



The Holy See

APOSTOLIC JOURNEY
OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI
TO FRANCE ON THE OCCASION OF THE 150th ANNIVERSARY
OF THE APPARITIONS OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY AT LOURDES
(SEPTEMBER 12 - 15, 2008)

MEETING WITH REPRESENTATIVES OF THE JEWISH COMMUNITY

ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI

Elysée Palace, Paris

Friday, 12 September 2008

Dear friends, it is with great pleasure that I meet with you this evening. Our meeting auspiciously coincides with the vigil of the weekly celebration of the *shabbat*, the day which from time immemorial has occupied a significant position in the religious and cultural life of the people of Israel. Every pious Jew sanctifies the *shabbat* with the reading of the Scriptures and the reciting of the Psalms. Dear friends, as you know, the prayer of Jesus also was nourished by the Psalms. Regularly he went to the temple and the synagogue. There he too listened to the word on the Sabbath. There he wanted to underline the goodness with which God cares for man, even in the arrangement of time. Does not the Talmud Yoma (85b) say: the Sabbath is offered to you, but you are not offered to the Sabbath? Christ has asked the people of the Covenant to recognize always the unprecedented greatness and love of the Creator for all humanity. Dear friends, because of that which unites us and that which separates us, we share a relationship that should be strengthened and lived. And we know that these fraternal bonds constitute a continual invitation to know and to respect one another better.

By her very nature the Catholic Church feels obliged to respect the Covenant made by the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Indeed, the Church herself is situated within the eternal Covenant of the Almighty, whose plans are immutable, and she respects the children of the Promise, the children of the Covenant, as her beloved brothers and sisters in the faith. She compellingly repeats, through my voice, the words of the great Pope Pius XI, my beloved predecessor: Spiritually, we are Semites (*Allocution to the Belgian Pilgrims*, 16 September 1938). The Church

therefore is opposed to every form of anti-Semitism, which can never be theologically justified. The theologian Henri de Lubac, in a time of darkness, as Pius XII (*Summi Pontificatus*, 10 October 1939) described it, added that to be anti-Semitic also signifies being anti-Christian (cf. *Un nuovo fronte religioso* in: *Israele e la Fede Cristiana* [1942]). Once again I feel the duty to pay heartfelt recognition to those who have died unjustly and to those that have dedicated themselves to assure that the names of these victims may always be remembered. God does not forget!

I cannot neglect, on an occasion such as this, to recall the eminent role played by the Jews of France in the building up of the whole nation and of their prestigious contribution to her spiritual patrimony. They have given - and continue to give - great figures to the spheres of politics, culture and the arts. To each one of them I extend affectionate and respectful wishes and with fervour I invoke upon all of your families and upon all of your communities a special Blessing of the Lord of time and of history. *Shabbat shalom!*

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