



*To His Beatitude Fouad Twal  
Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem*

I send cordial greetings to you, your brother Bishops, and all those gathered in Nazareth as you celebrate the close of the Year of Faith in the Holy Land. I assure you of my spiritual closeness and I pray that this celebration will not only witness to your faith, but also nourish it and invite others to an encounter with Jesus Christ.

In announcing the Year of Faith, my beloved predecessor Benedict XVI reminded us that one aspect “...of decisive importance in this Year is retracing the history of our faith, marked as it is by the unfathomable mystery of the interweaving of holiness and sin” (*Porta Fidei*, 13). This past year has provided all of us an opportunity to reflect anew on the mystery of faith and on the holiness of God which he has shared with us in Jesus Christ. We do so as sinners, aware of our unworthiness, but ever the more grateful for God’s mercy and enduring invitation to union with him and with all people.

The history of our faith finds its origins in the very land where you celebrate. Before we can understand our own

personal history of faith and our need for God's mercy, we must all turn to that place and time when Jesus himself walked among us. For it was there that the Lord Jesus took on our human nature and revealed God to us. It was there that he taught his Apostles and disciples and that he experienced the joys and sufferings, the blessings and difficulties, of human life and love. And it was there that he gave to us the gift of his Passion, Death and Resurrection and the assurance of eternal life.

I wish to express my deep appreciation to all the Christians of the Holy Land for their faithful stewardship of the sacred sites and for their enduring witness to the proclamation of the Gospel. I assure you of my prayers and gratitude to God for your deep faith and for your perseverance. I encourage you to be witnesses always of God's peace, joy and mercy.

To the pilgrims who are present at this celebration, I likewise give the assurance of my prayers. May your experience of the sacred sites be an occasion for encountering Jesus Christ and deepening your love for him and for his Church.

Though the Year of Faith is drawing to a close, I pray that your desire to know Jesus may grow and your love for him

deepen. May you share this gift of faith with ever greater zeal, bringing grace and blessings to your families, your communities and the whole world.

With particular gratitude for those who made this celebration possible, I commend all of you to the intercession of Mary, the Mother of Jesus, and Saint Joseph, her spouse, and I willingly impart my Apostolic Blessing as a pledge of peace and joy.

From the Vatican, 8 November 2013

*Francis*