



The Holy See

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

VISIT TO PRESIDENT YASSER ARAFAT IN BETHLEHEM

SPEECH OF JOHN PAUL II

Wednesday, 22 March 2000

Your Excellency,

I am happy to have this opportunity to thank you again, and to return the visits which you have made to me in the Vatican. I thank you for your warm welcome. This is an important moment in the search for peace in this region. Much has been achieved, but there is still much to be done if all the peoples of the region are to live in harmony based upon respect for the rights and dignity of all.

Our meeting today makes clear the commitment of the Catholic Church to work unceasingly for peace in the Middle East as a partner of all peoples. The Church understands the aspirations of the different peoples and insists that dialogue is the only way to make those aspirations a reality rather than a dream. I am thankful for the recognition you have given me here today. I know that you too are convinced that only patient and courageous dialogue will open the way to the future which your people rightly desire.

Entrusting this great challenge to Almighty God, I invoke upon you, upon your family and the Palestinian people the abundant blessings of heaven.