

Pontiff Joins Religious Leaders in Peace Appeal

Calls for Protecting Children from Fanaticism and Violence

NAZARETH, MAY 14, 2009 (Zenit.org).- Benedict XVI met with religious leaders of various traditions in Galilee, assuring them of the Catholic Church's commitment to foster peace and work for the betterment of society.

Today at the Shrine of the Annunciation, as part of the Pope's daylong visit to Nazareth, an interreligious meeting gathered Christian, Muslim, Jewish and Druzian leaders for dialogue and prayer.

The Pontiff addressed the meeting participants, affirming that all religious traditions share the conviction that "peace itself is a gift from God."

However, he added, it "cannot be achieved without human endeavor."

The Holy Father noted, "Lasting peace flows from the recognition that the world is ultimately not our own, but rather the horizon within which we are invited to participate in God's love and cooperate in guiding the world and history under his inspiration."

"We cannot do whatever we please with the world," he stated, but "we are called to conform our choices" to the law "inscribed by the Creator upon the universe," and to "pattern our actions after the divine goodness that pervades the created realm."

Benedict XVI pointed out that Galilee is a land "known for its religious and ethnic diversity" and is a home to people "who know well the efforts required to live in harmonious coexistence."

He told the religious leaders, "Our different religious traditions have a powerful potential to promote a culture of peace, especially through teaching and preaching the deeper spiritual values of our common humanity."

Noble task

The Pope pointed out that the future of humanity will be shaped by "molding the hearts of the young."

"Christians readily join Jews, Muslims, Druze, and people of other religions," he affirmed, "in wishing to safeguard children from fanaticism and violence while preparing them to be builders of a better world."

The Pontiff encouraged his listeners to "continue exercising mutual respect as you work to ease tensions concerning places of worship, thus assuring a serene environment for prayer and reflection here and throughout Galilee."

He gave an assurance of the Catholic Church's commitment to join with other religious traditions in the "noble undertaking" of bettering society and thus testifying "to the religious and spiritual values that help sustain public life."

The Catholic Church will "seek to ensure that the light of truth, peace and goodness continue to

shine forth from Galilee and lead people across the globe to seek all that fosters the unity of the human family," the Holy Father affirmed.

Shared prayer

After this address, a Jewish representative led a moment of prayer shared by the representatives of the different religions, in which he sung: "Shalom! Salaam! Lord, grant us peace! Dona Nobis Pacem!"

The leaders on the stage joined hands amid applause from the audience.

Earlier today, in a Mass celebrated on Nazareth's Mount of Precipice with around 50,000 people, Benedict XVI acknowledged the "tensions in recent years" in that area, "which have harmed relations between its Christian and Muslim communities."

He appealed to both communities to "repair the damage that has been done" and "work to build bridges and find the way to a peaceful coexistence."

The Pontiff stated, "Let everyone reject the destructive power of hatred and prejudice, which kills men's souls before it kills their bodies!"

At the end of the day, the Pope traveled back to Jerusalem where he will conclude his Holy Land apostolic visit Friday.

On ZENIT's Web page:

Full text of address in interreligious meeting:<http://zenit.org/article-25903?l=english>

Full text of homily on Mount of Precipice:<http://zenit.org/article-25902?l=english>

© Innovative Media, Inc.

Reprinting ZENIT's articles requires written permission from the [editor](#).