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Meeting With Refugees on Lesbos

Pope Francis, Patriarch
Bartholomew and
Archbishop Ieronymos II

Pope Francis and Orthodox leaders focused their visit to the Greek island of Lesbos on the faces and stories of refugees. Pope Francis, Orthodox Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew of Constantinople and Archbishop Ieronymos II of Athens and all Greece spent more time April 16 greeting the refugees individually than they did giving speeches. On the flight from Rome, Pope Francis told reporters, "This is a trip marked by sadness and that's important. ... We are going to encounter the greatest human catastrophe since World War II." The three religious leaders visited the Moria refugee camp, a facility that a year ago was an open cen-

"The world will be judged by the way it has treated you."

ter where migrants and refugees could file requests for asylum. Today it is a locked facility surrounded by walls topped with razor wire where some 2,500 newcomers wait out the slow process of discovering whether their asylum requests will be accepted or they will be put on a ferry and taken back to Turkey. Most of the refugees are from Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan and set sail for Greece in inflatable boats from the nearby Turkish coast. Archbishop Ieronymos, speaking at the refugee camp, said he hoped to never again "see children washing up on the shores of the Aegean." For Patriarch Bartholomew, the visit to the camp was summarized as solidarity in tears. "We have wept as we watched the Mediterranean Sea becoming a burial ground for your loved ones," he told the refugees. The speeches of the three religious leaders follow.

Archbishop Ieronymos II

It is with unique joy that we welcome today to Lesbos the head of the Roman Catholic Church, Pope Francis.

We consider his presence in the territory of the church of Greece to be pivotal. Pivotal because together we bring forward before the whole world, Christian and beyond, the current tragedy of the refugee crisis.

I warmly thank His All-Holiness and my beloved brother in Christ Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, who blesses us with his presence as the first of Orthodoxy, uniting through his prayer so that the voice of

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