

Pope Ascends Temple Mount on Last Day in Israel

By [Lea Speyer](#) May 26, 2014 , 10:49 am

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“I lift up my eyes to the hills. From where does my help come? My help comes from the Lord, who made heaven and earth. He will not let your foot be moved; he who keeps you will not slumber. Behold, he who keeps Israel will neither slumber nor sleep. The Lord is your keeper; the Lord is your shade on your right hand.” (Psalm 121:1-8)



Pope Francis seen touching the stones of the Western Wall, Judaism's holiest site, in Jerusalem's Old City, on May 26, 2014. (Photo: Nati SHohat/FLASH90)

Pope Francis made his way to Tel Aviv yesterday after meeting with Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas and holding mass in Bethlehem's Manger Square on Sunday.

During his visit with Abbas, the pope called for unity between Israel and the [“State of Palestine”](#) and said the [failure of peace talks](#) was “increasingly unacceptable.” He urged both sides to acknowledge “the right of two states to exist and to live in peace and security within internationally recognized borders.”

While presiding over mass, Pope Francis was interrupted by the Muslim call to prayer from the Mosque of Omar on Manger Square. According to Israel Radio reporter Gal Berger, choral music was turned up to drown out the call to prayer. At one point, Christians in the crowd responded with whistles and shouts.

Army Radio reported that the Muslim calls of “God is Great” in Arabic were met with Christians cheering “Viva Il Papa.”

Upon conclusion of his time in Bethlehem, Pope Francis invited soon to retire Israeli President Shimon Peres and Abbas to the Vatican for prayer for peace. “I offer my home in the Vatican as a place for this encounter for prayer,” the pope stated after mass. Both have accepted the pope’s offer and are expected to meet in June.

Before departing for Tel Aviv, Pope Francis met with Palestinian children. He urged the children to never “abandon hope, and always look forward.” One Palestinian boy told the pope, “Your visit gives up hope. This occupation is a sing against God and man. It deprives the Palestinians of their basic human rights. Let’s all pray for a fair, all-encompassing peace.”

“You don’t solve violence with violence,” he told them. “Peace is achieved with hard work and dignity.

Upon arrival in Tel Aviv, Pope Francis was welcomed with full honors, including an IDF color guard. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and President Peres were on hand to welcome the pope to Israel.

Netanyahu told the pope that Israel is “committed to maintaining the status quo at the holy sites of Muslims, Christians and Jews.”

“Our hand is outstretched for peace to anyone who will take it,” the prime minister added.



Pope Francis arrives in Tel Aviv. (Photo: GPO)



Pope Francis thanked Israel for their warm welcome and said that he comes to the Holy Land as a pilgrim. He reiterated his support for a two-state solution and [condemned the “brutal” attack](#) “of an anti-Semitic hatred” in Brussels which left three dead, including an Israeli couple on holiday.

The pope spoke about peace between Israel and the Palestinians, highlighting the “universal value” of Jerusalem as a city of peace. He expressed hopes that peace “will become reality, and will not remain a dream.”

The pope ended his first day with a call for Christian unity after meeting with Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I in the Old City of Jerusalem. The meeting marked the 50th anniversary of the historic meeting between Pope Paul VI and the Eastern Orthodox Ecumenical Patriarch Athenagoras in Jerusalem in 1964.



Pope Francis inspects the IDF Color Guard. (Photo: GPO)

Early Monday morning, Pope Francis made his way to the Temple Mount flanked by armed security officials. The pope was given a tour by the grand mufti of Jerusalem before entering the Al Aqsa mosque.

Grand Mufti Muhammad Ahmad Hussein told the pope that Israel is creating hardships for Palestinians on the Temple Mount. During his speech, Pope Francis responded that the Mount was for “all communities who look to Abraham.”

“May no one abuse the name of God through violence, may we work together for justice and peace,” the pope stated.



