

# VISIT OF THE POPE OF ROME BENEDICT XVI TO THE HOLY LAND

On the 2<sup>nd</sup> of December 2008 the Apostolic Delegate Msgr. Antonio Franco, the representative of the Pope to the Holy Land, visited His Beatitude Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophillos III and informed him of the intention of the Pope of Rome Benedict XVI to visit the Holy Land.

His Beatitude Patriarch of Jerusalem replied that the Pope would be welcome to visit in accordance with the church order and the Status Quo.

Since then, the Committee for the Status Quo issues of the Patriarchate of Jerusalem, which consists of His Eminence Christodoulos Metropolitan of Eleftheroupoleos and Elder Dragoman, the Elder Chief Secretary His Eminence Aristarchos Archbishop of Constantina and the Superior of the Holy Sepulchre and Sacristan Reverend Archimandrite Isidoros, initiated cooperation with the Franciscan Brotherhood, Custodians of the Roman Catholic Church in the Holy Land and the Apostolic Delegate concerning the details of the Pope's visit to the Patriarchate and the Holy Places, based on the Status Quo developed through the centuries and further crystallized in the 19th century.

The Pilgrimage Committee constantly cooperated with the Israeli Police for the forthcoming visit of the Pope to the Patriarchate. As a guest of the State of Israel, tight safety measures were set for the protection of the Pope. The police repeatedly inspected and secured the grounds of the Patriarchate and especially the proposed areas of the Pope's visit, in order to prevent and avert any possible offensiveness.

Pope Benedict XVI was also an official guest of the Jordanian State. He arrived in Jordan, an integral part of the Holy Land, at Amman airport on Friday 8<sup>th</sup> of May 2009. He was received by the Jordanian Royal family, His Beatitude Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos III, His Eminence Venedictos Metropolitan of Philadelphia, the Latin Patriarch Finad Twal and other officials. Pope Benedict XVI visited the "King Hussein" Mosque and laid the foundation rock of the University in the city of Madaba. The Pope also visited Byzantine Churches at Mount Nevo in Jordan. During the various visits in Jordan the Patriarchate was represented by His Eminence Dorotheos Archbishop of Avila, the Patriarchal representative in Amman His Eminence Venedictos Metropolitan of Philadelphia and Reverend Archimandrite Innokentios, the Patriarchal representative in Madaba and responsible for the Patriarchal Arab speaking schools.

In Israel, the Pope arrived at Ben Gurion Airport on Monday morning 11<sup>th</sup> of May 2009. Upon his arrival he was welcomed on behalf of the Israeli Government by the President of the State, Mr. Shimon Peres and the Prime Minister, Mr. Benjamin Netanyahu. Present at the welcoming reception were Bishops of the Roman Catholic Church and leaders of the Christian Communities in the Holy Land. His Beatitude Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos III was represented by His Eminence Christodoulos Metropolitan of Eleftheroupoleos. In his statements to the Israeli media the Pope spoke about peace between Islam and Judaism and referred to the Jewish Holocaust during the Second World War.

On the same day 11<sup>th</sup> of May 2009 at 16:00 an official reception for the Pope was held at the Presidential Palace by President Shimon Peres. His Beatitude Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos III attended on the invitation of the President.

At 17:45 on Monday evening 11<sup>th</sup> of May 2009, the Pope visited

Yad Vashem in West Jerusalem, which is in memory of the six million Jews, victims of Hitler's murderous ideology. The Pope condemned this crime and all acts of anti-Semitism, and stated that it is his wish that this crime will never be repeated, not against the Jewish Nation or to humanity as a whole.

Later that day 11<sup>th</sup> of May 2009 at 18:30, in the Hall of Notre Dame Hotel, the pilgrim centre of the Roman Catholic Church by New Gate, a meeting was held between the Pope and the representatives of the Christian, Jewish and Islamic Communities in the Holy Land.

