

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)

MEETING WITH REFUGEES AND DISABLED YOUNG PEOPLE

ADDRESS OF POPE FRANCIS

*Latin Church, Bethany beyond the Jordan
Saturday, 24 May 2014*

Video

*Distinguished Authorities,
Your Eminences, Excellencies,
Dear Brothers and Sisters,*

As part of my pilgrimage I have greatly desired to meet with you who have had to leave your homes and your country as a result of violence and conflict. Here in Jordan you have found welcome and refuge. I have wanted also to meet with you, dear young people who bear the burden of physical disabilities.

The place where we are meeting commemorates Jesus' baptism. Coming here to the Jordan to be baptized by John, Jesus showed his humility and his participation in our human condition. He stooped down to us and by his love he restored our dignity and brought us salvation. Jesus' humility never fails to move us, the fact that he bends down to wounded humanity in order to heal us: he bends down to heal all our wounds! For our part, we are profoundly affected by the tragedies and suffering of our times, particularly those caused by ongoing conflicts in the Middle East. I think particularly of our beloved Syria, rent by nearly three years of civil strife which has led to countless deaths and forced millions to flee and seek exile in other countries. All of us want peace! But as we observe this tragic conflict, seeing these wounds, seeing so many people who have left their homeland, forced to do so, I ask myself: who is selling arms to these people to make war? Behold the root of evil! Hatred and financial

greed in the manufacturing and sale of arms. This should make us think about who is responsible for this situation, for providing arms to those in conflict and thereby sustaining such conflict. Let us think about this and with sincere hearts let us call upon these poor criminals to change their ways.

I thank the Jordanian authorities and people for the generous welcome they have extended to the immense number of refugees from Syria and Iraq. I also thank all those who offer them assistance and solidarity. I think too of the charitable work undertaken by Church institutions such as Caritas Jordan and others, who assist the needy regardless of their religious beliefs, ethnic origin or politics; in this way they reveal the radiant face of Jesus, full of kindness and love. May the Almighty and Merciful God bless all of you and every effort you make to alleviate the sufferings caused by war!

I urge the international community not to leave Jordan, who is so welcoming and so courageous, alone in the task of meeting the humanitarian emergency caused by the arrival of so great a number of refugees, but to continue and even increase its support and assistance. I renew my heartfelt appeal for peace in Syria. May the violence cease and may humanitarian law be respected, thus ensuring much needed assistance to those who are suffering! May all parties abandon the attempt to resolve issues by the use of arms and return to negotiations. A solution will only be found through dialogue and restraint, through compassion for those who suffer, through the search for a political solution and through a sense of fraternal responsibility.

Dear young people, I ask you to join me in praying for peace. You can do this by offering your daily efforts and struggles to God; in this way your prayer will become particularly precious and effective. I also encourage you to assist, through your generosity and sensitivity, in building a society which is respectful of the vulnerable, the sick, children and the elderly. Despite your difficulties in life, you are a sign of hope. You have a place in God's heart, you are in my prayers. I am grateful that so many of you are here, and for your warmth, joy and enthusiasm. Thank you!

As our meeting concludes, I pray once more that reason and restraint will prevail and that, with the help of the international community, Syria will rediscover the path of peace. May God change the hearts of the violent. May God change the hearts of those who seek war. May God change the hearts of those who manufacture and sell arms and may he strengthen the hearts and minds of peacemakers and grant them every blessing. May

God bless you all!

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