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Benedict XVI in Jordan

A selection of the addresses and homilies by the Holy Father on his visit to Jordan

05/12/2009

WELCOMING CEREMONY

Queen Alia International Airport of Amman

Friday, 8 May 2009

Your Majesties,

Your Excellencies,

Dear Brother Bishops,

Dear Friends,

It is with joy that I greet all of you here present, as I begin my first visit to the Middle East since my election to the Apostolic See, and I am pleased to set foot upon the soil of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, a land so rich in history, home to so many ancient civilizations, and deeply imbued with religious significance for Jews, Christians and Muslims. I thank His Majesty King Abdullah II for his kind words of welcome, and I offer my particular congratulations in this year that marks the tenth anniversary of his accession to the throne. In greeting His Majesty, I extend heartfelt good wishes to all members of the Royal Family and the Government, and to all the people of the Kingdom. I greet His Beatitude Fouad Twal and His Beatitude Theophilus III and also other

Patriarchs and Bishops here present, especially those with pastoral responsibilities in Jordan. I look forward to celebrating the liturgy at Saint George's Cathedral tomorrow evening and at the International Stadium on Sunday together with you, dear Bishops, and so many of the faithful entrusted to your care.

I come to Jordan as a pilgrim, to venerate holy places that have played such an important part in some of the key events of Biblical history. At Mount Nebo, Moses led his people to within sight of the land that would become their home, and here he died and was laid to rest. At Bethany beyond the Jordan, John the Baptist preached and bore witness to Jesus, whom he baptized in the waters of the river that gives this land its name. In the coming days I shall visit both these holy places, and I shall have the joy of blessing the foundation stones of churches that

are to be built at the traditional site of the Lord's Baptism. The opportunity that Jordan's Catholic community enjoys to build public places of worship is a sign of this country's respect for religion, and on their behalf I want to say how much this openness is appreciated.

Religious freedom is, of course, a fundamental human right, and it is my fervent hope and prayer that respect for all the inalienable rights and the dignity of every man and woman will come to be increasingly affirmed and defended, not only throughout the Middle East, but in every part of the world.

My visit to Jordan gives me a welcome opportunity to speak of my deep respect for the Muslim community, and to pay tribute to the leadership shown by His Majesty the King in promoting a better understanding of the virtues proclaimed by Islam. Now that some

years have passed since the publication of the Amman Message and the Amman Interfaith Message, we can say that these worthy initiatives have achieved much good in furthering an alliance of civilizations between the West and the Muslim world, confounding the predictions of those who consider violence and conflict inevitable. Indeed the Kingdom of Jordan has long been at the forefront of initiatives to promote peace in the Middle East and throughout the world, encouraging inter-religious dialogue, supporting efforts to find a just solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, welcoming refugees from neighboring Iraq, and seeking to curb extremism. I cannot let this opportunity pass without calling to mind the pioneering efforts for peace in the region made by the late King Hussein. How fitting that my meeting tomorrow with Muslim religious leaders, the diplomatic corps and

University rectors should take place in the mosque that bears his name. May his commitment to the resolution of the region's conflicts continue to bear fruit in efforts to promote lasting peace and true justice for all who live in the Middle East.

Dear Friends, at the Seminar held in Rome last autumn by the Catholic-Muslim Forum, the participants examined the central role played in our respective religious traditions by the commandment of love. I hope very much that this visit, and indeed all the initiatives designed to foster good relations between Christians and Muslims, will help us to grow in love for the Almighty and Merciful God, and in fraternal love for one another. Thank you for your welcome. Thank you for your attention. May God grant Your Majesties happiness and long life!

May he bless Jordan with prosperity and peace!

HOMILY OF HIS HOLINESS

BENEDICT XVI International Stadium
- Amman

Fifth Sunday of Easter, 10 May 2009

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

I rejoice that we are able to celebrate this Eucharist together at the beginning of my Pilgrimage to the Holy Land. Yesterday, from the heights of Mount Nebo, I stood and looked out upon this great land, the land of Moses, Elijah, and John the Baptist, the land where God's ancient promises were fulfilled in the coming of the Messiah, Jesus our Lord. This land witnessed his preaching and miracles, his death and resurrection, and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon the Church, the sacrament of a reconciled and renewed humanity. As I pondered the mystery of God's

fidelity, I prayed that the Church in these lands would be confirmed in hope and strengthened in her witness to the Risen Christ, the Savior of mankind. Truly, as Saint Peter tells us in today's first reading, "there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we are to be saved" (Acts 4:12).

Today's joyful celebration of the Eucharistic sacrifice expresses the rich diversity of the Catholic Church in the Holy Land. I greet all of you with affection in the Lord. I thank His Beatitude Fouad Twal, Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem, for his kind words of welcome. My greeting goes also to the many young people from Catholic schools who today bring their enthusiasm to this Eucharistic celebration.

In the Gospel we have just heard, Jesus proclaims: "I am the good shepherd... who lays down his life

for the sheep” (Jn 10:11). As the Successor of Saint Peter, to whom the Lord entrusted the care of his flock (cf. Jn 21:15-17), I have long awaited this opportunity to stand before you as a witness to the Risen Savior, and to encourage you to persevere in faith, hope and love, in fidelity to the ancient traditions and the distinguished history of Christian witness which you trace back to the age of the Apostles. The Catholic community here is deeply touched by the difficulties and uncertainties which affect all the people of the Middle East. May you never forget the great dignity which derives from your Christian heritage, or fail to sense the loving solidarity of all your brothers and sisters in the Church throughout the world!

