



# Bulletin Associated Christian Press

January - February 2003

No. 426

## The Churches

- Christmas Homily 2002 ..... 2
- A gloomy Christmas in Bethlehem ..... 4
- IDF pulls back from Bethlehem for Christmas ..... 5
- Catholic Summit sends Message of Solidarity to Holy Land Church..... 6
- A Message to the Christians of the Holy Land from the Visiting Bishops of Europe and North America..... 8
- The Episcopal Conference Coordination ..... 9
- Foreign bishops avoid taking sides in Middle East conflict ..... 10
- Vatican Envoy raps Israel Strategy against Terror ..... 11
- Pius XII gave Instructions specifically to save and protect Jews ..... 12
- Progress seen in Catholic-Jewish Dialogue ..... 13
- Vatican Archives opened for Period 1922-1939 ..... 15
- Cardinal Sodano wonders who would benefit from Iraq ..... 16
- Nuncio views the dire Situation in Holy Land ..... 16
- Vatican closing Jerusalem Institute..... 17
- Israelis block Patriarch Sabbah at Tel Aviv Airport ..... 18
- U.S. Prelate criticizes Israeli Visa Denials ..... 18
- Greek Orthodox Church takes hesitant goodwill step for Christian Unity Week..... 19
- 2nd Phase of Talks under Way with Ancient Eastern Churches ..... 20
- Caritas warns of calamity in Palestine Territories ..... 21
- Lapid suggests autonomy for Arabs in Jerusalem ..... 22
- Israeli-Arabs plan trip to Auschwitz 'to learn about Jewish suffering'..... 23
- Ethnic strife reaches missile firing point ..... 24
- Virtual Pilgrims asked to help Holy Land Communities..... 26
- Garbage dump proves just how big Jerusalem was ..... 27
- **SELECTIONS OF ITEMS FROM VATICAN INFORMATION SERVICE** ..... 28
- Right to Religious Freedom linked to all other Basic Rights..... 28
- The Pope meets with President of the State of Israel..... 29
- The Church continues to raise its Prayer for Peace ..... 29
- Starting the Year invoking the Precious Gift of Peace..... 31
- Ash Wednesday: Prayer and Fasting for World Peace..... 32

## Miscellaneous

## V.I.S.

*Editor: Athanasius MACORA, ofm*

# Christmas Homily 2002

Brothers and Sisters

Mr. President Yaser Arafat

1. This year again, we come to Bethlehem, in this venerable basilica in order to pray. We adore the Most High while we meditate on the mystery of the Nativity of his Eternal Word made man. The one that the world cannot contain, a cave welcomed him and a Virgin conceived him. He came, prince of peace, to bestow peace upon every human person, peace with God, peace with oneself and with all his brothers and sisters, without distinction of race, religion or color. He is the Lord Savior of all.

This holy night brings us at this time, before the mystery of God's love and before the mystery of our land's sufferings. In our land indeed God wanted to manifest to all of us His mercy and love. And we must acknowledge that we were until today incapable of being fully conscious of the mystery of God's love in our land, as we were incapable of recognizing and of accepting ourselves mutually as brothers and sisters.

Mr. President Yaser Arafat, for you too we pray in this holy night as we come to pray with your people. You would have wanted to be present with us, but the increasing confusion in the truth of this earth and in the manner of dealing with the human person prevented it. We ask God to grant you wisdom and courage, during the siege that is imposed upon you, so that you may pursue your difficult task in the search of justice and peace.

## 2. Brothers and sisters

The mystery of the Incarnation leads us to the depths of the mystery of God and the way in which He deals with men. God loved us, created us and entrusted to us this land in order to construct it and to make it a dwelling for God's love. St John says: «*We have recognized the love that God has for us, and we have believed* » (cf. *1 Jn 4,16*). With this verse, the apostle introduces us into the authentic significance of Christmas. He says: 'we recognized the love and we believed'. He and the other disciples who lived with Jesus Christ have recognized that Jesus is the Eternal Word of God who came to save the world. In this, we too believe, as the Apostles believed and successive generations of Christians.

St. John adds: "*God is love. And whoever remains in love remains in God and God in him...In love there is no room for fear, perfect love drives out fear* » (*1 Jn 4,16.18*).

Yes, we speak of love, whereas we live in hard times, facing difficulties, demolitions, hatred and death. Because we believe in Christmas' deep significance and in the difficult love of which the apostle has spoken to us. He also had to live this commandment, which was new for him and for the other disciples, as well as for the society of their time. For us, also, this new commandment is difficult, and puts us in perplexity: how to apply it and to live it, given the death that is imposed upon us. And we tell you, brothers and sisters: for the believer nothing is impossible. It is not impossible to love, to love all those with whom we live, all our brothers and sisters, Moslems, Jews,

Druze and Christians, and even with the Israeli soldiers who impose upon us siege, curfew and humiliations...

St. John says again: *“Anyone who says, I love God, and hates his brother is a liar; since no one who fails to love his brother whom he can see can love God whom he has not seen » (1 Jn 4, 20).*

3. Bethlehem is besieged by soldiers on all sides. Similarly are all Palestinian cities and villages. Christmas comes in difficult times. The gates of life are closed and not only the gates of the city. And you say, brothers and sisters, how can we celebrate Christmas and how can we live this difficult commandment of love? How to join between these two demanding realities: on one hand, this demanding commandment, and on the other, the reality of our daily life?

To all those who ask this question, we say: to celebrate Christmas means to pray and to put ourselves in the presence of God and not of men. Secondly, our difficult reality must not lead us to despair and to its consequences. We believe in God, in His love. One day, at the moment that He wants, He will inspire those whom He created and put in this land that is His, love and justice. Meanwhile, we have to be patient and to resist, the resistance of the spirit facing all discouragement, the resistance of the spirit facing the temptation not to believe in man's goodness, and the resistance of the spirit to all bloodshed, while we persevere in asking our freedom and our dignity.

Brothers and sisters, put yourselves in the presence of God the Most High and before the deep mystery of His love. In Him, in spite of all oppressions of men, you will find strength and peace. Our daily life is a witnessing to God, to His power and to His providence. The task of the Christian is to exercise patience, not to weaken and to escape. We pray, we exercise patience, and we do everything that must be done to put an end to the occupation and to the sufferings that ensue from it. In this way, we face all difficulty and even the fast or slow death that is imposed upon us.

4. As for the siege of Bethlehem, and the siege imposed upon the Palestinian human person everywhere, - who, like all human person and like all people in the world, is precious in God's eyes, - we say that this siege must not remain, under any pretext at all. Moreover, as a measure of security, the experience has showed that it did not bring the desired security.

5. Therefore, we address our message to the Israeli people and the Israeli authorities, to them we say: to you all, peace and security. For you also there was bloodshed in your cities and your streets, and among innocents. However, we tell you that the ways of peace are not those that you follow. You have power, make it a power of peace and then you will harvest peace and security. Believe in peace in this phase of history after one hundred years of conflict. The Palestinian people want for you security and peace, as they want peace for themselves. You say: they resort to violence and terrorism and they want us peace? Yes, it is so. They want peace for you, and for themselves, and, with peace; they want their freedom and the end of the occupation.

We say no to all violence and terrorism, but we also say no to the oppression that gives it birth. You say: violence and terrorism. It is so. But we invite you to ask yourself

what is the cause of it? You will perhaps find that the reason is in your hands, and it is the occupation and the deprivation of a people of their freedom and dignity. We invite you to open your mind and your heart to see the reasons that give birth to the terror of which you are afraid. The keys are in your hands. Take away the cause, the effect will disappear. Cut the tree and its fruit at the same time.

The tree is the occupation and the numerous oppressions that accompany it. In your hands, not in the power of your army, is the capacity to stop all what you say to be violence and terror. Your military action demolished so many things and crushed the Palestinian human person; it made at a time war and produced terror; but it did not manage to make peace and did not procure you the desired security. Your armies won wars and until today did not win peace. You need to have a new leadership that has new visions able to make peace, that cannot only promise you but can procure you security, while granting to Palestinians their right, their liberty and their security.

6. We remember in this holy night the tragedy of this venerable church, a few months ago; and we express our esteem and our love to the Franciscan Fathers and religious, as well as to the Greek Orthodox and to the Armenian orthodox monks, during this hard period. We greet their courage, their faith and their love for all.

We carry in our prayer the feelings of all the poor of this conflict, the strong and the weak, and all its victims: the demolished houses, the injured, the dead, the thousands of Palestinian prisoners in the Israeli prisons, those who receive the order to kill and those who give them. We put them all before God, we ask Him to purify them and to make them all, yes all, on whatever side they are, capable of love, justice and peace.

To all our faithful in all parts of our diocese, Palestine, Israel, Jordan and Cyprus, we ask God to make this feast an opportunity to renew their faith and their love, as we ask Him to grant them a New Year with abundant blessings.

