

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

VISIT TO THE ARMENIAN PATRIARCHAL CHURCH OF ST. JAMES

ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI

Jerusalem
Friday, 15 May 2009

Your Beatitude,

I greet you with fraternal affection in the Lord, and I offer prayerful good wishes for your health and your ministry. I am grateful for the opportunity to visit this Cathedral Church of Saint James in the heart of the ancient Armenian quarter of Jerusalem, and to meet the distinguished clergy of the Patriarchate, together with the members of the Armenian community of the Holy City.

Our meeting today, characterized by an atmosphere of cordiality and friendship, is another step along the path towards the unity which the Lord desires for all his disciples. In recent decades we have witnessed, by God's grace, a significant growth in the relationship between the Catholic Church and the Armenian Apostolic Church. I count it a great blessing to have met in this past year with the Supreme Patriarch and Catholicos of All Armenians Karekin II and with the Catholicos of Cilicia Aram I. Their visits to the Holy See, and the moments of prayer which we shared, have strengthened us in fellowship and confirmed our commitment to the sacred cause of promoting Christian unity.

In a spirit of gratitude to the Lord, I wish also to express my appreciation of the unwavering commitment of the Armenian Apostolic Church to the continuing theological dialogue between the Catholic Church and the Eastern Orthodox Churches. This dialogue, sustained by prayer, has made progress in overcoming the burden of past misunderstandings, and offers much promise for the future. A particular sign of hope is the recent document on the nature and mission of the Church produced by the Mixed Commission and presented to the Churches for study and evaluation. Together let us entrust the work of the Mixed Commission once more to the Spirit of wisdom and truth, so that it can bear abundant fruit for the growth of Christian unity, and advance the spread of the Gospel among the men and women of our time.

From the first Christian centuries, the Armenian community in Jerusalem has had an illustrious history, marked not least by an extraordinary flourishing of monastic life and culture linked to the holy places and the liturgical traditions which developed around them. This venerable Cathedral Church, together with the Patriarchate and the various educational and cultural institutions attached to it, testifies to that long and distinguished history. I pray that your community will constantly draw new life from its rich traditions, and be confirmed in its witness to Jesus Christ and the power of his resurrection (cf. Phil 3:10) in this Holy City. I likewise assure the families present,

and particularly the children and young people, of a special remembrance in my prayers. Dear friends, I ask you in turn to pray with me that all the Christians of the Holy Land will work together with generosity and zeal in proclaiming the Gospel of our reconciliation in Christ, and the advent of his Kingdom of holiness, justice and peace.

Your Beatitude, I thank you once more for your gracious welcome, and I cordially invoke God's richest blessings upon you and upon all the clergy and faithful of the Armenian Apostolic Church in the Holy Land. May the joy and peace of the Risen Christ be always with you.

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