

PILGRIMAGE TO THE HOLY LAND ON THE OCCASION OF THE 50th
ANNIVERSARY
OF THE MEETING BETWEEN POPE PAUL VI AND PATRIARCH
ATHENAGORAS IN JERUSALEM
(24-26 MAY 2014)

VISIT TO THE GRAN MUFTI OF JERUSALEM

ADDRESS OF POPE FRANCIS

*Building of the Great Council on the Esplanade of the Mosques
(Jerusalem)*

Monday, 26 May 2014

Video

*Your Excellency,
Dear Muslim Faithful,
Dear Friends,*

I am grateful for the opportunity to meet with you in this sacred place. I thank you for the courteous invitation you have extended to me and, in particular, I wish to thank the Grand Mufti and the President of the Supreme Muslim Council.

Following in the footsteps of my predecessors, and in particular the historic visit of Pope Paul VI fifty years ago, the first visit of a Pope to the Holy Land, I have greatly desired to come as a pilgrim to the places which witnessed the earthly presence of Jesus Christ. But my pilgrimage would not be complete if it did not also include a meeting with the people and the communities who live in this Land. I am particularly happy, therefore, to be with you, dear Muslim faithful, brothers.

At this moment I think of Abraham, who lived as a pilgrim in these lands. Muslims, Christians and Jews see in him, albeit in different ways, a father in faith and a great example to be imitated. He became a pilgrim, leaving his own people and his own house in order to embark on that spiritual adventure to which God called him.

A pilgrim is a person who makes himself poor and sets forth on a journey. Pilgrims set out intently toward a great and longed-for destination, and they live in the hope of a promise received (cf. *Heb* 11:8-19). This was how Abraham lived, and this should be our spiritual attitude. We can never think ourselves self-sufficient, masters of our own lives. We cannot be content with remaining withdrawn, secure in our convictions. Before the mystery of God we are all poor. We realize that we must constantly be prepared to go out from ourselves, docile to God's call and open to the future that he wishes to create for us.

In our earthly pilgrimage we are not alone. We cross paths with other faithful; at times we share with them a stretch of the road and at other times we experience with them a moment of rest which refreshes us. Such is our meeting today, for which I am particularly grateful. It is a welcome and shared moment of rest, made possible by your hospitality, on the pilgrimage of our life and that of our communities. We are experiencing a fraternal dialogue and exchange which are able to restore us and offer us new strength to confront the common challenges before us.

Nor can we forget that the pilgrimage of Abraham was also a summons to righteousness: God wanted him to witness his way of acting and to imitate him. We too wish to witness to God's working in the world, and so, precisely in this meeting, we hear deep within us his summons to work for peace and justice, to implore these gifts in prayer and to learn from on high mercy, magnanimity and compassion.

Dear brothers, dear friends, from this holy place I make a heartfelt plea to all people and to all communities who look to Abraham: may we respect and love one another as brothers and sisters! May we learn to understand the sufferings of others! May no one abuse the name of God through violence! May we work together for justice and peace! *Salaam!*