From Bethlehem to all Christians of the world, we convey in this holy night, our wishes of peace and joy. And for all the inhabitants of this land, we ask God Almighty to give us justice, peace and love. Amen.

*+ Michel Sabbah, Patriarch,  
Bethlehem–Christmas 2002*

## **A gloomy Christmas in Bethlehem**

The Christian holiday of Christmas will start tomorrow night in Bethlehem in the shadow of Israeli tanks. The town of Bethlehem, holy to Christians worldwide, is still under curfew, and only the traditional convoy of the Latin Patriarch will be allowed to reach the Church of the Nativity. Instead of tourists, there will be Israeli soldiers in the city; instead of decorations and holiday cheer, a feeling of siege and war will be in the air. As far as the Israel Defense Forces are concerned, it will be just another busy day that soldiers hope to get through peacefully.

Christians around the world are monitoring Israel's ability to allow free access to the Christian holy sites and freedom of religious worship during a difficult period of terror attacks. Since 1967, the proper conduct of Christmas services in Bethlehem has been proof that Israel jealously protects the rights of religious minorities in the territories. Israeli governors always made certain to attend the Christmas Midnight Mass alongside town dignitaries, and Israel was praised for its ability to make a distinction between the holy places and its security needs. During those years, the ruling concept was that the Christmas holidays were not merely a local event, but a showcase for Israel worldwide.

Apparently, that concept is fading, along with Israel's good name in the world. This most important religious rite now appears to be at the mercy of the Israeli government, which can grant or deny the right to hold the ritual. True, the official formalities of the ceremonies will not be disturbed: The convoy will pass on time and the mass will be held as usual. But the formalistic side is incomplete without allowing believers from the territories, Israel and the world to freely attend the events at the holy site.

As happened last year, the government decided to prevent Yasser Arafat from attending the ceremonies in Bethlehem, fearing that he would exploit the visit to restore some of the authority and leadership of which Israel has deprived him. This is also a blinkered approach, which regards the Christmas holiday as an alien event that can be handled in an uninspired military manner, ignoring the global symbolism of the holiday.

It is impossible to ignore the contribution of Palestinian terrorism to the sad situation in Bethlehem. But even under those circumstances, it seems that the Israeli government is not doing enough to guarantee the rights of Christians to celebrate their holiday as they would like in an area under the IDF's complete control. The IDF should be capable of taking appropriate steps to guarantee the safety of Israeli citizens during the holiday without overbearing displays of force. Lifting the curfew might perhaps enable wanted men to leave the area or find refuge in it, but that is one of the risks the government takes when it controls a town holy to Christians, as it is tested not only on its ability to provide security for Israeli citizens, but also on its facilitation of freedom of worship for other religions.

*Editorial Ha'aretz - 23 December 2002*

## **IDF pulls back from Bethlehem for Christmas**

Israel Defense Forces troops pulled out of central Bethlehem yesterday, ahead of the Christmas holiday. IDF sources indicated that the troops would re-deploy in the area as soon as the holiday celebrations are completed today.

Yesterday, plain-clothed Palestinian policemen directed pedestrian and vehicle traffic in central Bethlehem without any intervention from Israel, which has suspended security cooperation in the region.

### **142,000 Christians**

Israel is home to 142,000 Christians, 2.1 percent of the country's total population. The vast majority, 81 percent, 115,000 are Arabs.

In 1949, shortly after Israel's founding, there were only 34,000 Christians living in Israel, representing 2.9 percent of the population. At the time, Christian Arabs constituted 20 percent of the country's Arab population. In 1972, Christian Arabs comprised 15 percent of Israel's Arab population, and this year they constituted only 9 percent of the Arab sector.

Today, 83,000 Christians live in northern Israel, including 20,000 in Nazareth. Other large Christian populations are in Haifa (16,000), Jerusalem (14,000) and Shfaram (8,000).

Of the country's 27,000 non-Arab Christians, most arrive during immigration waves from Eastern Europe in the 1970s and 1980s and from the former USSR in the 1990s.

*By Amos Harel and Moti Bassok  
Ha'aretz - 25 December 2002*

## **Catholic Summit sends Message of Solidarity to Holy Land Church**

A Catholic summit in Jerusalem ended today (Thursday) with a message of support for the Christians of the Holy Land and a set of proposals.

The meeting - which included meetings with President Katsav of Israel and President Arafat of the Palestinian Authority - examined in some depth the situation in the Holy Land.

The event was hosted by His Beatitude Michel Sabbah, the Latin Patriarch, and attended by delegates from the Catholic Bishops' Conferences in England and Wales, the U.S., Germany, Canada, Spain and Italy as well as the Commission of the Bishops' Conferences of the European Community (COMECE) and the Council of European Bishops' Conferences (CCEE).

The co-ordination led by Archbishop Patrick Kelly, vice-president of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales, Bishop William Skylstad, of the U.S., Bishop Jacques Berthelet, of Canada, Bishop Joan Enric Vives, of Spain, Bishop Reinhard Marx, of Germany, and Monsignor Piergiuseppe Vachelli of Italy, issued a call for renewed international advocacy for peace in the Holy Land.

In a message to the Christians of the Holy Land, the visiting bishops of Europe and North America said: "It is clear that fear and mistrust grip many more besides you, our Christian sisters and brothers. Yet at the same time, we have been assured of widespread longing for justice and peace, and have experienced the lively hope that must, it seems, inspire the continued courage and dedication of so many people, not least your own commitment to reconciliation."

It added: "Until God grants the peace for which we all long, we promise to work without ceasing to help sustain you, our brothers and sisters in faith in Jerusalem, Palestine, Israel and Jordan.

"To you who first witnessed the risen Christ and seek a rightful share in the peace which can be found only in him, we pledge our love and solidarity."

The new proposals agreed by the peace summit were:

- Increased contact between our conferences and the Church in the Holy Land (the Assembly, the Latin Patriarch, the Nuncio, the Heads of Churches and other relevant church bodies) is necessary.
- The steering capacity of the facilitating bishop's conference ought to be strengthened. To this end, the Coordination facilitator will be responsible (a) for proposing issues for common advocacy (e.g., matters of humanitarian access), and (b) for identifying 'best practices' (e.g., child sponsorship and partnership programs).
- Regular and crisis communication among our conferences, on Holy Land issues, ought to be expanded.
- Information and proposals for action ought to be extended to a wider circle of conferences and Catholic organizations. Where feasible, additional conferences ought to be invited to participate in our meetings.

The meeting also agreed that:

- while resuming pilgrimages of the faithful on a large-scale may not be possible under present circumstances, every effort should be made to encourage pilgrimages by leadership groups in the Church,
- the material needs of the Holy Land's Christians are urgent,
- sharing information on how donations are used will encourage further generosity,
- we value the increased collaboration on the part of local and international Catholic agencies in the Holy Land and will continue to work with such agencies, particularly with Caritas Internationalis,
- we encourage placing the Holy Land on the agendas of the annual continental and inter-continental bishops meetings and should be prepared to provide information for preparation of these meetings,
- we support ecumenical collaboration in efforts to express solidarity with the Christians of the Holy Land and take particular note of relevance of 'accompaniment programs' like that sponsored by the World Council of Churches and endorsed by the Heads of Churches in Jerusalem, and
- interfaith dialogue with Jews and Muslims should be enhanced and it is hoped the fruit of these dialogues will include reconciliation and a shared pursuit of peace.

The full messages and proposals and a history of the coordination are below.

## **A Message to the Christians of the Holy Land from the Visiting Bishops of Europe and North America**

To our Christian brothers and sisters of the Holy Land;

To His Beatitude, the Latin Patriarch, the president, and their Excellencies, the members of the Assembly of Catholic Ordinaries of the Holy Land;

To their Beatitudes, the Greek and Armenian Patriarchs of Jerusalem, and their Excellencies, the bishops and heads of Churches in Jerusalem and the Holy Land;

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all (2 Cor 13:13).

A year ago, you shared with us your sufferings and spoke of your yearnings for justice and peace. To our great sorrow, as we return a year later, we have heard not of greater peace and hope, but only of even more violence and deeper despair.

Security measures have become more oppressive; unemployment has increased; poverty of body, mind and even spirit is ever greater. We have also witnessed people's dread and dismay at the threat of war in Iraq.

It is clear that fear and mistrust grip many more besides you, our Christian sisters and brothers. Yet at the same time, we have been assured of a widespread longing for justice and peace, and have experienced the lively hope that must, it seems, inspire the continued courage and dedication of so many people, not least your own commitment to reconciliation.

Last year we said, "The present cycle of violence is a tragedy for everyone. It is profoundly wrong to keep a people under occupation; it is abhorrent to hold millions of men, women and children confined in one enormous jail. It is likewise morally reprehensible to take vengeance or undertake resistance with random attacks on innocent people." The continuing violence, in so many different forms, indicates to us: something is profoundly wrong.