Present at the meeting were members of the Council of Religious Leaders in the Holy Land, Jewish, Christian and Muslim. This newly formed Council has as its objective the promotion of and contribution to a solution of the political crisis between Israel and the Palestinians. The members of this council, with His Beatitude Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos III as its president, had held a meeting in October 2007 in the U.S.A prior to the meeting of political leaders in Annapolis. Coordinator of the Council is Mr. Trond Bakkevig from Sweden. At the latest meeting at the Hall of Notre Dame Hotel, the Patriarchate was represented by the Elder Chief Secretary His Eminence Aristarchos Archbishop of Constantina.

During the address, the Latin Patriarch Mr. Fouad Twal, Mr. Trond Bakkevig Coordinator of the Council of Religious Leaders in the Holy Land, the Pope and Sheikh Taisir Tamimi emphasized the role that the representatives of these respective religions can play in finding a peaceful solution to the problem between Israel and the Palestinians, a solution that will guarantee freedom, independence, security and prosperity to the two peoples, followers of the three religions, Judaism, Christianity and Islam.

On Tuesday 12<sup>th</sup> of May 2009, the Pope visited the holy site of Muslims, the Dome of the Rock, where he was received by the

Mufti of Jerusalem, Sheikh Mohammed Hussein. He then proceeded in the same area, the Western Wall of Solomon's Temple, the most sacred site in Judaism.

At noon on the same day, the Latin Patriarch Mr. Fouad Twal gave a lunch in honour of the Pope, at the Latin Patriarchate. His Beatitude Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos III and the Elder Chief Secretary His Eminence Aristarchos Archbishop of Constantina were invited and attended the lunch.

Later that day in the evening, Pope Benedict XVI performed a Liturgy in the Garden of Gethsemane, in the "Kidron Valley" between the temple of Solomon and the Mount of Olives.

On Wednesday morning, 13<sup>th</sup> of May 2009, the President of the Palestinian Authority Mr. Mahmoud Abas-Abou Mazen, held a reception ceremony for the Pope at the presidential offices of the Palestinian Authority in Bethlehem. His Beatitude Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos III was invited to this reception and attended it accompanied by the Patriarchal Representative in Bethlehem His Eminence Theophilaktos Archbishop of Jordan. After this, the Pope performed a Liturgy in the city square of Bethlehem in front of the Municipality and the courtyard of the Church of the Nativity. Present at the Liturgy was the Patriarchal Representative in Bethlehem His Eminence Theophilaktos Archbishop of Jordan.

In the afternoon at about 15:30 that same day 13<sup>th</sup> of May 2009, the Pope visited the Church of the Nativity. The Pope entered the Holy Grotto, according to the Status Quo from the Latin Church of St. Catherine, and venerated, in the presence of our Patriarchal Representative and the Representative of the Armenians.

Later that day in the evening of May 14<sup>th</sup> the Pope visited the Palestinian refugee camp of Aida near Rachel's Tomb where, in

the presence of the President Abas-Abu Mazen, the Pope declared his support of the Palestinian people, acknowledging the recent suffering of the people in Gaza, and promising to help by all possible means to attain a just solution to the Palestinian problem.

On Thursday May 14<sup>th</sup>, the Pope visited and spent the day in the city of Nazareth.

On Friday May 15<sup>th</sup> the Pope Benedict XVI visited the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem accompanied by thirty six members of the Roman Catholic Church, according to the pre-arranged and regulated order. Amongst the members of his escort was Cardinal Tarcisio Bertone, the Foreign Minister of the Vatican, the Cardinal Walter Casper, President of the Pontifical Council for Christian Unity, the Apostolic Delegate Msgr. Antonio Franco and the Custos of the Holy Land father Pirbattista Pizzaballa.

The visit took place at 9:15a.m, after preparations and security measures were carried out by the Israeli Police the previous night and in the morning prior to his arrival. At the entrance of the Patriarchate, the Pope was greeted by His Eminence Kyriakos Metropolitan of Nazareth, His Eminence Isichios Metropolitan of Kapitolias and the Elder Chief Secretary His Eminence Aristarchos Archbishop of Constantina. They escorted the Pope to the entrance of the Hall of the Throne, where he was welcomed by His Beatitude Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos III who led him to sit on his right.

