, these children are trusting... and then instead of leading them to holiness, he abuses them. And this is extremely serious! It is like... let me give just one example: it is like saying a black mass. You are supposed to lead them to holiness and you create a life-long problem for them ... In the near future, at Santa Marta, there will be a Mass with some persons who have been abused, followed by a meeting: with them and myself, along with Cardinal O'Malley, who is part of the commission. But on this issue we need to keep moving forward: zero tolerance.

(Father Lombardi)

Thank you, Your Holiness. And now the Spanish language group.

Q. From the first day of your pontificate you have sent this clear message about a Church which is poor and for the poor, poor in simplicity, austerity. What do you plan to do to eliminate things which contradict this message of austerity? (The question went on to speak about situations recently reported in the press, including a transaction at the IOR involving 15 million euro).

A. The Lord Jesus once said to his disciples – it is in the Gospel: “It is inevitable that there will be scandals...” We are human beings, all of us are sinners. And there will be scandals, there will be. The issue is to prevent more from happening! In the administration of finances, honesty and transparency [are essential]. The two commissions, the one which studied the IOR and the other which studied the Vatican as a whole, have reached their conclusions and offered proposals, and now, the ministry (we can call it that), the Secretariat for the Economy headed by Cardinal Pell, will pursue the reforms which these commissions recommended. But there will be inconsistencies, they will always be there because we are human, and so reform has to be ongoing. The Fathers of the Church used to say: “Ecclesia semper reformanda”. We have to be concerned to reform the Church day by day, because we are sinners, we are weak, and there are going to be problems. The administrative reorganization which the Secretariat for the Economy is working on will greatly help to avoid scandals, problems... For example, at the IOR I believe that at this point some... 1,600 accounts have been closed, belonging to people who are not entitled to have an account at the IOR. The IOR is meant to assist the Church: bishops of dioceses are entitled to have an account there, as well as employees of the Vatican and their widows or widowers, for their pensions.. That is what it is meant for. But other private individuals do not have that right...embassies, but only during the time of their embassy and not thereafter. It is not something open. And it is a good thing to close accounts which have no business being there. I would like to say one thing: in asking your question you brought up that matter of the 15 million euro. It is being looked into, the whole affair is not clear. It could be true, but at this time nothing definitive has been established: the problem is being studied, to be fair. Thank you.

(Father Lombardi)

Now it is the turn of the French language group.

Q. Holy Father, after the Middle East, we are now returning to Europe. Are you concerned about the growth of populism in Europe, which was once again evident yesterday in the European elections?

A. In these days, I have barely had time to pray the Our Father! ... I really don't know anything about the elections, really. I don't have information about who won, who didn't win. I haven't seen the news. When you say populism, in what sense do you mean it?

Q. In the sense that many Europeans are afraid nowadays; they think that there is no future for Europe. Unemployment is high and the anti-Europe party has made great gains in these elections...

A. This is something I have been hearing about. About Europe, about people's confidence or lack of confidence in Europe. And about the euro, how some people want to turn back... I don't know a lot about these things. But you said a key word: unemployment. This is serious. It is serious because I see it this way, putting it simply. We are in a world economic system which is centred on money, not on the human person. A genuine economic system is centred on man and woman, the human person. Today money is at the centre. To maintain itself, its

equilibrium, this system has to adopt certain “throwaway” measures. So you throw away children – the birth rate in Europe is not very high! I believe that in Italy it stands at 1.2%; in France, you have 2%, maybe a little more; in Spain, less than Italy – I don't know if it even reaches 1%... Children are discarded. The elderly are discarded: old people are not useful; in the present situation, at this moment, we visit them because they are retired and needy, but it is a matter of the present situation. The elderly are also discarded with situations of hidden euthanasia in many countries. In a word, they are given medical care to a certain point, and then... And right now young people are being discarded and this is something very serious. It is extremely serious. In Italy, I believe that the rate of unemployment among the young is nearly 40%, I'm not sure. In Spain, I am sure that it is about 50%. And in Andalusia, in southern Spain, it is 60%! This means that there is an entire generation which is “neither-nor”: they neither study nor work, and this is something really serious! A generation of young people is being thrown away. For me, this throwaway culture is extremely serious. But it is not only in Europe, it is a bit everywhere, but in Europe we really feel it. A comparison can be made with the culture of well-being, ten years ago. And this is tragic. It is a difficult moment. It is an inhumane economic system. I didn't hesitate to write in the Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* that this economic system kills. And I repeat this. I don't know if to some extent I have addressed your concern... Thank you.