Pope John Paul's words a year ago are confirmed by the sad story of the last twelve months:

No one can remain indifferent to the injustice of which the Palestinian people have been victims for more than fifty years. No one can contest the right of the Israeli people to live in security. However, neither can anyone forget the innocent victims, on both sides, who fall day after day under the blows of violence. Weapons and bloody attacks will never be the right means for making political statements to the other side. Nor is the logic of the law of retaliation capable any longer of leading to the paths of justice.

On our return home, we requested our national bishops' conferences, regional groupings of conferences, and Catholic justice and peace commissions to make advocacy on behalf of peace in the Holy Land a priority matter. This they have done, although this year we have become increasingly aware of the need for these groups to continue their

efforts and to co-ordinate their work more effectively. We have continually tried to improve public awareness of the facts, and understanding of the issues underlying the facts. As we promised, we ourselves have returned. Regrettably, our attempts to bring large numbers of pilgrims have so far met only with limited success, though pilgrimages have continued and have been a source of mutual encouragement.

We renew the promise we made a year ago. Until God grants the peace for which we all long, we promise to work without ceasing to help sustain you, our brothers and sisters in faith in Jerusalem, Palestine, Israel and Jordan. To you who first witnessed the risen Christ and seek a rightful share in the peace which can be found only in him, we pledge our love and solidarity.

It is because Jesus of Nazareth is risen and his tomb is empty that, especially in the darkest days of your sufferings, we rejoice with you in this sure confidence: "Hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us." (Rom 5:5).

With our constant prayers, we are

Devotedly yours in Christ,

Bishop Jacques Berthelet C.S.V.  
President, Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops

Archbishop Patrick Kelly  
Vice-President, Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales, and  
Delegate, Council of Episcopal Conferences of Europe

Bishop Reinhard Marx,  
Delegate, German Bishops' Conference

Bishop William Skylstad  
Vice-President, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops

Bishop Joan Enric Vives  
Delegate, Spanish Bishops' Conference

Monsignor Piergiuseppe Vachelli  
Sub-Secretary, Italian Bishops' Conference

*16 January 2003 - Jerusalem*

## **The Episcopal Conference Coordination** *In Support of the Church in the Holy Land*

### **A Word of Explanation**

During the 1990s, the United States Catholic Conference had worked closely with the Holy See and the Church in the Holy Land on issues related to the Holy Land, particularly on the future of Jerusalem. In 1997, the Secretariat of State asked the USCC

to coordinate its policies and activities related to the Holy Land with European conferences. In October 1998, during a meeting of bishops' conferences on Jerusalem, the presidents of American and European conferences agreed to join in an informal coordination.

The Coordination's founding members consisted of the conferences of Canada, England and Wales, France, Germany, the United States of America, and the Council of Episcopal Conferences of Latin America and the Council of Episcopal Conferences of Europe. From the beginning, it was hoped that Italy and Spain would also join the group. Italy, along with the Bishops' Commission for the European Union (COMECE) joined at the time of the 2002 meeting in Jerusalem, and Spain at the 2003 meeting.

- From 1998 until 2003, the United States Catholic Conference served as facilitator of the Coordination. In mid-2003, the Conference of England and Wales took over primary responsibility for facilitation.

The Coordination is an informal working group. Authority over policy related to the Holy Land lies with individual conferences and councils/commissions of conferences. The original mandate was a broad one including coordination of finances. At the founding meeting in 1998, the bishop presidents narrowed the mandate to exclude finances, with a focus primarily on advocacy, communication and education. Because of the urgency of the material needs, however, there has been increased coordination of contributions at the local level under the leadership of the Apostolic Nuncio which includes some agencies connected to national conferences. Other areas of consultation have included pilgrimages and Episcopal conference visits.

- From 1998 through 2001, the Coordination operated primarily at the staff level with staff reporting to their respective conferences. The crisis provoked by the al Aqsa Intifada made it desirable for bishop presidents and the representatives to meet once again both to express solidarity with the Christians of the Holy Land and to formalize the ties between the conferences at the level of Episcopal leadership. In 2002, the participants agreed to meet every year as long as the crisis continued. In 2003, expecting a continuation of the crisis, they agreed to meet again in January 2004 in a meeting that would allow them to spend additional time with the faithful of the Holy Land.

*16 January 2003*

## **Foreign bishops avoid taking sides in Middle East conflict**

Catholic bishops from Europe and North America concluded a meeting in Jerusalem on Thursday by expressing solidarity with Christians in the Holy Land, but the clerics avoided making the type of political statement that is often typical of such gatherings.

Archbishop Patrick Kelly, vice-president of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales and the representative of the Council of Episcopal Conferences of

Europe, admitted that the clerics had been in the country for too short a time and did not have sufficient information to make such a statement.

"In order to make an effective political statement, we have to have access to all the data," Kelly said.

Bishop Reinhard Marx, a representative of the German Conference of Bishops, noted that the issues involved were not black and white. By going on a quest for historical justice, he said, one would not be able to solve anything.

"If you want to make a political statement, people ask who are you for. If you show solidarity with the poor Palestinians, people say you are against Israel," Marx said.

The bishops, including representatives from the US, Canada, Spain, and Italy, met with President Moshe Katsav and Palestinian Chairman Yasser Arafat.

In addition to their message of solidarity, they spoke of the widespread longing for justice and peace.

However, they admitted that the situation appeared to have deteriorated. Kelly noted that at the end of a similar meeting last year, the bishops had expressed hope, but things had not improved.

"We left last year hoping things would become better, but we found this year that the situation was more serious and more desperate," he said.

*By Haim Shapiro  
The Jerusalem Post - 17 January 2003*

## **Vatican Envoy raps Israel Strategy against Terror**

The Vatican's diplomatic representative in the Holy Land has sharply condemned Israel's strategy for dealing with Palestinian terrorists.

Archbishop Pietro Sambi, the apostolic nuncio in Jerusalem, said that Israel's policies amount to "unjust collective punishment" of the Palestinian people. Speaking to the Italian daily newspaper *Avvenire*, the archbishop said that he does not question the right and duty of the Israeli government to combat terrorism. But the means that Israel employs, he said, tend to "treat every resident as a terrorist."

"That approach does not combat terrorism; it creates new terrorists," the archbishop said.

Archbishop Sambi said that he was pleased with the Israeli decision to pull troops out of Bethlehem for the Christmas celebrations-- although he pointed out that the withdrawal was only partial, and a heavy troop presence remained just outside the city. Still, the Papal Nuncio remarked, the traditional observance of Christmas at the Nativity basilica was held "without exterior signs of celebration, but with intense participation" by the faithful who could attend.

Nevertheless, the papal legate continued, it would be "even wiser" for Israel to make the troop withdrawal permanent, ending the effective army occupation of

Bethlehem. The curfew there, he observed, "not only paralyzes things at present, but limits the future." Education of children has been suspended, medical treatment interrupted, and all business stopped. "Requiring people to stay shut up in their own homes only stimulates their desire for vengeance," the archbishop said.

Archbishop Sambri said that he was disappointed by the failure of Christians from elsewhere in the world to show their support for the Christians of the Holy Land. He recalled that he was especially disappointed during the occupation of the Nativity basilica in Bethlehem in April 2002, when he had expected "a general cry from the whole Christian world, to express their love and interest in a place that is central to our faith." No such cry was heard, he remarked, with one exception. "Only the Pope, with moving insistence, mentioned the situation many times," he said. *Avvenire* also reported that Archbishop Sambri had received a phone call from Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon on Christmas Day, conveying his best wishes on the feast. It was the first time that an Israeli government leader had offered personal Christmas greetings to a Vatican representative.

*Catholic World News - 27 December 2002*

## **Pius XII gave Instructions specifically to save and protect Jews**

*Magazine to Publish 2 Wartime Letters*

Two documents soon to be published reveal Pope Pius XII's preferential help for the Jews during the years of Nazi persecution.

The documents would undercut the accusations that Pius XII avoided making express reference to the Jews during the Nazi era.

Susan Zuccotti, history professor at Barnard College in New York, contends in her book "The Vatican and the Holocaust in Italy" that there is no proof of Pius XII's intervention in favor of the Jews.

"Pius XII never used the terms 'Jew' or 'race,'" writes Zuccotti. "The Pope often expressed in general terms his sorrow over the suffering of innocent civilians, but without referring explicitly to the Jews."

Given these grave accusations, the magazine [Inside the Vatican](#) will publish in its forthcoming issue two letters sent by Pius XII in 1940 to Bishop Giuseppe Maria Palatucci of Campagna, in southern Italy, where a major concentration camp was located.

Bishop Palatucci, in cooperation with his nephew Giovanni, chief of police in Fiume, and with the Vatican, looked after the Jews interned in Campagna.

In letter No. 28436 sent by the Vatican on Oct. 2, 1940, the Holy Father donated the sum of 3,000 lire and had it put in writing that "this money is allocated preferably to those suffering for reasons of race."