His Beatitude the Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos III addressed Pope Benedict XVI and Pope Benedict XVI replied with his own address.

(The transcripts of each address are reproduced at the end of

this chronicle).

After the addresses, His Beatitude Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos III presented a gift to the Pope, a beautiful icon of the Nativity of our Lord Jesus Christ, which was illuminated for the 2000 years celebration of Christianity and two 'dikirotrikira' candles for blessing of Patriarchs and Bishops.

The Pope responded by presenting a gift to His Beatitude, a precious Facsimile manuscript, an illustrated handcrafted Synaxarion of the months September to February which had been written for the Byzantine Emperor Vasilios II (976-1025). The 11<sup>th</sup> century original is kept in the Vatican Library known as Codex Vat. Graec., 1613.

Invited to this meeting were the representatives of the other Christian Communities in the Holy Land, the heads of the Israeli Police, the Directors of the Department of Christian Affairs of the Ministry of Religions of Israel, the President of the Local Administration of the Palestinian Authority Mr.Ziad Bandak, members of the Committee for Christian Affairs of the Palestinian Authority, the representatives of Diplomatic Delegations of Jerusalem, amongst them the Greek Consul General Mr. Sotirios Athanasiou, members of our Arab-speaking congregation and prominent members of the Jewish, Muslim and Christian Communities.

Soon after the addresses and greetings by the Christian Communities, the Pope continued his visit to the Church of Resurrection.

In the courtyard of the Church of Resurrection Pope Benedict XVI was received by His Eminence Isichios Metropolitan of Kapitolias, the members of the Status Quo Committee of our

Patriarchate, the Elder Dragoman His Eminence Christodoulos Metropolitan Eleftheroupoleos, the Elder Chief Secretary His Eminence Aristarchos Archbishop of Constantina, Reverend Archimandrite Isidoros the Sacristan and Superior of the Holy Church of Resurrection and the representatives of the Armenians and Franciscans.

As he entered, the Pope was received by the Custos of the Holy Land Rev. Fr Pierebattista Pizzaballa at the Stone of Anointing where he venerated and then performed Doxology at the Holy Sepulchre in the presence of the Patriarchate's representatives who previously received him in the courtyard of the Holy Sepulchre.

The Pope then worshipped at the Shrine of the Franciscans "Noli me tangere" otherwise known as the Chapel of Saint Maria Magdalena and then ascended the North stairs to the Holy Calvary (Golgotha), where he was received by the Greek Orthodox monk of the Shrine, before praying and lighting a candle.

After the worship at the Holy Sepulchre, Pope Benedict XVI visited the Armenian Patriarchate and the Holy Cenacle on Mount Zion. Finally he travelled to the city of Tel-Aviv, to Ben Gurion airport, where the official farewell ceremony took place prior to his departure for Rome.

## **Chief Secretary's Office**

### ***Text of Pope Benedict's Speech During Meeting with***

#### ***Greek Orthodox Patriarch of Jerusalem***

*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 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 the theological dialogue between the Catholic Church and the Orthodox Churches, adding to the recent fruits of study documents and others 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 World 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 Phillip: "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!*

**Speech of Welcome**

**To His Holiness Benedict XVI**

**Pope of Rome.**

**His Beatitude Theophilos III**

**Patriarch of Jerusalem.**

*Friday, 15th, May, 2009*

*Your Holiness Pope Benedict XVI,*

*Christ is risen!*

*We greet you warmly in the name of the risen Lord in this Holy City which witnessed the passion, death and resurrection of Our Lord, and we welcome you on this, the first visit to the Holy Land of your pontificate. We remember well the visit of your late and beloved predecessor, Pope John Paul II, in the year 2000, and the deep and positive effect that his visit had for reconciliation and peace in our region.*

*All who come to the Holy Land – from the greatest to the humblest ordinary people – come as pilgrims. In Latin the word for pilgrim is peregrinus. At its root, peregrinus is someone who comes from another country, a traveler; and from the earlier days of the life of the Church after Constantine, faithful people have traveled to Shrines and Holy Places both in the Holy Land and throughout Europe.*

