



## **VATICAN - Benedict XVI in Lebanon, "in this region, which saw actions and heard words, may the Gospel continue to resonate as it did 2000 years ago and may it be lived today and for ever!"**

Beirut (Agenzia Fides) - "With the consigning of this document there now begins its study and appropriation by all the members of the Church, pastors, consecrated persons and lay people, so that everyone will find new joy in the pursuit of his or her mission, encouraged and fortified to put into action the message of communion and witness understood in the various human, doctrinal, ecclesiological, spiritual and pastoral aspects of this Exhortation. " With these words, the Holy Father Benedict XVI consigned the Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation "Ecclesia in the Middle East" to the Catholic Patriarchs of the Middle East, the Presidents of the Episcopal Conferences of Turkey and Iran, and a representation of the faithful, at the end of the Mass celebrated in Beirut City Center Waterfront, on Sunday morning, September 16. Speaking to "Dear brothers and sisters of Lebanon and the Middle East," the Pope said he hoped that "this exhortation will be a guide to follow the various and complex paths where Christ goes before you," and concluded: "May fraternal communion be a support for you in your daily life and the sign of the universal brotherhood which Jesus, the firstborn of many, came to bring! Thus, in this region, which saw his actions and heard his words, may the Gospel continue to resonate as it did 2000 years ago and may it be lived today and for ever."

In the homily of the Mass, the height of his apostolic journey, attended by 300 Bishops, pilgrims and faithful from all over the Middle East, from the President of the Republic of Lebanon and other institutional representatives, the Pope commented on the readings of the day, where Jesus "makes it clear that those who wish to be his disciple must accept to be a servant, as He himself is a Servant." He continued: "I pray in particular that the Lord will grant to this region of the Middle East servants of peace and reconciliation, so that all the people can live in peace and with dignity. This is an essential testimony which Christians must render here, in cooperation with all people of good will. I appeal to all of you to be peacemakers, wherever you find yourselves.

The invitation to work without ceasing "so that our love for Christ may lead us little by little into full communion with each other" was reiterated by the Pope during the Ecumenical Meeting at the Syrian Catholic Patriarchate of Charfet on Sunday 16 September, where he met the Orthodox Patriarchs, the representatives of the Protestant Confessions of Lebanon and the Catholic Patriarchs of Lebanon. "Our encounter this evening - the Pope said in his speech - is an eloquent sign of our profound desire to respond to the call of Christ: 'That all may be one' (Jn 17:21). In these unstable times, so inclined to the violence which your region knows so well, it is even more necessary that Christ's disciples give an authentic witness to their unity, so that the world may believe in their message of love, peace and reconciliation. This is a message that all Christians, and we in particular, have been commissioned to hand on to the world, a message of inestimable value in the present context of the Middle East." During the Farewell ceremony at the International Airport in Lebanon "Rafiq Hariri" in Beirut, the Holy Father said: "My thanks go in particular 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." (SL) (Agenzia Fides 17/09/2012)

### > LINKS

*Holy Father Benedict XVI's speeches and homilies, in different languages:*  
[http://www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/benedict\\_xvi/travels/2012/index\\_libano\\_it.htm](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/travels/2012/index_libano_it.htm)