In a second letter, No. 31514, the Pope gave the sum of 10,000 lire "to be distributed in aid to interned Jews." The amounts were considerable at that time.

The letters have just been published in Italy in the book "Giovanni Palatucci, the Policeman Who Saved Thousands of Jews," edited by the state police.

Last Oct. 9, Cardinal Camillo Ruini opened the cause of beatification of Giovanni Palatucci. In 1990, he was proclaimed by Israel "Righteous Among the Nations," and a street in Tel Aviv has been named after him.

*Zenit - 29 January 2003*

## **Progress seen in Catholic-Jewish Dialogue**

*So says New Vatican Secretary for Relations with Judaism*

The Vatican's point man for relations with Judaism says he is optimistic about the dialogue with the Jews, citing progress that would have been unthinkable 40 years ago.

To back up his optimism, Salesian Father Norbert Hofmann points to the high-level relations scheduled to begin soon between the Vatican and the Great Rabbinate of Jerusalem.

For the past two months, German-born Father Hofmann has been secretary for relations with Jews, a specific task undertaken by the Vatican through the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity.

The priest handles plans for congresses, and fosters Catholic-Jewish dialogue centers and other initiatives to improve and promote the meeting between the faiths. Among other things, he plans to further the dialogue in Eastern Europe and to involve young people.

Q: Can we be optimistic about the Catholic-Jewish dialogue?

Father Hofmann: At the outset I must tell you that as a Salesian I am always optimistic. Moreover, great progress can be seen in the history of 40 years of dialogue with Jews. Prior to Vatican Council II it was unthinkable; there was no progress. What is most significant is that the dialogue has reached a world level.

We already knew, for example, that in the United States there was a habitual practice of meetings between Catholics and Jews. The novelty is that the dialogue is taking place at different levels: with Orthodox Jews, with the ultra-Orthodox, with Conservatives, and those of the Reformed Synagogue.

Q: Is work done at the common level?

Father Hofmann: There is an initiative that is worth mentioning: the International Jewish Committee for Interreligious Consultation. Since 1970, we have established an institutional dialogue with this group of organizations.

We organize a congress every two to three years. Within a few days, the director of the organization will come to finalize details of the new congress.

The [Vatican's] Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews and this International Committee make up the International Catholic-Jewish Liaison Committee, which issues very interesting joint statements on topics such as the family, the environment, and the protection of religious liberty and holy places.

Q: What are the difficulties in the dialogue?

Father Hofmann: Sometimes we hope to talk on theological arguments and we realize it is difficult. It is much easier to be centered on common social problems, such as culture, the family, life as a gift of God, protection of the environment as God's creation. Difficulties are greater in the doctrinal realm and less so in the moral.

Another difficulty is that in some cases we think we have so many things in common with the Jewish people, and forget that there are important and intrinsic differences.

For example, we Catholics think that our Old Testament is the same as the Jews', and this is not so. We have a few additional books, the so-called Deuterocanonical, and, in addition, our interpretation is very different from the rabbinical. We must be cautious and not get confused.

Q: Do you notice a rapprochement of Jewish institutions that wish to be open to dialogue with the Catholic Church?

Father Hofmann: The interest is reciprocal. What happens is that the Jews are very conscious that they are talking with the Vatican, but we don't have a single Jewish speaker [to talk to]. There are many different groups within Judaism, and this creates a certain difficulty for us.

Good news is the beginning of relations with the Great Rabbinate of Jerusalem. It is a good sign, given the present political difficulties.

The meeting will be both at the level of the local Catholic Church as well as at the international level with the Vatican. It is a very stimulating result that arose after the Pope's visit to Israel in the Jubilee Year 2000. I think it is a great sign of hope -- providential.

Q: Do the constant debates on Pius XII's so-called silence darken the dialogue?

Father Hofmann: The debates on Pius XII have calmed down quite a bit. They were very intense in the year 2001, especially because of the breakup of the Joint Study Commission of Jews and Catholics.

Although the debate has calmed down, the possible beatification of Pius XII would be an obstacle for the promotion of dialogue. However, given the progress to date, we can no longer pull back.

On Feb. 15 the Vatican secret archives will be opened, which contain correspondence between the Holy See and the Nunciature of Berlin and the Munich See during the most difficult years of Nazism. We need more in-depth study of this question.

Q: Can we say that this pontificate has been the most courageous in history in relation to the Jewish world?

Father Hofmann: The Pope has certainly favored dialogue, perhaps due to his personal experience. John Paul II lived the experience of the extermination of Jews in Poland and has always advocated reconciliation. In his visits around the world, the Pope has always insisted on meeting with the Jewish representatives.

He has also been the first Pontiff in history to visit the Synagogue of Rome, in 1986. While there, he referred to Jews as "our elder brothers in the faith of Abraham." They are evident signs of his appreciation of the Jewish people.

It was very moving for a Jew to see the Pope praying at the Wailing Wall in the Holy Land, during his March 2000 visit. And let's not forget that previously he had asked forgiveness for all the wrong the Church has committed against the Jewish people. This was, without a doubt, a very strong sign.

John Paul II is a visible sign for the promotion of dialogue between Jews and Catholics.

*ZENIT - 27 January 2003*

## **Vatican Archives opened for Period 1922-1939**

### *Relating to Germany and Pius XI's Pontificate*

Researchers now have access to the so-called diplomatic funds of the Vatican Archives concerning relations between the Holy See and Germany in the 1920s and 1930s.

The "funds" include correspondence between the Holy See's Nunciatures in Munich and Berlin, kept in the archives of the Vatican State Secretariat's Section for Relations with States, during Pius XI's pontificate (1922-1939).

The documents have stirred great interest as they testify to the work of Eugenio Pacelli, first apostolic nuncio in Germany and later Vatican secretary of state. Pacelli in 1939 became Pope Pius XII.

Speaking on Vatican Radio, Father Sergio Pagano, prefect of the Vatican Secret Archive, addressed the question whether the opening of the archive last Saturday would add anything to what historians already know.

Father Pagano said that historians themselves should answer the question after carrying out their research. Speaking for himself, he said he does not think that they will find "startling revelations."

But he added: "None of us can know what these hundreds of envelopes contain in detail. There are millions of documents that must be analyzed one by one." Therefore, "neither can we exclude some discovery," he said.

Preparation for the opening of the archives entailed the compilation of inventories and an index. John Paul II has established that all the material relating to Pius XI's pontificate will be available by 2005.

Researchers already have access to the inventory of the Bavaria Nunciature of Eugenio Pacelli (1917-1925), as well as of Berlin's, from the time of Pacelli's arrival to that of his successor, Monsignor Cesare Orsenigo.

Father Pagano explained that the archive of the Berlin Nunciature was destroyed during the bombing at the end of 1943, resulting in the loss of all the documents kept there for the period 1930-31 to 1942.

*Zenit - 17 February 2002*

## **Cardinal Sodano wonders who would benefit from Iraq War**

### *Vatican Secretary of State Analyzes Possible Attack*

The Vatican secretary of state appealed to the United States and Great Britain to analyze the moral aspects and consequences of a possible war against Iraq.

"Whom does it suit to confront 1 billion Muslims and run the risk of decades of hostility from the Muslim world?" Cardinal Angelo Sodano asked Tuesday in the Holy See's Nunciature in Italy, where he celebrated his 25 years of episcopacy.

During an informal meeting with journalists, Cardinal Sodano confirmed that the Vatican is committed "with all the means at its disposal" to find a solution to this crisis.

He reminded Western heads of state that a "war" of attack is not justifiable ethically, and less so if it is "preventive," as reflected in the Catechism of the Catholic Church, which focuses on a country's right to legitimate defense.

In this connection, the cardinal said the "West has the right to defend itself from terrorism," but it also has the obligation to do so according to morality.

This poses the question of the clash of civilizations, "poorly presented, certainly, by some, but possible," he cautioned.

In any case, he added, "there is not just one Islam. There are many tendencies within it and Muslim ambassadors to the Vatican speak of tolerance," although there is "the problem of the situation of Christians who are suffering" in some of those countries.

Regarding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the secretary of state said that there have been "errors and blindness on both sides, but the two peoples must be able to have two states with secure borders."

*Zenit - 30 January 2003*

## **Nuncio views the dire Situation in Holy Land**

### *Scene facing Ariel Sharon's New Government*

Ariel Sharon's new government in Israel will have to take into consideration the deep impasse in the Mideast conflict, says a papal nuncio.

"We must be honest," Archbishop Pietro Sambi, the nuncio in Israel, told Vatican Radio after the victory by the Likud Party in Tuesday's elections. "The Pope has pointed out four pillars on which peace is based: the first is truth, the second is justice, the third is love, and the fourth is liberty."

The present situation, in which "not only peace has disappeared from the horizon, but the horizon itself has disappeared," shows that the way chosen so far, that of violence, is wrong, the Archbishop stressed.

He pointed out the courage of Christians who have decided to stay in the area. They can receive support in many ways, including from people who make pilgrimages to the Holy Places.