*And in Greek the word for pilgrim is proskynitis. In this word we encounter the concept of the pilgrim as “one who worships.” Just as most pilgrims travel, so too in the object of every pilgrim’s journey to worship at the shrine at the destination.*

*You come here, Your Holiness, as one who, like so many millions of others down the ages, embodies both these understandings of pilgrimage: you have come a long way, and you have come to worship at the Holy Places. May your pilgrimage be an example to all those others who long to come*

to the places where sacred history has been made flesh, and where human beings have experienced God in the words of the prophets and in the person of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Jerusalem is the spiritual "mother of all the Churches." Here on the Day of Pentecost, the Church was revealed, and from that day to this, for 2000 years, the Church of Jerusalem has been a witness of the life, death, and resurrection of Our Lord Jesus Christ.

We who seek to be faithful to the vocation of Jerusalem as the spiritual mother of all the Churches cherish our ecumenical partnerships and relationships, and we pray daily for the "union of all." **"Υπέρ τῆς τῶν πάντων ἐνώσεως."** The ecumenical journey is a journey of the healing of memories of the past as much as it is the recovery of a common life of faith and witness for the present and the future. May God give us the grace always to take to heart the difficulty we are in because of our unhappy divisions, and the resolve to do all that we can to overcome all that still divides us.

We continue to witness by maintaining the Holy Places which are dear and sacred to Jew, Christian and Moslem alike. As for the Christian community in our broader region and in the Holy Land in particular, the Holy Places have been the bond between the Church and this Land. The ministry of those to whom the Holy Places have been entrusted by Divine providence is to ensure that all have free access to them, so that the power of our sacred history may transform the lives of the faithful into discovering our common humanity and our mission for the restoration of all – as St. Paul says, **"ἀποκατάλλαξαι τὰ πάντα εἰς Αὐτόν"**. (Col.1,20).

The Pascal spirit is a reminder to us of the triumph of love over hate, of life over death, of justice over iniquity, of peace

over conflict, of light over darkness. The Church continues to

*bear witness to this Incarnate love, who during his earthly ministry, commanded us not simply to love our neighbour as ourselves, but also to love our enemies and those who hate us.*

*We believe that the peaceful co-existence of Jew, Christian, and Moslem in the Holy land is essential to the fundamental integrity of the region. We have lived here together for generations; and so it must be into the future. We continue to be for the Christian population of the Holy Land. Our numbers are decreasing in relation to the rest of the population, and we are committed to the improvement of opportunities for education, employment and family life that enable all those who call the Holy Land their home to be able to live full and happy lives.*

*Jerusalem is unique. Here Jew, Christian and Moslem constitute a model of unity and diversity that gives expression to the inter-religious and multi-cultural environment of our contemporary life and the challenges that the world faces.*

*Our task is to extend and deepen the moral task of mutual respect, reconciliation, and lasting peace in the Holy Land. In this great work, Christians from every confession are called to join forces. Let our life together model the words of the psalmist, who said "steadfast love and faithfulness will meet; righteousness and peace will kiss each other." (Ps.84(85),10).*

*In this great task, we are all summoned to move dynamic dialogue- a dialogue between our Churches, as well dialogue between Christians and the believer of our faiths. Let us never forget that the unity of faith to which we Christians are summoned is not an end in itself, but a means by which we witness to the unity of humankind.*

*Your Holiness, we know that you have come to the Holy Land as a pilgrim, but you are welcome also by the people here as a messenger of peace and reconciliation. At the same time, as*

*Patriarch of Jerusalem, we greet you with the words of the Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom, who exhorts us at every Divine Liturgy to "love one another, that with one mind we may confess Father, Son and Holy Spirit, the consubstantial and undivided trinity."*

*Your Holiness, on behalf of all the representatives of the Churches and the communities of faith gathered here today, we thank you for your visit.*

*Christ is risen! He is risen indeed!*

*God bless your pilgrimage.*

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