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E-Newsletter

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King to Take Part in the Pope's Funeral

Amman, April 6 (Petra)--His Majesty King Abdullah II will take part, along with world leaders, in the funeral of Pope John Paul II, which will be held at the Vatican on Friday.

The King's participation comes in appreciation of the Pope's support to peace and humanitarian issues, and his role in bringing followers of the three monotheistic religions in the world closer together.

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King expresses deep sorrow over Pope's passing

Monday, April 4, 2005 (Jordan Times)

Amman - Jordan on Sunday remembered the late Pope John Paul II in three lights: His encouragement of Muslim-Christian dialogue, support for the Palestinian cause and opposition to the war on Iraq.

His Majesty King Abdullah expressed deep grief and sorrow over the passing of John Paul II, who contributed to enhancing tolerance, dialogue and human rights as well as strengthening ties between monotheistic religions around the world.

“His Holiness devoted his life to calling for solidarity between the rich and poor countries, peace, freedom, love and alleviation of the suffering in the world,” a Royal Court statement quoted King Abdullah as saying.

“We lost an influential figure, who had tangible contributions as well as positive and firm stands on legitimate Arab issues, especially the Palestinian cause, and human principles and values, called for by Islam,” the King said.

Referring to the late Pope's 2000 visit to Jordan during his

pilgrimage to the Holy Land, the Monarch said ties between the Kingdom and the pontiff have always been “unique and distinguished.”

The King also sent a cable of condolences to the Vatican on Jordan's behalf.

And Prime Minister Faisal Fayez on Sunday announced that the national flags on government buildings will fly at half-mast for three days as of today, the Jordan News Agency, Petra, reported.

All of Jordan remembers the pontiff's visit to Jordan.

King's Adviser Akel Biltaji, who accompanied the Pope on that visit five years ago to several of Jordan's holy sites, recalls when he first met John Paul II.

“In 1998, I met the Pope in the company of His Majesty the late King Hussein during our visit to the Vatican. We told him about the discovery of the Baptism Site in Jordan and presented him with a gift,” Biltaji said.

“In 1999 during the visit to the Vatican in the company of His Majesty King Abdullah, we presented the Pope with documents about the updated renovation and construction works at the Baptism Site. Then in 2000, I accompanied the Pope during his pilgrimage to Jordan.”

Biltaji described the Pope as a “humble and prestigious person supporting efforts for the establishment of peace in the Middle East... and he truly loved Jordan.”

John Paul II started his historic pilgrimage to the Holy Land with an impassioned appeal for the continuation of the peace process.

“In this area of the world there are grave and urgent issues of justice, of the rights of peoples and nations, which have to be resolved for the good of all and as a condition for lasting peace,” the pontiff said in an address upon his arrival in Amman on March 20, 2000.

“Without peace, there can be no authentic development for this region. That is why Jordan's proven commitment to securing the conditions necessary for peace is so important and praiseworthy,” the Pope said.

The late Pope also believed that the pressures on global society

make it imperative that the world's religions work together for peace. "All religions must feel called to fresh efforts to cooperate in order to promote human life and its dignity," the pontiff said in late 2000.

For HRH Prince Hassan, the moderator of the World Conference of Religions for Peace, the world's largest multi-religious organization, "the death of Pope John Paul II was an occasion for sorrow in religious communities around the world."

Prince Hassan noted that "John Paul II exercised historic leadership in advancing goodwill and cooperation among the world's diverse religions."

The Prince singled out with appreciation the Pope's powerful and steadfast commitment to building respectful relations among religions, citing the pontiff's visit to a mosque in Syria and his kissing of the Holy Koran as gestures of goodwill deeply appreciated by Muslims.

Prince Hassan, who accompanied the Pope to the holy site of Mount Nebo said: "The Pope maintained an abiding and learned respect for religious differences, and demonstrated in action his deep commitment to the bonds of unity shared by all peoples."

Father Nabil Haddad of the Greek Orthodox Church in Jordan said the Pope's visit to Jordan and the occupied Palestinian territories helped further cement Christian-Muslim ties.

"Jordanian Muslims and Christians will remember the Pope's fervent support of the Kingdom's efforts for the Palestinian cause and his strong opposition to the war on Iraq," Father Nabil said.

For his part, Father Hanna Kildani, spokesperson for the Roman Catholic bishop, said, "His Holiness firmly stood against the war on Iraq stressing that 'preemptive war does not exist in Christian teachings'."

Catholic churches in Jordan yesterday held requiem mass for the Pope's soul.

Government Spokesperson Asma Khader, meanwhile, described the Pope as a symbol of love and peace and coexistence among different cultures and civilizations.

"Pope John Paul II left behind a spiritual legacy that bore fruit and

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manifested in solidarity, cooperation and dialogue for resolving issues founded on the basis of justice and love,” Khader, also minister of culture, told Petra.

Also on Sunday, acting House Speaker Mamdouh Abbadi sent a cable of condolences to the Vatican embassy in Amman, describing the passing of the late Pope as a great loss of a world personality, who diligently worked for enhancing world peace.

As president of the Royal Academy for Islamic Civilization Research (Al al Bayt Foundation), Nassereddin Assad twice had an audience with the Holy Father at the Vatican.

“The Pope welcomed me as the foundation president and my companions, expressing deep appreciation of our efforts in promoting Muslim-Christian dialogue which he described as a means for promoting peace. Pope John Paul II delivered lectures on both occasions that gave us encouragement to pursue our efforts,” Assad told The Jordan Times.

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