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Benedict XVI Notes Goals for Holy Land Trip Asks Faithful to Pray for Success

VATICAN CITY, MAY 3, 2009 (Zenit.org).- Benedict XVI is asking for prayers for his weeklong trip to the Holy Land, saying that his pilgrimage seeks to promote dialogue, reconciliation and peace.

The Pope invited the faithful to pray for the trip today when he recited the midday Regina Caeli with those gathered in St. Peter's Square. He is set to leave this Friday and return May 15, and will visit Jordan, Israel and the Palestinian Territories.



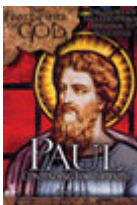
The Holy Father noted that he will be following in the footsteps of Paul VI and John Paul II, who also made pilgrimages to the Holy Land. He expressed that he hopes "to confirm and encourage the Christians of the Holy Land, who must daily confront many difficulties. As a successor of the Apostle Peter, I will show the closeness and support of the whole body of the Church."

"Moreover, I will be a pilgrim of peace, in the name of the one God, Father of all," the Bishop of Rome continued. "I will give witness to the Catholic Church's commitment in favor of those who work to practice dialogue and reconciliation, to arrive to a stable and lasting peace in justice and mutual respect."

As well, the Pontiff noted, "this trip will necessarily have notable ecumenical and interreligious significance. Jerusalem is, from this point of view, the symbolic city par excellence: There Christ died so as to reunite all of the dispersed children of God."

Benedict XVI will deliver 29 discourses and homilies during his week in the Middle East. He will also meet with civil authorities and representatives of Christianity, Islam and Judaism.

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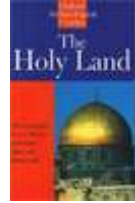
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