A pilgrimage is not only useful for one who undertakes it, but also "helps Christians who see that their brothers in the faith are present," the Nuncio said.

"There has been no pilgrim martyr," Archbishop Sambí pointed out, rejecting the idea of danger as regards pilgrimages. "I have received several groups since Christmas ... none had problems."

There is great concern in the Holy Land over a possible war against Iraq, the Nuncio said. A "war cannot be waged except in a case of extreme necessity, once all other means have been exhausted," he said. "In any event, war is always a defeat for humanity."

*Zenit - 30 January 2003*

## **Vatican closing Jerusalem Institute**

The Vatican said Thursday it is closing its center for Jewish studies in Jerusalem and moving it to Rome a closure that has been criticized by some Jewish teachers as sending a negative signal about relations between Christians and Jews.

The Vatican said it was incorporating the Pontifical Ratisbonne Institute into its Gregorian University in Rome for financial and other reasons, including giving it greater visibility and improving academic quality so that its degrees are recognized elsewhere.

"Beyond serious academic concerns, severe intractable and increasing financial problems of several years' standing necessitate a change of venue for what should be the Catholic Church's premier program in Jewish studies, where it can enjoy more appropriate quality and financial security," a statement published in the Vatican newspaper *L'Osservatore Romano* said.

It added that in Rome, students would receive a "more integrated knowledge and understanding of the Jewish religion, culture, and history" and enjoy greater intellectual collaboration between Jewish and Christian specialists.

The Ratisbonne has been a Christian center for Jewish studies in Jerusalem since the Second Vatican Council, the 1962-65 meeting that modernized the Church. In 1998, the center was named a pontifical institute, bringing it under the direct control of the Pope.

In 2001, the Vatican advised the faculty that it planned to temporarily close the Ratisbonne. At the time, the papal nuncio to Israel, Monsignor Pietro Sambí, stressed that the Ratisbonne was only closing temporarily and that the reason was financial not political or related to the surge in fighting between Israel and the Palestinians.

A group of Jewish teachers at the institute wrote to Cardinal Zenon Grocholewski, prefect of the Congregation for Catholic Education, saying they feared the closure would signal that the Church was abandoning Israel, *The Jerusalem Post* reported at that time. The letter said the closure would be viewed as adversely affecting relations between Jews and Christians.

"Even if those who made the decision did not intend this, the decision is bound to be perceived so by many in light of the current political pressure," the newspaper quoted the letter as saying.

Classes at the Ratisbonne were stopped in June 2001, said a Christian source in Jerusalem. The source said students used to study at the institute for a year in English or French, and then at Jerusalem's Hebrew University where they would study in Hebrew. The source said it would be difficult for students now to study about Judaism, in Hebrew, so far from Israel.

*By The Associated Press  
The Jerusalem Post - 24 January 2003*

## **Israelis block Patriarch Sabbah at Tel Aviv Airport**

*Officials disregard his Vatican Diplomatic Passport*

Latin-rite Patriarch Michel Sabbah of Jerusalem was unable to leave Tel Aviv airport because of a security search he was subjected to by Israeli officials.

The Vatican's semi-official newspaper L'Osservatore Romano reported today that the search was a violation of the respect due to a Vatican diplomatic passport, which the Patriarch showed at the airport Friday.

Consequently, the Patriarch was unable to attend the symposium organized on Saturday in Rome by the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue. During that event, Archbishop Michael Louis Fitzgerald, council president, publicly noted the Patriarch's absence.

The Latin Patriarch was scheduled to deliver an address on "The Spiritual Resources of Religion for Peace."

In his speech, which was read at the symposium in his absence, Patriarch Sabbah said that the priority task of religions in the Middle East is to contribute to "break the spiral of violence."

Sources of the Patriarchate told ZENIT that the Israeli security services not only obliged the Patriarch to open his suitcases to inspect what he was carrying, but they also tried to search through his personal documents.

The Italian newspaper Avvenire considered the search a violation of the fundamental 1993 agreement between the Vatican and the State of Israel, which provides for the safeguarding by the Israeli state of the freedom necessary for pastors of the Catholic Church to carry out their mission.

*Zenit - 19 January 2003*

## **U.S. Prelate criticizes Israeli Visa Denials**

*Says they interfere with Work of Jerusalem Patriarchate*

Washington, D.C. - Israel's practice of denying entry visas and work permits for Catholic clergy, religious and lay people appears to be an infringement on religious liberty, a U.S. bishop says.

In a letter to the Israeli ambassador to the United States, Bishop John Ricard, chairman of the U.S. Bishops' Committee on International Policy, said that the denial of

entry visas and work permits for clergy and seminarians affiliated with the Latin-rite Patriarchate of Jerusalem violates the spirit of a 1993 agreement between Israel and the Holy See.

"Extensive restrictions of this sort would appear to amount to a practical infringement of religious liberty." Bishop Ricard told Ambassador Daniel Ayalon.

"Two-thirds of the Patriarchate's seminarians come from outside Israel," he stated. "To prevent their study at the Patriarchal Seminary would prevent the normal functioning of one of the Patriarchate's principal institutions."

Bishop Ricard of Pensacola-Tallahassee said the Israeli policy has also unacceptably affected other institutions.

"The exclusion of clergy, Church workers and seminary students has serious adverse affects on the Church in Israel and the Palestinian Territories," he said.

The letter from Bishop Ricard came in response to a statement made last month by the Patriarch concerning the problems the Church was experiencing.

The territory of the Latin Patriarchate encompasses Israel, the Palestinian Autonomous Territories, Jordan and Cyprus.

*Zenit - 21 January 2003*

## **Greek Orthodox Church takes hesitant goodwill step for Christian Unity Week**

After 15 years of division from other local churches, the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate in Jerusalem said Wednesday it is taking hesitant steps towards reconciliation as a gesture of good will during Christian Unity Week.

"We participate in unity week with reservations because we don't recognize all denominations, but maybe this is a positive change in attitude," said Archbishop Aristarchos. "We send an official representative to attend even though he won't participate in communal prayers."

Since 1971, when many members and leaders of the 13 major churches in Israel participated in the eight days of ecumenical prayers, the Greek Orthodox Church has been noticeably absent. It has had theological and political disagreements with the other churches over the last decades, and in 1987 made an official split. Despite the divisions, the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate holds the most power over the other churches, as it guards most of the holy sites, is the largest landowner, and was Israel's official spokesperson and representative for the Christian communities.

But since the election of Patriarch Irineos I in August of 2001, a representative of the Patriarchate has been sent to the unity week activities.

"The Greeks don't pray with the other churches and never used to come to unity week. This shows a development in the Greek Church towards more unity," said Lutheran Minister Rev. Dr. Petra Heldt at a unity service in the Old City of Jerusalem Tuesday that drew more than 200 worshipers.

Father Aleksandr, representing the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate, has not joined the representatives of the other Jerusalem Patriarchates this week who stand at the end of each evenings prayer service to offer a communal blessing.

Though he is restricted from joining ecumenical prayers and blessings, he attends the ceremonies and plans to address a Thursday gathering on the subject of spirituality. It will be the first time in recent history that a member of his community has spoken publicly before the other churches.

"There are so many disputes between the Christian churches, plus we are all stuck between the Muslims and the Jews. But we are not here for properties we are here for spiritual purposes," he told *The Jerusalem Post*. "It sounds strange, but the fact that we can all shake hands this week is almost something of a miracle."

Though many of the area churches continue to clash over theological differences, control for holy spaces, language, and concern over proselytization from one church to another, they set aside their differences every year for Christian Unity Week.

Some local events, however, have been limited this year because of the security situation. "Curfews have limited church life," said Catholic priest Father Madros of Bethlehem. He added that he is hopeful about the Greek Orthodox Church. "It's a first and important step that they even show up. Division is the biggest shame of Christendom."

Though Irineos has not yet been recognized by the State of Israel, he has been slowly making changes within the Church that are perceived as more modern. In addition to initiating new dialogues within the Christian community, the Patriarchate has become an active member in the World Council of Churches, which it previously shunned.

*By Lauren Gelfond  
The Jerusalem Post - 23 January 2003*

## **2nd Phase of Talks under Way with Ancient Eastern Churches** *Had separated from Rome in 451*

John Paul II officially launched the second phase of ecumenical dialogue between the Catholic Church and ancient Eastern Churches that separated from Rome in 451.

These Churches rejected the conclusions of the Council of Chalcedon, which professed the divine and human natures of Jesus.

The ecumenical dialogue that followed the Second Vatican Council has clarified misunderstandings, seeing that the differences arose more from "terminology" and "culture" adopted "by the various theological schools to express the same argument."

This much was acknowledged in the 1984 joint declaration signed by John Paul II and the head of the Syro-Orthodox Church, Patriarch Mar Ignatius Zakka I Iwas of Antioch.

