

PILGRIMAGE
OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI
TO THE HOLY LAND
(8-15 MAY 2009)

GREETING TO RELIGIOUS LEADERS OF GALILEE

ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI

*Auditorium of the Shrine of the Annunciation - Nazareth
Thursday, 14 May 2009*

Dear Friends,

Grateful for the words of welcome offered by Bishop Giacinto-Boulos Marcuzzo and for your warm reception, I cordially greet the leaders of different communities present, including Christians, Muslims, Jews, Druze and other religious peoples.

I feel particularly blessed to visit this city revered by Christians as the place where the Angel announced to the Virgin Mary that she would conceive by the power of the Holy Spirit. Here too Joseph, her betrothed, saw the Angel in a dream and was directed to name the child “Jesus”. After the marvellous events surrounding his birth, the child was brought to this city by Joseph and Mary where he “grew and became strong, filled with wisdom; and the favour of God was upon him” (*Lk 2:40*).

The conviction that the world is a gift of God, and that God has entered the twists and turns of human history, is the perspective from which Christians view creation as having a reason and a purpose. Far from being the result of blind fate, the world has been willed by God and bespeaks his glorious splendour.

At the heart of all religious traditions is the conviction that peace itself is a gift from God, yet it cannot be achieved without human endeavour. Lasting peace flows from the recognition that the world is ultimately not our own, but rather the horizon within which we are invited to participate in God’s love and cooperate in guiding the world and history under his inspiration. We cannot do whatever we please with the world; rather, we are called to conform our choices to the subtle yet nonetheless perceptible laws inscribed by the Creator upon the universe and pattern our actions after the divine goodness that pervades the created realm.

Galilee, a land known for its religious and ethnic diversity, is home to a people who know well the efforts required to live in harmonious coexistence. Our different religious traditions have a powerful potential to promote a culture of peace, especially through teaching and preaching the deeper spiritual values of our common humanity. By moulding the hearts of the young, we mould the future of humanity itself. Christians readily join Jews, Muslims, Druze, and people of other religions in wishing to safeguard children from fanaticism and violence while preparing them to be builders of a better world.

My dear friends, I know that you accept cheerfully and with a greeting of peace the many pilgrims who flock to Galilee. I encourage you to continue exercising mutual respect as you work to ease tensions concerning places of worship, thus assuring a serene environment for prayer and reflection here and throughout Galilee. Representing different religious traditions, you share a desire to contribute to the betterment of society and thus testify to the religious and spiritual values that help sustain public life. I assure you that the Catholic Church is committed to join in this noble undertaking. In cooperation with men and women of good will, she will seek to ensure that the light of truth, peace and goodness continue to shine forth from Galilee and lead people across the globe to seek all that fosters the unity of the human family. God bless you all.

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