



The Holy See

ADDRESS OF THE HOLY FATHER

POPE JOHN PAUL II

**TO HIS BEATITUDE MICHEL SABBAH PATRIARCH OF JERUSALEM FOR LATIN RITE AND TO
PILGRIMS FROM THE HOLY LAND**

Thursday, 7 January 1988

Your Beatitude,

On this great feast of the Epiphany, you have followed the path of Peter, coming to Rome to receive from his successor the fullness of the priesthood and the mission of giving a shepherd's care to the faithful of the Latin rite who live in that blessed land where the Son of God was born as a man. I am very pleased to have this occasion to tell you again of the joy it has been for me to confer Episcopal ordination on you at the tomb of the fisherman of Galilee who became the Prince of the Apostles.

Your cultural heritage and your academic and spiritual training, together with your vast pastoral experience, have prepared you for the heavy ministerial responsibilities which you are now assuming. Those who are gathered here with you know this very well. In their presence I assure you of my deep communion with you and of my closeness in prayer with all the Christians of the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem.

The presence of your relatives and friends, and of other members of your local Church, bears witness to the vitality of the faith and hope which sustains you. I wish to express to all of you who have accompanied your new Patriarch and to all those whom he will serve in his ministry the gratitude and the encouragement of the Pope. My gratitude, because the one who has become your Bishop was born in the midst of a community which has remained faithful to its baptism down through the centuries, living in the footsteps of Christ the joyful mysteries, the sorrowful mysteries and the glorious mysteries of the Redemption. And I offer you my encouragement, for it is your responsibility to bear witness to the faith which you have received as a precious gift and to the

love which Christ gives to his friends, doing this under the guidance of this new Pastor who will gather you together to hear the words of our Saviour and be the first celebrant of the sacraments instituted by Jesus in your land.

On the way from Bethlehem to Jerusalem, on the paths which Jesus walked, and on all the roads taken by the Apostles as they went out to all the world to proclaim the Good News of salvation, you can be certain, dear friends, that the Lord is still present today.

“Know that I am with you always”, he says, “yes, to the end of time” (*Matth. 28, 20*). Live, then, with confidence in the presence of the Lord. And live in loving communion with the universal Church: with the other disciples present in the Holy Land, with the pilgrims who come there from around the world, with your brothers and sisters of every continent.

I assure you of my prayers for your new Pastor, for his auxiliary Bishops, for the priests and religious, for the families and for each person of the Patriarchate. May the Lord be your strength, making the rough ways smooth, removing all obstacles from the path he asks you to walk in trust. May he help you to establish a respectful and fraternal dialogue with all those among whom you live and make you servants of unity and peace.

With all my heart, I cordially impart to you my Apostolic Blessing.

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