

origins

CNS documentary service

Caucasus Visit: Meeting With Authorities in Georgia

Pope Francis

Subtly acknowledging Georgia's ongoing territorial dispute with Russia, Pope Francis urged greater efforts to sow peace throughout the Caucasus region. Shortly after arriving in Tbilisi at the start of his 16th foreign trip, the pope met privately with Georgian President Giorgi Margvelashvili Sept. 30 and, with the president, he addressed a small gathering of civic leaders and members of the diplomatic corps outside the presidential palace. In a nation where more than 230,000 people are still displaced by the ongoing Georgian-Russian dispute over

"Distinctions along ethnic, linguistic, political or religious lines can and must be for everyone a source of mutual enrichment in favor of the common good."

control of South Ossetia, the pope said it was time to find a way for the displaced to return to their homes and for respect for the "sovereign rights" of each nation. The theme the government and local church chose for the pope's visit Sept. 30-Oct. 1 was "pax vobis," "peace be with you." Pope Francis urged the people of the region to make concerted efforts to respect their cultural and ethnic differences, giving everyone a chance "to coexist peacefully in their homeland or freely to return to that land if, for some reason, they have been forced to leave it." He said, "The peaceful coexistence among all peoples and states in the region is the indispensable and prior condition for ... authentic and enduring progress." The pope spoke in Italian throughout his three-day visit to Georgia and Azerbaijan; a Vatican translation of his speech to Georgian officials follows, copyright © 2016 by Libreria Editrice Vaticana.

■ thank Almighty God for granting me the opportunity to visit this blessed land, a place of encounter and vital exchange among cultures and civilizations, which, since the preaching of St. Nino at the beginning of the fourth century, discovered in Christianity its deepest identity and the solid foundation of its values.

As St. John Paul II observed when visiting your country, "Christianity became the seed of successive flowerings of Georgian culture" (Nov. 8, 1999, arrival ceremony), and this seed continues to bear fruit. Recalling with

continued on page 306

contents

Pope Francis' Visit to the Caucasus

- 305 Meeting With Authorities in Georgia
- 307 Meeting With Georgian Orthodox Patriarch
- 309 Prayer for Peace
- 310 Mass in Georgia
- 311 Meeting With Priests, Religious, Seminarians and Pastoral Workers in Georgia
- 313 Visit to Georgian Orthodox Cathedral
- 315 Mass in Azerbaijan
- 316 Meeting With Authorities in Azerbaijan
- 317 Interreligious Meeting in Azerbaijan
- 320 Datebook
- 320 On File

Oct. 13, 2016
Volume 46
Number 20



2249A