

PRESS INFORMATION PAPAL VISIT 2011

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SECOND SUMMARY

Benedict XVI

Pope speaks to the Bundestag and celebrates Holy Mass at the Olympic Stadium

On Thursday afternoon, Pope Benedict XVI held a keynote speech on political ethics at the German Bundestag. In his expositions on the foundations of a free state under the rule of law, he said, referring to the biblical King Solomon, that politicians should above all have “a listening heart” to “govern the people and to distinguish between good and evil”. In his eagerly expected speech in the almost completely full plenary hall, the Pope emphasized: “To serve right and to fight against the dominion of wrong is and remains the fundamental task of the politician.” The criterion and the motivation for the work of a politician must not be success “and certainly not material gain”. Politics must be a striving for justice and hence it has to establish the fundamental preconditions for peace.

Moreover the Pope pointed out the limits of the democratic majority principle. For most of the legal issues this may be a sufficient criterion. Yet it is evident, the Pope said, that “for the fundamental issues of law, in which the dignity of man and of humanity is at stake, the majority principle is not enough“. Democratic politicians are challenged to recognize what is “truly right”. The answer to this question has never been simple, “and today, in view of the vast extent of our knowledge and our capacity, it has become still harder”, said Benedict XVI. The speech received standing ovations by all members of Parliament present.

Good relations between Judaism and the Catholic Church

Afterwards, the Pope met with representatives of the Jewish community for a non public conversation. Benedict XVI called for an intensification of the good relations between Christians and Jews.

He stressed that “we Christians become increasingly aware of our own inner affinity with Judaism”. For Christians, there can be no rupture in salvation history. “Salvation comes from the Jews”, said the head of the Catholic Church.

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The President of the Central Council of Jews in Germany, Dr Dieter Graumann, emphasized that the relationship between the Catholic Church and Judaism has really improved in recent decades “in a highly dramatic manner”. According to the script of his speech he underlined: “We are highly aware, that you in particular have personally always considered reconciliation with Judaism to be important, in fact, an absolute matter of the heart”. With regard to the contacts with the Catholic Church in Germany, Grauman said, that they “have now become highly varied, trustful, reliable and close”. At the same time, Graumann also mentioned delicate issues such as the “Pius Brotherhood”, the Good Friday prayers and the envisioned beatification of Pope Pius XII, saying that they “really hurt us”.

Holy Mass at the Olympic Stadium with approximately 61,000 participants

In the evening, Benedict XVI celebrated the first Mass during his visit to Germany with about 61,000 people in the Berlin Olympic Stadium. Among the participants were Federal President Christian Wulff and Chancellor Angela Merkel as well as other cabinet members. In his homily the Pope encouraged the faithful to a life with the Church. “The Church as the herald of God’s word and dispenser of the sacraments joins us to Christ”, Benedict XVI underlined. Each person is faced with the fundamental choice to abide in the Church and thus in Christ. “We do not believe alone, but we believe with the whole Church”, said the Pope. “The Church is God’s most beautiful gift.”

Benedict XVI emphasized that “in our era of restlessness and lack of commitment, when so many people lose their way and their grounding, when loving fidelity in marriage and friendship has become so fragile and short-lived, (...) the Risen Lord gives us a place of refuge, a place of light, hope and confidence, a place of rest and security”.

After Holy Mass, the Pope in a limousine returned to the nunciature, where he will stay the night.