Present at today's audience in the Vatican were representatives of the Armenian Apostolic Church, the Orthodox Coptic Patriarchate of Egypt, the Syro-Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch, the Orthodox Church of Ethiopia, the Orthodox Church of Eritrea, and the Syrian Orthodox Church of Malankar.

"Substantial ecumenical progress has already been made between the Catholic Church and the different Eastern Orthodox Churches," the Holy Father said, when he received the members of a dialogue committee composed of Catholic representatives and members of those Churches.

"Essential clarifications have been reached with regard to traditional controversies about Christology, and this has enabled us to profess together the faith we hold in common," he added.

"This progress is most encouraging, since it shows us that the path followed is the right one and that we can reasonably hope to discover together the solution to other disputed questions," the Pope added.

"May your efforts to establish a Joint Commission for Theological Dialogue prove a major step forward toward full communion in truth and charity," he said.

Most of the Churches' representatives came from Middle East countries or surrounding areas. The Holy Father invited them to "pray together that this region will be preserved from the threat of war and further violence."

"May our ecumenical endeavors always be directed to the building up of a 'civilization of love,' founded on justice, reconciliation and peace," he concluded.

The dialogue committee began its meeting Monday at the headquarters of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity.

The meeting, which ends Wednesday, is studying the topics and methods of the second phase of dialogue. To date, theological agreements were reached separately between each one of the Churches and the Catholic Church. The second phase will foster joint dialogue among all the Churches in a single commission.

*Zenit - 28 January 2003*

## **Caritas warns of calamity in Palestine Territories**

Caritas-Jerusalem warned that the Palestinian civilian population is facing a humanitarian emergency, more than two years into the Intifada.

It also appealed for help from the international community and Churches worldwide, so that Israelis and Palestinians will attain peace.

The appeal was made at the recent meeting of European and North American bishops, held here last week.

Claudette Habesh, secretary-general of Caritas-Jerusalem, described the humanitarian emergency in the area.

"Since September 2000, that is, since the second Intifada began, 1,918 Palestinians have died, 19% of whom were under 17 years of age," she said. "Of the 41,000 wounded, 2,500 are affected by permanent disabilities."

In addition, 720 homes have been destroyed, and 11,553 are damaged.

The situation is aggravated by the "failure of the United Nations resolutions regarding the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, Israeli settlement policy, and the inability of the Palestinian Authority to respond to the needs of the Palestinian civilian society," Habesh emphasized.

*Zenit - 22 January 2003*

## **Lapid suggests autonomy for Arabs in Jerusalem**

Shinui leader Yosef (Tommy) Lapid is proposing that, under a peace settlement, Jerusalem's Arab residents are given autonomous status and have their affairs managed by an Arab deputy mayor.

Lapid, who is often criticized for having vague diplomatic views, also said that he "certainly rejects" the idea of the Palestinians having their capital in Jerusalem. In any case, he said, the Palestinians are already prepared to have their capital in Abu Dis, just outside the city.

"We cannot build a wall in Jerusalem, but we must allow [the Arabs] to administer themselves," Lapid told *The Jerusalem Post*.

Shinui is seeking to be the centrist partner in a Likud-Labor national unity government.

According to Lapid's plan, Arab residents of Jerusalem would be entitled to vote in municipal elections and have the option of voting for the Palestinian Legislative Council.

He believes the question of passports and citizenship will have to be worked out in negotiations.

Lapid also said that it is against the interests of Jerusalem's Arabs to be separated from the Jewish parts of the capital. He also does not believe that it would be feasible to have separate management of the same infrastructure in the city.

As for the Holy Sites, Lapid believes in preserving the status quo throughout the city, including on the Temple Mount.

While he does not believe that the Palestinians would readily embrace his plan, he says that it is a "modus vivendi."

Lapid also says a Jerusalem settlement is attainable if an accord can be reached for the remainder of the territories. As a result, he believes that Jerusalem must be "the last issue" tackled.

As for the settlements, Lapid believes that isolated settlements must be evacuated under a peace accord. Only large settlement blocs would be retained.

In an appearance in Beersheba earlier this week, Lapid also acknowledged that a Palestinian state would be the last phase of a settlement, on condition that the Palestinians give up the "right of return."

*By Nina Gilbert  
The Jerusalem Post - 23 January 2003*

## **Israeli-Arabs plan trip to Auschwitz 'to learn about Jewish suffering'**

A group of public figures from the Arab sector will hold a press conference in Jerusalem this morning to announce a trip to the Auschwitz concentration camp in May with the purpose of learning the roots of the Jewish pain and fear. "We want to learn about this suffering and its influence on the Jewish nation, causing it to live in constant fear of the other," declares a leaflet published by the group.

Although Israeli Jews are also expected to travel to Auschwitz with the group (the organizers are hoping for some 120 participants from each sector), only Arabs will participate in the press conference so as to stress that the trip is an Arab initiative that is not conditioned on mutuality, i.e. Jewish recognition of the Palestinians' suffering.

The Arab participants will include author Mohammed Ali Taher, attorney Ahmed Masalha from the village of Daburiya, and businessmen Ali Kadmani and Ahmed Afifi. The idea of the trip came from Father Emil Shufani, a priest and educator from Nazareth.

Shufani and his school, St. John in Nazareth, have for the past 15 years conducted an ongoing dialogue with students and teachers from the Leyada High School in Jerusalem.

"There was a teacher there," Shufani relates, "Ran Melamed, a human rights man, who, in the wake of October 2000 [riots in the Arab sector], seemed to be no longer speaking as he usually did. He said that for the first time, he felt threatened as a Jew, and not only in the context of a national conflict.

"I had already claimed that in order to understand the Jews, there was a need to study the Holocaust, but I related to it as something historic, and I didn't understand just how much it also influences the daily lives of the Jews who didn't go through the Holocaust themselves."

Shufani raised the idea of a trip to Auschwitz in a book of his interviews that was published in France in September 2001.

He then took up and began forwarding the idea of a joint Arab-Israeli trip to the concentration camp with a friend, Ruthie Bar-Shalev, who specializes in teaching organizations and individuals how to change their behavioral patterns.

Bar-Shalev, the daughter of former chief of staff Mordechai Gur, has enlisted a few dozen Jewish public figures for the trip, including former Jerusalem District police chief Arie Amit, singer Ehud Banai and writer Beni Shvili.

Shufani stresses that although the trip is an Arab initiative, Jewish participation is important "because I don't only want to learn about the Holocaust from a historical perspective, but also to learn from the Jews how it influences their lives in the present."

A Jewish-Muslim delegation from France, where Shufani studied, is also slated to participate in the trip.

Shufani says he has encountered criticism from angry Arabs who believe he should have made the trip conditional on Jewish recognition of the suffering of the Palestinians, and also from Jews "who feel that Auschwitz is an internal Jewish hurt and don't want to share it with anyone else."

He says, however, that he is determined to see the trip go ahead as planned.

*By Yair Sheleg  
Ha'aretz - 3 February 2003*

## **Ethnic strife reaches missile firing point**

Visitors to the church in the Galilee village of Rama were surprised yesterday to find a large hole piercing the wall of an adjacent building and police tape stretching across the scene. The building with the gaping hole currently houses nuns from South America. The damage was caused by an anti-tank missile fired at the building early Saturday morning. Apparently, the missile was aimed at the church, but missed.

The missile was the climax of an outbreak of violence that began Friday evening in Rama, near Karmiel. The hostilities included a violent skirmish between Druze and Christian youths, with five persons injured and one of the injured, now in moderate condition, was stabbed with a screwdriver.

That night, Rama residents were subjected to shooting in the streets (in village areas largely populated by Christians), shattered car windows, and cars being set fire. The outbreak is only the latest in a long continuum of ethnic violence that has claimed lives, as well as leaving a trail of injuries and property damage. Christian residents of the village were claiming yesterday that a criminal gang - primarily Druze - was harming local Christians as a means of promoting their own criminal agenda.

The Druze in Rama admit that the young people are resorting to violence as a means of channelling their long-standing feelings of discrimination. And both sides, Christians and Druze, are accusing the police of not doing their job.

Ethnic relations have never been the main cause of violence in the village, half of whose residents are Christian Arabs, one-third is Druze and the remainder Muslim Arabs. Usually, the violence between Christian and Druze in Rama has been primed by a criminal dispute, which was then further inflamed by the ethnic angle. This was also the case last weekend: the brawl broke out following a verbal clash between Christians and Druze, and some young people from the village were physically assaulted.

"The Christians are hitting the Druze," went the rumor that began to spread through the village. A few dozen masked Druze, some carrying rifles, then proceeded to

gather in the center of the village - which is primarily Christian - and created a disturbance that went on for a while.

### **Not a war**

The incident culminated a few hours later with the firing of the missile at the church compound. Several nuns went into shock. The police have made several arrests, Christians and Druze. Four youths have been remanded in custody, and a Druze under arrest is suspected of having fired the missile.