(Father Lombardi)

It is now the turn of the Portuguese language group.

Q. Holiness, I would like to ask you how should the “Jerusalem question” be resolved, so as to obtain a lasting and, as you have said, stable peace? Thank you.

A. There are many proposals about the Jerusalem question. The Catholic Church, we can say the Vatican, has its own position from a religious perspective: it will be the city of peace of the three religions. This from a religious standpoint. The concrete measures for peace must emerge from negotiations. There have to be negotiations. I would be in agreement if from negotiations, there might come forward this part: it will be capital of one state, of another... But these are conjectures. I am not saying: “It has to be this way”, no. These are proposals which have to be negotiated. Really, I don't feel competent to say, “This or that should be done”, because it would be madness on my part. But I believe that one has to enter into negotiations with honesty, a spirit of fraternity and mutual trust. And there everything is negotiated: all the territory, also the relations. Courage is needed to do this, and I fervently pray to the Lord that these two leaders, these two governments, will have the courage to go forward. This is the only path to peace. I only say what the Church must say and has always said: Jerusalem should be preserved as the capital of the three religions, as a point of reference, as a city of peace – I was also about to say “sacred”, but that is not the right word – but [a city] of peace and [a] religious [city].

(Father Lombardi)

Thank you, Holiness. Now we call upon the representative of the German language.

Q. Thank you, Holiness. During your pilgrimage, you spoke at length, and on a number of occasions met with Patriarch Bartholomaios. We were wondering if you also spoke about concrete means of rapprochement, if you also had occasion to speak of this. I wonder also if perhaps the Catholic Church could be able to learn something from the Orthodox Churches – I am speaking of married priests, a question which many Catholics in Germany consider urgent. Thank you.

A. But the Catholic Church has married priests, no? Greek Catholics, Coptic Catholics, no? They exist, in the Eastern rites, there are married priests. Because celibacy is not a dogma of faith, it is a rule of life which I highly esteem and I believe is a gift for the Church. Since it is not a dogma of faith, the door is always open: at this time we have not spoken about this, as a programme, at least not now. We have more important things to do. With Bartolomaios, this subject was not broached because it is secondary, really, in our relations with the Orthodox. We spoke about unity, but unity happens along the way, unity is a journey. We can never create unity in a theology conference. He told me something I already knew, namely, that Athenagoras had said to Paul VI: “Let us quietly go forward; we can put all the theologians on an island to carry on their discussions, while we keep walking on in life!” It is true, as I thought it was... No, no, it is true. Bartholomaios himself told me so in these days. To walk together, to pray together, to cooperate on the many things we can do together, to join in helping one another. For example, with our churches. In Rome, and in numerous other cities, many Orthodox communities use Catholic churches at certain times as a help in this moving forward. Another thing about which we spoke, which perhaps the Pan-Orthodox council may do something, is the date of Easter, since it is a little ridiculous: “Tell me when does Christ rise for you?” ... “Next week” ... “For me he rose last week...” Yes, the date of Easter is one sign of unity. And with Bartholomaios we spoke as brothers. We like each other, we tell each other about our difficulties in governance. And one thing we have frequently spoken about is the issue of ecology: he is very concerned [about this], as I am. We have spoken enough to cooperate on a joint project on the issue. Thank you.

(Father Lombardi)

Since here we are not only Europeans or Americans, and so on, but also Asians, let’s now have a question from the representative of the Asian group, since you are also preparing to make trips to Asia.

Q. Your next journey will be in South Korea, and thus I would like to ask you about the Asian countries. In countries close to South Korea – there is no freedom of religion or freedom of expression. What are you thinking of doing on behalf of people who suffer from these situations?

