

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

**ECUMENICAL MEETING**

***ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI***

*Throne Hall of the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate - Jerusalem  
Friday, 15 May 2009*

*Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,*

It is with profound gratitude and joy that I make this visit to the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem; a moment to which I have much looked forward. I thank His Beatitude Patriarch Theophilus III for his kind words of fraternal greeting, which I warmly reciprocate. I also express to all of you my heartfelt gratitude for providing me with this opportunity to meet once again the many leaders of Churches and ecclesial communities present.

This morning I am mindful of the historic meetings that have taken place here in Jerusalem between my predecessor Pope Paul VI and the Ecumenical Patriarch Athenagoras I, and also between Pope John Paul II and His Beatitude Patriarch Diodoros. These encounters, including my visit today, are of great symbolic significance. They recall that the light of the East (cf. *Is* 60:1; *Rev* 21:10) has illumined the entire world from the very moment when a “rising sun” came to visit us (*Lk* 1:78) and they remind us too that from here the Gospel was preached to all nations.

Standing in this hallowed place, alongside the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, which marks the site where our crucified Lord rose from the dead for all humanity, and near the cenacle, where on the day of Pentecost “they were all together in one place” (*Acts* 2:1), who could not feel impelled to bring the fullness of goodwill, sound scholarship and spiritual desire to our ecumenical endeavors? I pray that our gathering today will give new impetus to the work of theological dialogue between the Catholic Church and the Orthodox Churches, adding to the recent fruits of study documents and other joint initiatives.

Of particular joy for our Churches has been the participation of the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople, His Holiness Bartholomew I, at the recent [Synod of Bishops](#) in Rome dedicated to the theme: *The Word of God in the Life and Mission of the Church*. The warm welcome he received and his moving intervention were sincere expressions of the deep spiritual joy that arises from the extent to which communion is already present between our Churches. Such ecumenical experience bears clear witness to the link between the unity of the Church and her mission. Extending his arms on the Cross, Jesus revealed the fullness of his desire to draw all people to himself, uniting them together as one (cf. *Jn* 12:32). Breathing his Spirit upon us he

revealed his power to enable us to participate in his mission of reconciliation (cf. Jn 19:30; 20:22-23). In that breath, through the redemption that unites, stands our mission! Little wonder, then, that it is precisely in our burning desire to bring Christ to others, to make known his message of reconciliation (cf. 2 Cor 5:19), that we experience the shame of our division. Yet, sent out into the world (cf. Jn 20:21), empowered by the unifying force of the Holy Spirit (*ibid.* v. 22), proclaiming the reconciliation that draws all to believe that Jesus is the Son of God (*ibid.* v. 31), we shall find the strength to redouble our efforts to perfect our communion, to make it complete, to bear united witness to the love of the Father who sends the Son so that the world may know his love for us (cf. Jn 17:23).

Some two thousand years ago, along these same streets, a group of Greeks put this request to Philip: “Sir, we should like to see Jesus” (Jn 12:21). It is a request made again of us today, here in Jerusalem, in the Holy Land, in the region and throughout the world. How do we respond? Is our response heard? Saint Paul alerts us to the gravity of our response: our mission to teach and preach. He says: “faith comes from hearing, and what is heard comes through the word of Christ” (Rm 10:17). It is imperative therefore that Christian leaders and their communities bear vibrant testimony to what our faith proclaims: the eternal Word, who entered space and time in this land, Jesus of Nazareth, who walked these streets, through his words and actions calls people of every age to his life of truth and love.

Dear friends, while encouraging you to proclaim joyfully the Risen Lord, I wish also to recognize the work to this end of the Heads of Christian communities, who meet together regularly in this city. It seems to me that the greatest service the Christians of Jerusalem can offer their fellow citizens is the upbringing and education of a further generation of well-formed and committed Christians, earnest in their desire to contribute generously to the religious and civic life of this unique and holy city. The fundamental priority of every Christian leader is the nurturing of the faith of the individuals and families entrusted to his pastoral care. This common pastoral concern will ensure that your regular meetings are marked by the wisdom and fraternal charity necessary to support one another and to engage with both the joys and the particular difficulties which mark the lives of your people. I pray that the aspirations of the Christians of Jerusalem will be understood as being concordant with the aspirations of all its inhabitants, whatever their religion: a life of religious freedom and peaceful coexistence and - for young people in particular - unimpeded access to education and employment, the prospect of suitable housing and family residency, and the chance to benefit from and contribute to economic stability.

Your Beatitude, I thank you again for your kindness in inviting me here, together with the other guests. Upon each of you and the communities you represent, I invoke an abundance of God’s blessings of fortitude and wisdom! May you all be strengthened by the hope of Christ which does not disappoint!