"There is no war between Christians and Druze here," said one man interviewed at the church yesterday. "What you have is a largely Druze criminal gang that sells drugs and plays up the ethnic issue as a means of gaining strength. They use it to sweep up a lot of people: Tell the young people that the Christians are going to be beaten up."

"Even if we say the first brawl was two-sided," says another worshiper, "nothing justifies this Druze reaction. Imagine - a missile is fired at the church, and masked youths are marching through the streets."

Mazen Faraj, a Druze resident of the village who intends to run for head of the local council in the next election, thinks the Christians are giving a "big discount" to those in their own community. The source of Friday's violence, he says, is the deep hostility felt by the Druze youth, who feel they are discriminated against, a situation which began during the Lebanon War in a parallel conflict between the ethnic communities.

The dropout rate from the educational system among Christians in the village is 25 percent, among Druze, 70 percent. The reasons for this are diverse. Part of it has to do with history. The Russian church built a school in the village in the early 20th century and sent only the Christian youths for higher studies in Nazareth.

Faraj condemns the violence and notes that it is also harming the Druze, since it is used as a means of exerting pressure on politicians.

Another reason for the violence is the traditional leadership's loss of control of the young people. A dialogue was held Saturday night, which was attended mainly by Druze, including some of those who took part in the rioting. "There wasn't a single adult there who was willing to get up and say to them: 'Fella, sit down and shut up,' as people used to be able to say," recounts a Christian who was present. "When a kid of 19 brings home a BMW that he's bought with the profits from his drug sales, there is nothing that his father - who still subsists on his olive orchards - can say to him."

"We talk with them, we try to explain to them that this isn't the proper way," says Mazen Faraj, "but it doesn't help." In retrospect, he says, the young people agree that the rioting was a mistake, but in the heat of events, they don't stop to think.

The police are criticized for their inability to catch the thugs. All of the parties are demanding that they abandon their attempts at reconciliation and take a hard stand against the rioters. In fact, the police have to contend with lack of cooperation from the two sides, a result of prolonged distrust.

"You are always going to hear this sort of allegations," says the commander of the Galilee district, Brigadier General Dov Lutzky. "But the police are not an insurance

company. We investigate and we gather evidence; there is a huge gap between what we know and what we can prove in court. We have large forces stationed in Rama, but I wouldn't belittle the traditional forces. At times such as these, the leadership is put to the test. We deal with those who do not submit to the influence of the leadership."

Some of the speakers cast an accusatory finger at the local council, which they claim has avoided dealing with the painful issues. "The solution is cooperation between Christians and Druze," says Mazen Faraj. "But even though everyone sees the situation the same way, there have been no initiatives put forward to reach these solutions. People don't have the nerve."

*By Uri Ash*

*Ha'aretz - 18 February 2003*

## **Virtual Pilgrims asked to help Holy Land Communities**

*Initiative of Solidarity*

Would-be pilgrims who fear to travel to the Holy Land are being asked to contribute aid to help the Christian communities suffering from the drop in religious tourism.

The idea is the brainchild of the Pesaro diocesan Office of Pilgrimages, in collaboration with Caritas-Pesaro, Caritas-Italy and Caritas-Jerusalem.

"The virtual pilgrimage of solidarity" consists of contributing the corresponding expenses of a pilgrimage to the Holy Land -- about \$700, or at least a portion of them -- to attenuate the extreme poverty of Christian peoples in Palestine.

"It depends on us, Christians of the West, who have benefited from their witness of faith, to find the concrete means to express the fraternal bond that Palestinian parishes need," the director of the Office of Pilgrimages, Giampiero Cernuschi, explained.

"We cannot say that we didn't know it. They expect our visible and concrete response," added Giorgio Giorgetti of Caritas-Pesaro.

The funds received will support four objectives: assistance to the unemployed and creation of new jobs, medical treatment and rehabilitation of minors wounded in the conflict, school expenses for students without means, and support for families in difficulty.

In addition, the diocese is organizing "real" pilgrimages. The first, led by Bishop Angelo Bagnasco last month, was a success and another is being planned for this month.

"The help that pilgrims can contribute, not just financial, is great," organizer Marco Farina said.

*Zenit - 11 February 2003*

## **Garbage dump proves just how big Jerusalem was**

At the end of the Second Temple period, in the first century BCE, Jerusalem was one of the largest, most advanced cities in the world. Until now, the main evidence of this were the remnants of the large construction projects of Herod, exposed by digs in the city, and the writing of Josephus Flavius.

The recent discovery of a city garbage dump, where thousands of tons of rubbish were deposited annually, sheds new light on the dimensions and development of Jerusalem in the Second Temple era. The garbage dump is located on the slopes of the City of David hill. It was first discovered in 1867 by renowned archaeologist Charles Warren. Since then generations of archaeologists have dug at the site, combing every corner of it, without realizing it had been a garbage dump. This was ascertained only recently by archaeologists Ronni Reich and Eli Shoukrun, who have been digging there since 1995 for the Antiquities Authority.

"All the archaeologists who dug at the site passed through a 'sewage layer' about 10 meters thick that included huge quantities of dust, gravel, pottery, coins and animal bones," says Reich. "They must have noticed that this was an unusual layer of earth - but they didn't think it deserved further study. As far as I know, the only one who contemplated this layer was Yigal Shilo, who assumed it was created by the Romans pouring in building refuse and earth that was evacuated from the City of David hill after they destroyed the city."

What led Reich and Shoukron to the conclusion that the sewage layer was none other than a garbage dump were the quantities of waste that had accumulated in the site - which could not have been created by a one-time event. They estimated the amount of garbage in the site at about 300,000 tons. From this they concluded that the amount of refuse deposited annually at the site was about 3,000 tons - which could easily fill 200 garbage trucks. This amount does not include the organic refuse that decomposed over the years, and garbage swept away in the seasonal flow of the Kidron River.

"The amounts of garbage show clearly that this is not rubbish thrown from the yards of the nearby houses, but rubbish collected in an orderly way from all parts of the city," says Reich. He assumes the garbage was transported to the site by donkeys, the customary means of transport in city alleys.

The southern basin of the city was already serving as the preferred garbage dump at the end of the First Temple era (the seventh and eighth centuries BCE), according to references in the Book of Jeremiah. From that time until the present, the gate leading to the site has been called the Dung Gate. Despite this, the existence of a garbage dump and a system for removing large quantities of rubbish from the city is new to scholars of the city's history.

According to the pottery and coins found in the garbage dump, the site started working intensively in the first century BCE, at the time Herod rose to power. It is

assumed the garbage dump stopped being active in 66 CE, when the great rebellion against the Romans broke out.

"The sequence of archaeological findings in the dump is simply cut off at this year," says Reich. "In the whole dump there is not a single coin from the rebellion period, and I'm talking of very common coins. This strengthens the assumption that the municipal garbage collection system stopped working at that time."

*By Amiram Barkat  
Ha'aretz - 11 February 2003*

## **SELECTIONS OF ITEMS FROM VATICAN INFORMATION SERVICE**

### **Right to Religious Freedom linked to all other Basic Rights**

Archbishop Jean-Louis Tauran, secretary for Relations with States and head of the Holy See delegation to the 10th Meeting of the Council of Foreign Ministers of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, spoke yesterday afternoon in Oporto, Portugal, during the first day of the two-day OSCE meeting. His discourse focussed on respect for religious freedom, which he called a "test for observing fundamental human rights."

In opening remarks, the archbishop noted that "by being actively involved in reflections on current themes such as terrorism, trafficking in human persons, tolerance and discrimination, the OSCE has shown yet again its vocation to form a space of freedom, justice and stability in the perspective of a global understanding of security, specific to our organization."

"Over the past months," he added, "our delegations have often observed that no State, no democracy can work without a certain consensus on the basic values of human existence, among which (are) religious convictions." He stated that he wished to express some concerns of the Holy See on this subject.

"In the year that has just ended," remarked Archbishop Tauran, "there has been an alarming deterioration of the conditions of exercising the right to freedom of religion, in violation of the commitments undertaken by this Organization. In certain countries which are represented here, laws restricting religious freedom have been adopted or are being adopted. Leaders of communities of believers, including a Catholic bishop, have been expelled from the country where they exercise their apostolate or are forbidden from rejoining their faithful."

"Such attitudes," he underscored, "often adopted in an arbitrary manner, show a mistrust with regard to religious facts, a poor knowledge of the role of religion in civil

societies, a contempt of international commitments freely signed and a discrimination towards believers." The international commitments, he said, include the documents of the Helsinki process, in particular the final Vienna document of 1989.

"In addition," affirmed Archbishop Tauran, "when, for historical reasons, one religious denomination is the majority denomination and certain rights and privileges are given to it, that could only be to the detriment of the basic freedoms of other denominations present on the national territory."

In his closing remarks, the archbishop quoted from Pope John Paul's speech to the diplomatic corps accredited to the Holy See in January 1989: "'The right to freedom of religion is so closely linked to other basic rights that one could justly say that respect for religious freedom is like a 'test' for the observance of other basic rights'."

