

PRESS INFORMATION
PAPAL VISIT 2011

22.09.2011

Embargoed for broadcast until: 22.09.2011, 8.30 p.m.!

Check against delivery!



Archbishop Dr Rainer Maria Woelki
Archbishop of Berlin

Address delivered at the reception following
Holy Mass with Pope Benedict XVI
on 22 September 2011 in Berlin

Ladies and gentlemen, sisters and brothers,

Thank you for taking up my invitation, after such an eventful day, to look back once again over the last few hours.

Don't worry, you needn't expect another sermon. I'd just like to take this opportunity to say thank you.

Thank you to Federal President Christian Wulff, who invited our Holy Father to Germany.

I'd also like to thank the President of the Bundestag, Norbert Lammert, who through his invitation to the German Bundestag gave Pope Benedict XVI an opportunity to deliver a historically unique speech before the German parliament, and thus to all Germans.

And I'd like to thank the Governing Mayor of Berlin, Klaus Wowereit, who on behalf of the federal state of Berlin welcomed the pope here at the Olympic Stadium.

Together with all those I've just mentioned I'd like to thank the many people working in security and protocol, who either directly or indirectly have guided the pope safely through Berlin.

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Following this moving service at the Olympic Stadium in Berlin, I would not like to forget all those who made it possible for us to celebrate the mystery of our faith together in such a dignified and festive setting here.

I'd like to mention just some of the many people involved: the staff of the Olympic Stadium, the workers from the many different trades who put up the facilities here, the staff of the numerous national and regional agencies, and the staff of the Berlin broadcasting company *rbb*, who enabled not only those here in the stadium but also millions of people around the world to celebrate with us.

I'd like to thank my brothers at the German Bishops' Conference, who already gave my predecessor to understand that they would not leave us Berliners to do all the preparatory work ourselves.

Most especially I'd like to thank our Holy Father, Pope Benedict.

To be here with us today, he has submitted himself to an ambitious programme for the day. Once again he has impressed me by modestly and resolutely placing not himself, but his agenda at the centre. Anyone who heard him today will have understood clearly that his agenda concerns not himself, but Jesus Christ and the Church.

This is the attitude with which he preached to us. Pope Benedict is aware of the 'good and bad fish, the wheat and the chaff' that exist in the Church. Time and time again he has identified the negative elements and drawn attention to the changes needed.

Today I'd like to thank him very much for his sermon, which was 'joyful' in the true sense of the term. In it he invited us to fix our gaze not on the negative elements, but on Jesus Christ, who is the bond that links us together in the Church.

I was seized by this joy. It is in this spirit of joy that we look forward together to the next few days.

The Holy Father has already brought his day to a close. I will be including him and all of us in my prayers today, as I ask for great strength and God's blessing for him and all of us for the days to come.