“I am the good shepherd”, the Lord tells us, “I know my own, and my own know me” (Jn 10:14). Today in Jordan we celebrate the World Day of

Prayer for Vocations. As we reflect on the Gospel of the Good Shepherd, let us ask the Lord to open our hearts and minds ever more fully to hear his call. Truly, Jesus “knows us”, even more deeply than we know ourselves, and he has a plan for each one of us. We know, too, that wherever he calls us, we will find happiness and fulfilment; indeed, we will find our very selves (cf. Mt 10:39). Today I invite the many young people here present to consider how the Lord is calling you to follow him and to build up his Church. Whether it be in the priestly ministry, in consecrated life or in the sacrament of marriage, Jesus needs you to make his voice heard and to work for the growth of his Kingdom.

In today’s second reading, Saint John invites us to “think of the love that the Father has lavished on us” by making us his adopted children in Christ. Hearing these words should

make us grateful for the experience of the Father's love which we have had in our families, from the love of our fathers and mothers, our grandparents, our brothers and sisters. During the celebration of the present Year of the Family, the Church throughout the Holy Land has reflected on the family as a mystery of life-giving love, endowed in God's plan with its own proper calling and mission: to radiate the divine Love which is the source and the ultimate fulfilment of all the other loves of our lives. May every Christian family grow in fidelity to its lofty vocation to be a true school of prayer, where children learn a sincere love of God, where they mature in self-discipline and concern for the needs of others, and where, shaped by the wisdom born of faith, they contribute to the building of an ever more just and fraternal society. The strong Christian families of these lands are a great legacy handed

down from earlier generations. May today's families be faithful to that impressive heritage, and never lack the material and moral assistance they need to carry out their irreplaceable role in service to society.

An important aspect of your reflection during this Year of the Family has been the particular dignity, vocation and mission of women in God's plan. How much the Church in these lands owes to the patient, loving and faithful witness of countless Christian mothers, religious Sisters, teachers, doctors and nurses! How much your society owes to all those women who in different and at times courageous ways have devoted their lives to building peace and fostering love! From the very first pages of the Bible, we see how man and woman, created in the image of God, are meant to complement one another as

stewards of God's gifts and partners in communicating his gift of life, both physical and spiritual, to our world. Sadly, this God-given dignity and role of women has not always been sufficiently understood and esteemed. The Church, and society as a whole, has come to realize how urgently we need what the late Pope John Paul II called the "prophetic charism" of women (cf. *Mulieris Dignitatem*, 29) as bearers of love, teachers of mercy and artisans of peace, bringing warmth and humanity to a world that all too often judges the value of a person by the cold criteria of usefulness and profit. By its public witness of respect for women, and its defence of the innate dignity of every human person, the Church in the Holy Land can make an important contribution to the advancement of a culture of true humanity and the building of the civilization of love.

Dear friends, let us return to the words of Jesus in today's Gospel. I believe that they contain a special message for you, his faithful flock in these lands where he once dwelt.

"The good shepherd", he tells us, "lays down his life for his sheep." At the beginning of this Mass, we asked the Father to "give us new strength from the courage of Christ our shepherd", who remained steadfast in fidelity to the Father's will (cf. *Opening Prayer*, Mass of the Fourth Sunday of Easter). May the courage of Christ our shepherd inspire and sustain you daily in your efforts to bear witness to the Christian faith and to maintain the Church's presence in the changing social fabric of these ancient lands.

Fidelity to your Christian roots, fidelity to the Church's mission in the Holy Land, demands of each of you a particular kind of courage: the courage of conviction, born of

personal faith, not mere social convention or family tradition; the courage to engage in dialogue and to work side by side with other Christians in the service of the Gospel and solidarity with the poor, the displaced, and the victims of profound human tragedies; the courage to build new bridges to enable a fruitful encounter of people of different religions and cultures, and thus to enrich the fabric of society. It also means bearing witness to the love which inspires us to “lay down” our lives in the service of others, and thus to counter ways of thinking which justify “taking” innocent lives.

“I am the good shepherd; I know my own, and my own know me” (Jn 10:14). Rejoice that the Lord has made you members of his flock and knows each of you by name! Follow him with joy and let him guide you in all your ways. Jesus knows what

challenges you face, what trials you endure, and the good that you do in his name. Trust in him, in his enduring love for all the members of his flock, and persevere in your witness to the triumph of his love. May Saint John the Baptist, the patron of Jordan, and Mary, Virgin and Mother, sustain you by their example and prayers, and lead you to the fullness of joy in the eternal pastures where we will experience for ever the presence of the Good Shepherd and know for ever the depths of his love. Amen.

**REGINA CAELI International
Stadium - Amman**

Fifth Sunday of Easter, 10 May 2009

Dear Friends,

During the Mass I spoke about the prophetic charism of women as bearers of love, teachers of mercy

and artisans of peace. The supreme example of womanly virtue is the Blessed Virgin Mary: the Mother of Mercy and Queen of Peace. As we turn to her now, let us seek her maternal intercession for all the families of these lands, that they may truly be schools of prayer and schools of love. Let us ask the Mother of the Church to look down in mercy upon all the Christians of these lands, and with the help of her prayers, may they be truly one in the faith they profess and the witness they bear. Let us ask her who responded so generously to the angel's call, and accepted her vocation to become the Mother of God, to give courage and strength to all young people today who are discerning their vocations, so that they too may generously dedicate themselves to carrying out the Lord's will.

In this season of Eastertide, it is with the title *Regina Coeli* that we call

upon the Blessed Virgin. As a fruit of the Redemption won by her Son's death and resurrection, she too was raised to everlasting glory and crowned Queen of Heaven. With great confidence in the power of her intercession, with joy in our hearts and with love for our glorious ever-Virgin Mother, we turn to her now and ask for her prayers.

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