*VIS - 9 December 2002*

## **The Pope meets with President of the State of Israel**

Holy See Press Office Director Joaquin Navarro-Valls made the following declaration in the late morning:

"Today, Thursday December 12, the Holy Father John Paul II received Moshe Katsav, president of the State of Israel.

"Later the same head of state met with Cardinal Angelo Sodano, secretary of State. Ambassador Yosef N. Lamdan, representing Israel, was present during the meeting. Msgr. Pietro Parolin, undersecretary for Relations with States, was present on behalf of the Secretariat of State.

"In the above-mentioned meetings, current relations between Israel and the Holy See were examined in light of the "Fundamental Agreement" of 1993. Particular attention was paid to the opportunity to intensify collaboration in the cultural sphere.

"In regards to the dramatic situation in the Holy Land, there was an in-depth discussion in which both parties expressed their point of view. The Holy See's position favoring the existence and collaboration between two States, Israel and Palestine with the need to reach a swift conclusion of the current conflict, was explained once again to the illustrious guest. In particular, an appeal was made for free access to Bethlehem during the upcoming Christmas celebrations."

*VIS - 12 December 2002*

## **The Church continues to raise its Prayer for Peace**

This morning in the Clementine Hall, the Pope met with cardinals, members of the pontifical family, the Curia and the Roman prelature for the traditional exchange of Christmas greetings.

John Paul II began by saying that for him, this Christmas is "especially significant because it falls on the 25th year of my pontificate. It is this reason that urges me to have you participate in my 'thanks' to the Lord for the gifts that he has given me in this long period of time spent in the service of the Universal Church."

"Our gathering," he continued, "gives a particular tone because it takes place during the Year of the Rosary. ... In the apostolic letter 'Rosario Virginis Mariae' I underlined the anthropological value of this prayer, which, helping us in contemplating Christ, guides us to look at man and history in the light of the Gospel."

The Holy Father affirmed that we cannot forget that Christ's face "continues to have a sorrowful expression, of true passion, for the conflicts that stain so many regions of the world with blood, and for those that threaten to explode with renewed force. The situation in the Holy Land continues to be emblematic, as well as the 'forgotten' wars, that are no less devastating. Terrorism continues to reap victims and dig more graves. Faced by this horizon stained by blood, the Church does not cease to make itself heard, and, above all, continues to raise its prayer."

The Pope later referred to the beauty of creation which reflects a "ray of splendor of Christ's face", but also "the devastation man's neglect is capable of inflicting upon the environment. ... For this reason, I am happy to have been able to bear witness to the Church's commitment to the environment during this year, on different occasions."

In regards to relations with States, "I have reminded everyone," said John Paul II, "of the urgency to put the dignity of the human person and service to the common good at the center of national and international politics."

Speaking about the celebration of World Youth Day, held in July in Toronto, Canada, the Holy Father recalled "the presence of so many young people" without forgetting so many others "taken in by other messages or misguided by thousands of different proposals. It is up to young people to evangelize their peers." Afterwards, the Pope recalled the progress made on the ecumenical front, despite "reasons for bitterness. But," he continued, "we must look at the lights rather than the shadows." He also recalled, along with the aforementioned joint Declaration with the Patriarch Bartholomew I, the visit made by the Delegation of the Greek Orthodox Church with a message from His Beatitude Christodoulos, archbishop of Athens and of all of Greece, and the meeting with the Romanian Orthodox Patriarch Teoctist with whom he signed a common declaration this past October.

"When will the Lord finally give us the joy of full communion with the Orthodox brothers?" he asked. "The answer lies in the mystery of Divine Providence. But faith in God does not exempt us from personal commitment. For this reason, the ecumenism of prayer and holiness must be intensified above all."

The last paragraphs of the Pontiff's speech were dedicated to holiness, "summit of the ecclesiastical landscape." The Holy Father also thanked God for this year's beatifications and canonizations: Pedro de San Jose Betancur, Juan Diego and the martyrs of Oaxaca during his apostolic trip to Guatemala City and Mexico City, and in Rome Padre Pio of Pietrelcina and St. Josemaria Escriva de Balaguer who inspired "public opinion's particular interest."

He concluded by saying: "My apostolic trip to Poland was also characterized by sanctity, for the dedication of the shrine of Divine Mercy in Krakow-Lagiewniki. On that occasion, I once again reminded our world, tempted by discouragement in the face of so many unresolved problems and threatening unknowns of the future, that God is 'full of mercy'. For those who trust in Him, nothing is definitively lost; everything can be rebuilt."

*VIS - 23 December 2002*

## **Starting the Year invoking the Precious Gift of Peace**

At 10:00 am in the Basilica of St. Peter's, John Paul II presided the eucharistic celebration of the Solemnity of Saint Mary, the Mother of God and the occasion of the XXXVI World Peace Day, whose theme this year is "'Pacem in terris': a permanent commitment". The Mass was celebrated by Cardinal Angelo Sodano, Secretary of State.

In the homily, the Pope said that "faced with the events that devastate the planet, it is clear that only God may touch the human soul to the core; only His peace can bring new hope to humanity. For this, He needs to turn His face towards us, bless us, protect us, and give us the gift of peace. Therefore, it is opportune to begin the New Year invoking this precious gift from Him. We do this through the intercession of Mary, Mother of the 'Prince of Peace'."

Speaking about the land of Jesus' birth, the Holy Father exclaimed: "Bethlehem! The Holy Land! The dramatic and enduring tension, this area of the Middle East finds itself in, makes the search for a positive solution to this fratricidal and unreasonable conflict, which has shed blood for too long, more urgent. Cooperation from all those believing in God is necessary, conscious of religious authenticity, far from placing individuals and peoples in conflict among themselves, urging them to build a world of peace together."

He concluded saying: "Faced with today's conflicts and the menacing tensions of the moment, once again I invite to prayer, to find the 'peaceful means' of composition inspired by a 'desire for genuine and constructive dialogue', in harmony with the principles of international law."

At noon, the Pope came to the window of his office to recite the Angelus to the persons present on Saint Peter's Square, among which the participants in the peace march promoted by the Community of Sant' Egidio.

John Paul II began by saying that "the world can only expect salvation from the Lord. (...) Supported by this knowledge, the faithful must not lose hope, even when facing multiplying obstacles and attempts on peace."

The Holy Father recalled that "almost forty years ago, in a context of serious threats to world security, the Blessed John XXIII published, with great courage, the Encyclical 'Pacem in Terris'. I wish to refer to this significant event in the Message for today's World Day of Peace. Like then, today each is asked to give his contribution to promote and achieve peace, through generous choices of mutual understanding, of

reconciliation, of forgiveness and true care for those in need. Genuine 'gestures of peace' are needed in families, in work places, in communities, in all of lay life, in national and international social meetings. Above all, one must never stop praying for peace."

He ended by saying: "Once more, we must express the hope that, on the part of those responsible, everything possible may be done to find peaceful solutions to the many tensions in the world, in particular in the Middle East, thus avoiding further suffering to those so deeply tested? Human solidarity and law prevail!"

The Pope wished a Happy New Year to all in French, English, German, Spanish, Portuguese and Polish.

*VIS - 2 January 2003*

## **Ash Wednesday: Prayer and Fasting for World Peace**

Pope John Paul reminded the faithful gathered in St. Peter's Square today that Lent starts on Ash Wednesday, March 5, when "we undertake a penitential path towards Easter with a stronger commitment to prayer and fasting for peace, which has been put in doubt by growing threats of war."

He recalled that "last Sunday I announced this initiative that is intended to involve the faithful in a fervent prayer to Christ, Prince of Peace. Peace, in fact, is a gift of God that we must invoke with humble and insistent trust. Without giving in to difficulties, we must seek and pursue every possible path to avoid war, which always leads to mourning and grave consequences for everyone."

The Pope noted that not only prayer, but fasting for peace, must mark Ash Wednesday. Calling fasting "a penitential practice that calls for a deeper spiritual effort," he added that "with physical fasting ... the Christian prepares to follow Christ and to be His faithful witness in every circumstance. In addition, fasting helps us to better understand the difficulties and sufferings of so many of our brothers and sisters, oppressed by hunger, misery and war."

He urged Catholics "to live this day of prayer and fasting for peace with intense participation. ... We will ask for peace for the world, in particular for Iraq and the Holy Land, especially through reciting the Rosary, which will involve shrines and parishes, communities and families."

After praying the Angelus, John Paul II greeted pilgrims in Spanish, Portuguese and Italian. He had special words for the community of Romanian faithful in Rome, saluting them in their language and telling them that he "recalls with gratitude the warmth with which I was welcomed four years ago in your land. I encourage you to persevere with fervor in Christian practice, making an effort to always be worthy of the rich spiritual traditions of your people."

*VIS - 3 March 2003*