

Address to the President of Israel, Reuven Rivlin

Wednesday 16 September 2015

His Eminence Péter Cardinale Erdő
Archbishop of Esztergom-Budapest
President of CCEE

Your Excellency, Mr President

In the name of the Council of Episcopal Conferences of Europe, I thank you most warmly for your welcome and for hosting this meeting. It is a very special occasion because the representatives of the Catholic Bishops of Europe are meeting in Jerusalem. Such a visit is also an occasion for us to make a religious pilgrimage. In this land, we come to the place where Jesus, our Teacher and Lord, lived. And here, we also meet the people who are linked with him, and with whom we are linked, with indissoluble bonds, from the beginning and for ever.

In these past days, we have been able to express our closeness to the Christians of the Holy Land; we have admired the dynamism and the modern vitality of the State of Israel and its people, and we were able to reflect on our experiences of interreligious dialogue.

In our meetings, it is always possible for us to share with one another our pastoral experiences from distinct countries, from Ireland to Russia, from Turkey to Norway. If we are preoccupied with those Christians in parts of the world who are persecuted, at the same time, we try to find the best ways to express our solidarity with all those in need.

Mutual knowledge and mutual understanding are what is most important for constructive and peaceful relations between peoples of different cultures and religions. For this, we believe it is important in our countries that Christians, and society in general, form a realistic and empathetic view of the history of the Jewish people and of Israel. At the same time, we are engaged in a sincere dialogue with history and on the fundamental questions of human existence. The traditional ideals from the Judeo-Christian cultural heritage are still relevant and precious to all humanity today.

Mr President, we thank you for your visit to the Holy Father and your openness to the solution of various practical issues. We have understood the preoccupations of our fellow Christians living in the Holy Land, and we hope that you can find appropriate solutions to these issues, especially in the educational forum.

We wish peace and prosperity to the people of Israel, to the Holy Land, and throughout the Middle East.

Shalom al kol Israel!