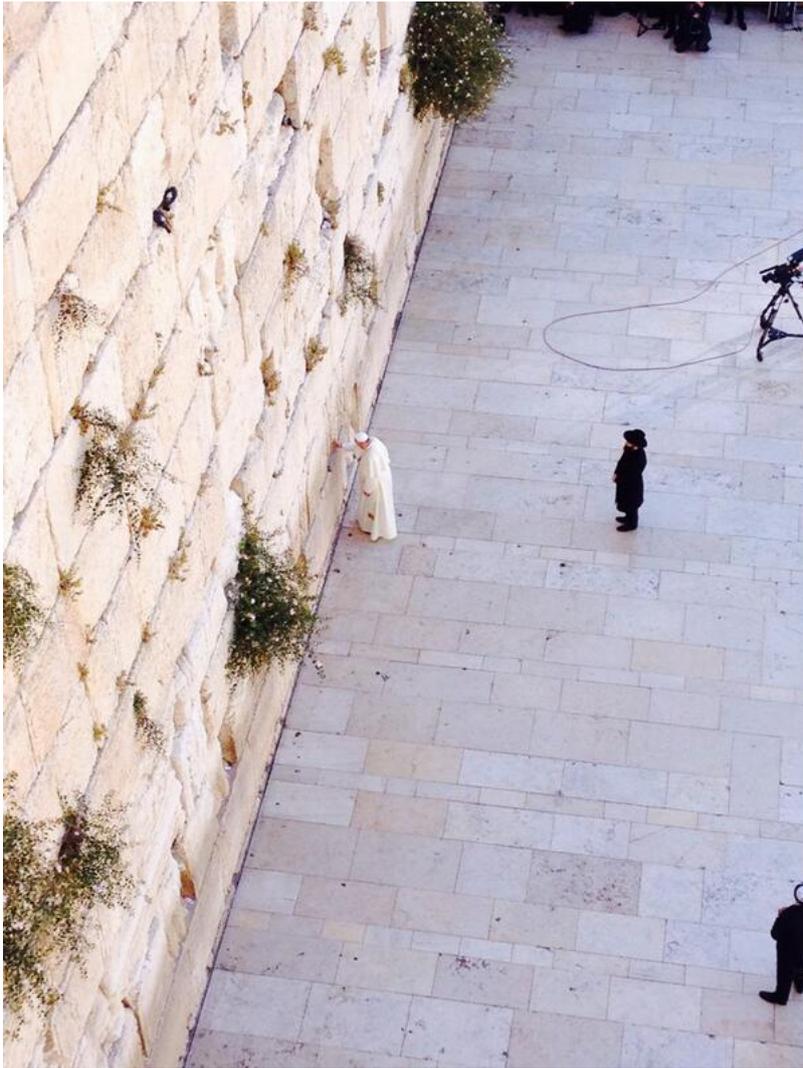
Pope Francis putting on his shoes after visiting the Al Aqsa Mosque. (Photo: Vatican TV Screenshot)

After touring the Temple Mount, Pope Francis made his way to the Western Wall and was greeted by Rabbi Shmuel Rabinovitch. The Western Wall Plaza was closed off to the public this morning.

Accompanied by Rabbi Rabinovitch, Pope Francis placed a note in the cracks of the wall, bowing his head and touching the ancient stone. He took some time to pray at one of the holiest sites revered by Jews. After praying, Pope Francis hugged Rabbi Abraham Skorka and Muslim leader Omar Abboud, who are accompanying him on the trip.



Pope Francis, accompanied by Rabbi Rabinovitch, is given a historical tour of the Temple Mount and Western Wall Plaza. (Photo: Vatican TV Screenshot)



(Photo: @MickyRosenfeld/

Twitter)



Pope Francis praying at the Western Wall. (Photo: Vatican TV Screenshot)

After his [visit at the Western Wall](#), the pope visited the grave of Theodor Herzl on Mount Herzl. Pope Francis is the first ever pope to do so and the visit is seen as a nod to Zionism. While on Mount Herzl, the pope made an unplanned visit to a memorial for terror victims. The memorial was inaugurated in 1998 and commemorates terror victims who have died since 1851.



Pope Francis visiting the memorial for terror victims on Mount Herzl. (Photo: @IsraeliPM/ Twitter)

Lastly, before meeting with Israeli leaders, Pope Francis visited Israel's Holocaust museum, Yad Vashem. While visiting Yad Vashem, which all state dignitaries must visit while in Israel, the pope "rekindled the eternal flame", laid a wreath and met with six Holocaust survivors.

After meeting with the survivors, a solemn Pope Francis ascended the podium, stood silently for several moments, and began his speech by quoting Genesis: "Adam where are you, where are you, old man? In this memorial of the Shoah we hear this question once again."

The Pope questioned humanity and asked how it could allow the tragedy of the Holocaust to happen.

"Who corrupted you, who disfigured you, who led you to believe you are the master of good and evil. Not only did you torture your brothers and sisters but you sacrificed them to yourself, because you made yourself a God."

"Once again in this place we hear this voice of God. Adam, where are you? A great evil has befallen us, as such that has never occurred."

"Grant us the grace to be ashamed of what men have done, to be ashamed of this massive idolatry. Never again, Lord, never again," he concluded.

Read more at <http://www.breakingisraelnews.com/15636/pope-ascends-temple-mount-last-day-israel/#4U8XBZihKvzDPegm.99>