R. As far as Asia is concerned, two trips are planned: this one to South Korea for the meeting with Asian young people, and then, next January, a two-day visit to Sri Lanka and the Philippines, in the areas struck by the typhoon. The problem of the lack of freedom to practice one’s religion is not only found in certain Asian countries: in some, yes, but also in other countries of the world. Religious freedom is not something which all countries have. Some exert a more or less light, unobtrusive control; others adopt measures which end up as a true persecution of believers. There are martyrs! There are martyrs, today, Christian martyrs. Catholic and non-Catholics, but martyrs just the same. And in some places one cannot wear a crucifix or have a Bible. You can’t teach catechism to children, today! And I believe, I don’t think I am mistaken – that nowadays there are more martyrs than in the early days of the Church. We need to draw close to them, prudently in some places, in order to come to their aid; we must pray much for these Churches which suffer: they suffer greatly. Bishops too, and the Holy See, are quietly working to help these countries, the Christians of these countries. But is not an easy thing. For example, I’ll tell you one thing. In one country it is prohibited to pray together: it is forbidden. But the Christians there want to celebrate the Eucharist! And there is someone, a worker, who is a priest. And he goes there, to the table, and they make believe they’re drinking tea and they celebrate the Eucharist. If the police come, they quickly hide the books and take their tea. This is happening today. It is not easy.

(Father Lombardi)

And now we return to the Italian language group.

Q. Holiness, as Pope you have a great number of commitments and you keep up a very busy schedule, as we have seen these days. If at some point, let's say, some time from now, you feel that you no longer have the strength to carry out your ministry, do you think you would make the same choice as your predecessor, and leave the papacy?

A. I will do what the Lord tells me to do. Pray and seek God's will. But I believe that Benedict XVI is not a unique case. It so happened that his strength was failing, and in all seriousness – he is a man of faith and very humble – he made this decision. I believe that he is an institution. Seventy years ago, for the most part retired bishops didn't exist. And now, we have plenty of them. What will happen with retired Popes? I believe that we should see him as an institution: he opened a door, the door to retired Popes. Will there be others? God knows. But this door is open. I believe that a Bishop of Rome, a Pope, who feels that his strength is failing – because these days we are living longer – has to ask the same questions that Pope Benedict asked.

(Father Lombardi)

We now return to the English language group.

Q. Holy Father, today you met a group of Holocaust survivors. Obviously, you are well aware that a figure who remains controversial because of his role during the Holocaust is your predecessor, Pope Pius XII. Before becoming Pope, you wrote or said that you held Pius XII in high regard, but that you wanted to see the archives opened before coming to a definite conclusion. So we want to know whether you intend to go ahead with the cause of Pius XII, or will wait for further developments in the process before making a decision. Thank you.

A. Thank you. The cause of Pius XII remains open; I have looked into it. There is still no miracle, and without miracles it cannot proceed. That is where things stand. We have to wait to see how things turn out, how the cause proceeds, and then think about making decisions. But the fact remains that there is no miracle and at least one miracle is needed for beatification. This is where the cause of Pius XII stands today. And I cannot think: "Will I beatify him or not", because it is a slow process. Thank you.

(Father Lombardi)

Now let us go to Argentina for another question from the Spanish language group.

Q. You have become a spiritual leader, and also a political leader, and you are raising many expectations, both within the Church and in the international community. Within the Church, for example, what is going to happen with communion to the divorced and remarried, and in the international community, this mediation with which you surprised the world, for which this meeting will take place in the Vatican... My question is whether you are afraid of failure, after having raised so many expectations. Aren't you afraid of somehow failing? Thank you.

A. First of all, let me clarify something about this meeting in the Vatican. It will be a meeting to pray, not to mediate or to seek solutions, no. We will meet to pray, only. And then each one will go home. But I believe that

prayer is important and that praying together without discussions of any kind is helpful. Perhaps I did not explain things well, before this, about what it will involve. It will be a prayer meeting: there will be a rabbi, there will be a Muslim and myself. I have asked the Custos of the Holy Land to organize some of the practical matters.

