

A Visit for Prayer and Productive Dialogue

Two weeks before the visit of Pope Benedict XVI to Turkey, a report was published by the European Commission in Brussels accusing Turkey of not protecting religious minorities and not giving them juridical recognition. In a majority population of Sunni Muslims, Christians among others, have long complained of discrimination. Small communities of Catholics are scattered throughout the country mainly in Istanbul, Anatolia and Izmir. In addition there was tension, trouble and riots over the address given by Pope Benedict at Regensburg some weeks earlier. Into this climate of unrest and tension, Pope Benedict began his visit on November 28 to conclude on December 1 as a guest of the Orthodox Ecumenical Patriarchate. Despite the negative premonitions, the visit has been hailed as a great success. Pope Benedict held talks with Government and Muslim leaders, as well as representatives of Syriac Christians and Jews.

The Pope spoke of his visit as being supported by many: "I felt I was accompanied and supported by the prayers of the entire Christian community." He expressed the hope that

*Left: Pope Benedict XVI, second from right, and Istanbul's Mufti Mustafa Cagrici, right, pause during their visit inside the Blue Mosque in Istanbul Thursday, Nov. 30, 2006. Pope Benedict XVI prayed alongside the Islamic cleric in Turkey's most famous mosque. In a dramatic gesture to Muslims, the Pope turned towards Mecca in a gesture of Muslim prayer. (AP Photo/Salih Zeki Fazlioglu) ***



Pope Benedict XVI frees a dove upon his arrival at Istanbul's Holy Spirit Cathedral, 01 December 2006. The Pope released four white doves, symbols of peace, into the air outside the Cathedral of the Holy Spirit before celebrating the second and final Mass of his busy four-day visit to Turkey. AFP PHOTO/ MUSTAFA OZER



his visit would produce “fruits of goodness for ever more sincere cooperation among all Christ’s disciples and for a productive dialogue with Muslim believers.” He thanked the Turkish authorities and people for “a welcome worthy of their traditional spirit of hospitality.” The Holy Father mentioned the Catholic community in Turkey which, he said, “often finds itself in difficult conditions.”

In his final homily, Pope Benedict invoked the Holy Spirit: “The Spirit is the enduring source of our faith and unity. He awakens within us true knowledge of Jesus and He puts on our lips the words of faith that enable us to acknowledge the Lord.”

“To manifest the Spirit, to live by the Spirit, is not to live for oneself alone, but to let oneself be conformed to Christ Jesus by becoming, like Him, the servant of his brothers and sisters. Here is a very concrete teaching for each of us.”

The Church, said the Pope, “has been charged to proclaim His Gospel to the ends of the earth, transmitting to the men and women of our time the Good News which not only illuminates but overturns their lives, even to the

Below: In this picture released by the Ecumenical Orthodox Patriarchate, Pope Benedict XVI, left, and Ecumenical Orthodox Patriarch Bartholomew I exchange the kiss of peace during a Mass celebrated at the St. Esprit Cathedral, the Cathedral of the Holy Spirit, in Istanbul, Turkey, Friday, Dec. 1, 2006, during the last day of the Pontiff’s four-day visit to Turkey. (AP Photo/Nikos Manginas)



Right: Pope Benedict XVI and Ecumenical Orthodox Patriarch Bartholomew celebrate Mass at the Holy Spirit Cathedral in Istanbul, 01 December 2006. The Pope released four white doves, symbols of peace, into the air outside the Cathedral of the Holy Spirit before celebrating the second and final mass of his busy four-day visit to Turkey. AFP PHOTO / ARTURO MARI / OSSERVATORE ROMANO

point of conquering death itself. This Good News is not just a word, but a person, Christ Himself, risen and alive!”

“The Church’s mission is not to preserve power, or to gain wealth; her mission is to offer Christ, to give a share in Christ’s own life, man’s most precious good, which God Himself gives us in His Son.”

“You know well,” the Pope told his listeners, “that the Church wishes to impose nothing on anyone and that she merely asks to live in freedom, in order to reveal the One whom she cannot hide, Christ Jesus. ... Be ever receptive to the Spirit of Christ and so become attentive to those who thirst for justice, peace, dignity and respect for themselves and for their brothers and sisters.”



World Youth Day 2008

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19 MONTHS TO GO!

- Randwick Racecourse chosen as the venue for the overnight vigil and final Mass to be celebrated by Pope Benedict XVI
- WYD08 Anthem entries have closed and soon to be chosen.
- A Delegation from the Pontifical Council of the Laity has recently visited Sydney to view event sites and to meet Catholic leaders, Government leaders and Community representatives.
- Fr Peter Williams of Parramatta Diocese has been appointed as Director of Liturgy. He is currently Executive Secretary Of the Australian Catholic Bishops' Conference Commission for Liturgy.
- An Events Co-ordinator for the Lismore Diocese is soon to be appointed.

