



The Holy See

JUBILEE PILGRIMAGE
OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II
TO THE HOLY LAND (MARCH 20-26, 2000)

SPEECH OF JOHN PAUL II*

VISIT TO THE PRESIDENT OF ISRAEL

Thursday, 23 March 2000

*Mr President,
Government Ministers,
Members of the Knesset,
Your Excellencies,*

I am most grateful, Mr President, for the welcome you have given me to Israel. To this meeting we both bring long histories. You represent Jewish memory, reaching beyond the recent history of this land to your peoples unique journey through the centuries and millennia. I come as one whose Christian memory reaches back through the two thousand years since the birth of Jesus in this very Land.

History, as the ancients held, is the *Magistra vitae*, a teacher of how to live. This is why we must be determined to heal the wounds of the past, so that they may never be opened again. We must work for a new era of reconciliation and peace between Jews and Christians. My visit is a pledge that the Catholic Church will do everything possible to ensure that this is not just a dream but a reality.

We know that real peace in the Middle East will come only as a result of mutual understanding and respect between all the peoples of the region: Jews, Christians and Muslims. In this perspective, my pilgrimage is a journey of hope: the hope that the twenty-first century will lead to a new

solidarity among the peoples of the world, in the conviction that development, justice and peace will not be attained unless they are attained for all.

Building a brighter future for the human family is a task which concerns us all. That is why I am pleased to greet you, Government Ministers, members of the Knesset and Diplomatic Representatives of many countries, who must make and implement decisions which affect the lives of people. It is my fervent hope that a genuine desire for peace will inspire your every decision. With that as my prayer, I invoke abundant divine blessings upon you, Mr President, upon your country, and upon all of you who have honoured me with your presence. Thank you.

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