Second, thank you for your question about the divorced. The Synod will be on the family, the problem of the family, the treasures of the family, the present situation of the family. The preliminary talk which Cardinal Kasper gave had five chapters: four of them were on the family, the beauty of the family, its theological foundations, and problems facing families; while the fifth chapter dealt with the pastoral issue of separations, declarations of marriage nullity, divorced persons... Part of this issue is that of communion. I have not been happy that so many people – even church people, priests – have said: “Ah, the Synod will be about giving communion to the divorced”, and went straight to that point. I felt as if everything was being reduced to casuistry. No the issue is bigger and wider. Today, as we all know, the family is in crisis, it is in crisis worldwide. Young people don’t want to get married, they don’t get married or they live together. Marriage is in crisis, and so the family is in crisis. I don’t want us to fall into this casuistry of “can we” or “can’t we”? ... So I thank you so much for this question, because it gives me the opportunity to clarify this.

The pastoral problem of the family is complex, very complex. And it has to be looked at case by case. Something Pope Benedict had said on three different occasions about the divorced has been very helpful to me. First, in Valle d’Aosta, another time in Milan, and a the third time in the consistory, the last public consistory which he called for the creation of cardinals. [He said that there is a need] to study the annulment process; to examine the faith with which people enter marriage and to make clear that the divorced are not excommunicated, [even though] they are often treated as if they were. This is something serious: the casuistry of the problem.

The Synod will be on the family: both the rich reality of the family and the problems faced by families. Solutions, annulments, all of this. This problem too, but as part of a larger picture. Now I would like to tell you why the Synod will be on the family: this has been a very powerful spiritual experience for me. During my second year as Pope, Archbishop Eterović, then the Secretary [General] of the Synod, approached me with three themes that the Post-synodal Council had proposed for the forthcoming Synod. The first was very striking, very good: what Jesus Christ brings to contemporary men and women. That was the title, following up on the Synod on evangelization. I agreed, we spoke for bit about changes in the method of the Synod, and at the end, I said: “Let’s add something else: what Jesus Christ brings to contemporary men and women and to the family”. Good. Then, when I went to the first meeting of the Post-synodal Council, I saw that the title was there in full, but gradually people were saying: “Yes, yes, “what he brings to the family”, “what Jesus Christ brings to the family”, and so, without realizing it, the Post-synodal commission ended up speaking about the family. I am sure that it was the spirit of the Lord guiding us even to the choice of this title. I am sure of it, because today the family truly needs so many forms of pastoral assistance. Thank you.

(Father Lombardi)

Now we once more have the French group.

Q. Holiness, can you tell us what the obstacles are to your reform of the Roman Curia, and where it presently stands?

A. Well, the first obstacle is me! (laughter). No, we're doing well, because it was... I don't recall the date, but three months, or a little less after my election, that the Council of eight Cardinals was named...

(Father Lombardi)

... one month after the election...

A. ... One month after the election. Then, in early July we had our first meeting and from that time on we have been working. What does the Council do? The Council studies the entire Constitution *Pastor Bonus* and the Roman Curia. It has held consultations worldwide and with the whole Curia, and it is beginning to examine certain things. "This could be done one way, this in another.." Amalgamating some offices, for example, to streamline the organization... One of the key issues was finances, and the office for the economy will help greatly. It must work together with the Secretary of State, because everything is connected, everything happens together... Presently we have four days of work with this commission in July, and then, in September I think, another four. We are working. We are working hard and the results are not yet all evident, but the financial part is what emerged first, since there were some problems which the press had reported at length, and which we have to examine. The obstacles are the normal obstacles of the whole process. Studying the path... Convincing people is so important. Convincing, helping... Some people who do not see things clearly, but every reform entails this. But I am pleased, I am really pleased. We are working quite hard and this commission greatly assists us. Thank you

(Father Lombardi)

Holiness, thank you for making yourself available; pardon me if I interrupt your conversation. You have been most generous, all the more so following an extraordinary voyage which proved exciting for all of us, perhaps not as much as for yourself, but almost so! We also followed closely your moving spiritual experiences in the holy places; we felt these and they touched us. We hope that the rest of this trip will go well for you, and all the countless other things you have in mind, particularly the prayer meeting which is the natural continuation and completion of this journey. May it bear the fruit which you desire, and which I believe we all desire, for peace in the world. Heartfelt thanks, Your Holiness!

(the Holy Father)

I thank you all for your company, for your kindness... and please, I ask you to pray for me. I need it, so much! Thank you.