



Dear Friend,

Once again we are happy to share with you the Elijah Interfaith Institute's most recent activities. We have much to report and hope you enjoy this month's *Wisdom* e-newsletter.

In This Edition:

- News Update - Jerusalem Meeting of Crisis of the Holy Think Tank
- Sharing Reflections - Inspirational Words from Archbishop Boutrous Moualem
- Getting Involved - Widening Your Horizons

News Update - Jerusalem Meeting of Crisis of the Holy Think Tank

In our last newsletter, we presented our exciting calendar of activities for 2005. One month later, we are equally excited to share the news of the Jerusalem Meeting of the Crisis of the Holy Think Tank. This think tank brought together the following scholars for a week of intensive discussion:

- Professor Brenda Brasher, University of Aberdeen
- Professor Michael Van Brueck, Munich University
- Professor David Burrell, Notre Dame University
- Rabbi Dr. Alon Goshen-Gottstein, Elijah Interfaith Institute
- Professor Barry Levy, McGill University
- Professor Ali Qleibo, Al-Quds University
- Dr. Maria Reis Habito, Museum of World Religions, Taiwan
- Professor Deepak Sarma, Case-Western Reserve University
- Mr. Kurt Schreiber, Vanderbilt University
- Mr. Michael Weil, The Jewish People's Policy Planning Institute

A flavor of the deliberations of the think tank can be found in the section below in the insight of Archbishop Boutrous Moualem.

Sharing Reflections - Inspirational Words from Archbishop Boutrous Moualem

In preparation for the Jerusalem meeting of the think tank, members of the think tank met with Jewish and Christian leaders in the Holy Land. The crisis of the holy, or the surplus of the holy? An original perspective on the crisis in the Christian context was offered by Archbishop Boutrous Moualem, of the Melkite Church. Archbishop Moualem suggested that when everything becomes holy, one loses

sight of what is essential in religion. This, according to him, is the greatest crisis for his own Christian community. Liturgy, practice and religious teaching often become self enclosed, sustaining themselves as systems of practice, rather than sustaining the spiritual lives of believers.

Religious leaders often seek to hold on to power, and to preserve existing forms of religion, rather than posing the question of what forms of religion will best suit the needs of the ultimate goal of religion under present circumstances. The crisis of the holy thus involves a crisis in religious leadership, no less than a crisis in practice. It was striking to hear such honest self-examination from the mouth of a representative of Catholic hierarchy. Ultimately, the crisis of the holy amounts to our losing sight of the ultimate purpose of religion itself.

Getting Involved - Widening Your Horizons

This newsletter is being written at a time of the year of great spiritual significance for many of our readers. In this spirit and as religious communities worldwide remember with appreciation the late Pope John Paul II and as they come together in praying for the success of the pontificate of Pope Benedict 16, Elijah too recalls its moments with these two religious figures. We invite you to a virtual tour of an important moment in Pope John Paul's Jubilee pilgrimage to the Holy Land. Elijah had the honor of organizing the interfaith summit at which the Pope participated. Elijah's work included preparing an interreligious conference, whose proceedings were presented to the Pope, as well as coordinating musical and artistic activities of children of the three Abrahamic faiths for the event. Conference proceedings presented to the Pope may be found on our website (<http://www.elijah.org.il/protocols/religionsandrepentance.shtml>). The interfaith event may be seen in our picture gallery (<http://www.elijah.org.il/pope/index.shtml>).

Pope Benedict 16 is very aware of the work of the Elijah Institute and its Board of World Religious Leaders. Just two years ago I met with him (for the second time) in Rome, in order to invite him to take part in our Seville meeting, scheduled for the end of 2003. I found him a touching person, much softer than his public image. I was particularly touched by his reply. He was in the process of winding down his activities and looking towards retirement. He therefore was no longer accepting lecture invitations. Little did he know what was still awaiting him. Nevertheless, he did not turn down Elijah's invitation immediately. He considered the project important enough to deserve further consideration, which he indeed gave it. While his final decision was not to attend the meeting, his prayers for Elijah's work and its success are assured.



We too pray for his success in the challenging work that lies ahead for him.

With Cardinal Ratzinger's appointment as Pope Benedict 16, a photograph I had taken with him several years ago takes on a new meaning.

Remember, the Elijah Interfaith Institute and all our 2005 activities are largely dependent on your active support and generosity. If you believe in our mission, namely fostering peace among faith communities by integrating the lived spirituality and wisdom of world religions with the highest level of scholarly and academic work, in order to address pressing issues of our contemporary global society, then make a donation now.

Donations can be made at <http://www.elijah.org.il/participate/donate.shtml>

or by sending a check to our administrative offices:

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