

## Editorial

### *A miracle in the making?*

The pilgrimage of Pope John Paul II to the Holy Land has brought a new hope of breakthrough to the peace process in the Middle East. By raising the level of discourse to the moral-philosophical plane of the respect for the human person which is shared by the world's three great monotheistic religions, the Pope has raised the potential for what otherwise would have seemed impossible: a lasting peace between the Arabs and Israelis.

The Pope's public events have brought together both the leaders, and masses, of Muslims, Christians, and Jews. The uplifting effect of his words, and the interaction, has been visible to all.

A central theme of the pilgrimage is the continuity of the three Abrahamic religions, an idea the Pope enunciated during a visit to a Rome synagogue in 1986, when he called Judaism Christianity's "elder brother" in the Covenant. The pontiff has put the primacy of love in the relationship between God and man, and the dignity of man as created in the image of God, at the center of a process of dialogue among the religions, and thus the framework for peace.

The Pope exchanged warm greetings with King Abdullah of Jordan, a Muslim leader, when he visited that land on March 20, and during his visit to Bethlehem, he addressed Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat. As expected, the Pope gave an impassioned expression of the Vatican's traditional support for the Palestinians' right to a homeland.

Perhaps the most difficult hurdle to be overcome, however, was that with the Israeli leaders, due to the historical legacy of distrust between the Holy See and the Israeli state, as well as sections of the international Jewish community. But here too, Pope John Paul II appears to have made significant progress in reconciliation. Only two weeks before, the pontiff had held an unprecedented ceremony at the Vatican, where he had publicly asked God's forgiveness for the Church's sins through history, including in its relations with the Jews. In Israel, he did more.

The Pope visited Yad Vashem, Israeli's Holocaust Memorial, and was received by Israeli Prime Minister

Ehud Barak. In addressing the Pope, Barak said: "You have done more than anyone else to bring about the historic change in the attitude of the Church towards the Jewish people, initiated by the good Pope John XXIII, and to dress the gaping wounds that festered over many bitter centuries.

"I think I can say, Your Holiness, that your coming here today, to the Tent of Remembrance at Yad Vashem, is a climax of this historic journey of healing. Here, right now, time itself has come to a standstill. . . ." Prime Minister Barak took the opportunity to detail recent progress that had been made in the peace process.

Pope John Paul's prayerful remarks at the Holocaust Memorial stressed the purpose for remembering those horrors: "namely, to ensure that never again will evil prevail, as it did for the millions of innocent victims of Nazism." Only a "Godless" ideology could have carried out these crimes, he said. "Only a world at peace, with justice for all, can avoid repeating the mistakes and terrible crimes of the past."

The prospects for this spirit of good will turning into an effective peace process, will depend on how it is carried forward after the Pope has left. Most crucial will be the issue of economic policy, which, under the thumb of the World Bank and its cothinkers, has greatly exacerbated the tensions in the region, despite peace agreements. The promise of economic progress, which had been part of the original Oslo Accords, has been all but dead and buried, with living conditions significantly worsening for the Palestinians.

The economic policy required has been elaborated by economist and statesman Lyndon LaRouche, in terms precisely parallel to the Pope's: an economic policy based upon man in the image of the Creator. Such a policy requires putting the issue of debts aside, while investment in upgrading the skills of the population, and in conquering the problems of nature, is provided, with long-term, low-interest credits. Such a policy alone will build the physical basis for realizing the spirit of reconciliation which Pope John Paul II has brought to the fore.