



The Holy See

APOSTOLIC JOURNEY
TO LEBANON
(14-16 SEPTEMBER 2012)

FAREWELL CEREMONY

ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS POPE BENEDICT XVI

Rafiq Hariri International Airport, Beirut
Sunday, 16 September 2012

[Video]

Mr President,
Messrs President of the Parliament and of the Council of Ministers,
Your Beatitudes, my brother Bishops,
Civil and religious authorities, dear Friends,

As the moment to depart draws near, I leave Lebanon with regret. I thank you for your words, Mr President, and for promoting along with the Government whose representatives I salute, the organization of the various events during my stay with you, assisted in a special way by the efficiency of the various services of the Republic and the private sector. I thank, too, Patriarch Bechara Boutros Rai, and all the Patriarchs present, as well as the Eastern and Latin Bishops, priests, deacons, men and women religious, seminarians and faithful who came to receive me. In visiting you, it was as if Peter himself had come to you and you received him with the cordiality which characterizes your Churches and your culture.

My especial thanks go to the entire Lebanese people who form a beautiful and rich mosaic and who have shown the successor of Peter their enthusiasm by the efforts, both general and specific, of each community. I cordially thank our venerable sister Churches and the Protestant communities. I thank in particular representatives of the Muslim communities. Through my stay here, I have noticed how much your presence has contributed to the success of my journey. In

these troubled times, the Arab world and indeed the entire world will have seen Christians and Muslims united in celebrating peace. It is a tradition in the Middle East to receive a guest with consideration and respect as you have done. I thank you all. But, to that consideration and respect, you added something else, which can be compared to one of those renowned oriental spices which enriches the taste of food: your warmth and your affection, which make me wish to return. I thank you for that especially. May God bless you for it!

During my all too brief stay, motivated principally by the signature and consigning of the Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Medio Oriente*, I have been able to meet various elements of your society. There were moments that were more official in character, others that were more intimate, moments of great religious importance and of fervent prayer, and others marked by the enthusiasm of young people. I give thanks to God for granting these occasions, for these meaningful encounters which I was able to have, and for the prayer offered by all and for all in Lebanon and the Middle East, whatever their origins or religious beliefs.

In his wisdom, Solomon asked Hiram of Tyre to build a house for the name of God, a sanctuary for all eternity (cf. *Sir 47:13*). And Hiram, whom I mentioned at my arrival, sent wood taken from the cedars of Lebanon (cf. *1 Kg 5:22*). Cedar furnishings adorned the interior of the Temple, with garlands of sculpted flowers (cf. *1 Kg 6:18*). Lebanon was present in the sanctuary of God. May the Lebanon of today, and her inhabitants, also dwell in the sanctuary of God! May Lebanon continue to be a place where men and women can live in harmony and peace with each other, in order to give the world not only a witness to the presence of God, the primary theme of this past Synod, but also a witness to the communion between people, the second theme of the Synod, whatever their political, social, or religious standpoint.

I pray to God for Lebanon, that she may live in peace and courageously resist all that could destroy or undermine that peace. I hope that Lebanon will continue to permit the plurality of religious traditions and not listen to the voices of those who wish to prevent it. I hope that Lebanon will fortify the communion among all her inhabitants, whatever their community or religion, that she will resolutely reject all that could lead to disunity, and with determination choose brotherhood. These are blossoms pleasing to God, virtues that are possible and that merit consolidation by becoming more deeply rooted.

The Virgin Mary, venerated with devotion and tenderness by the faithful of the religious confessions here present, is a sure model for going forward in hope along the path of a lived and authentic brotherhood. Lebanon understood this well when, some time ago, she proclaimed 25 March as a holiday, thus allowing everyone to live more deeply their unity in serenity. May the Virgin Mary, whose ancient shrines are so numerous in your country, continue to accompany and inspire you!

May God bless Lebanon and all the Lebanese! May he never cease to draw them to himself so as

to offer them a share in his eternal life! May he fill them with his joy, his peace and his light! May God bless all the Middle East! Upon all of you, I affectionately invoke abundant divine blessings.
مُكَّعِيْمَجُّ بَرَلَا كِرَابُّيَل – God bless you all!