

BRIEFS



Battling Boko Haram

The international response to the fundamentalist Muslim terrorist organization spurred the government of Nigeria into action to recover more than 200 kidnapped young girls.

World, page 4



Francis the Uniter

Approximately 10,000 worshippers from Israel, Palestine and beyond braved heightened security in Bethlehem to join Pope Francis for Mass.

Vatican, page 6



Summer Reading

Books on conversion, fatherhood, the faith and renewal top the Register's recommendations.

Books, page 11



JORDANIAN PRIDE. A young girl holds a photo of Pope Francis and Jordan's King Abdullah II as Jordanians and Christians from various nationalities and denominations congregate at Amman's International Stadium to wait for Pope Francis to celebrate Mass on May 24. AP photo/Raad Adayleh



SOLIDARITY. At left, Pope Francis embraces Israeli President Shimon Peres upon his arrival at Ben Gurion International Airport. Above, the Holy Father kisses the hands of a Holocaust survivor May 26 during his visit to the Yad Vashem Holocaust Museum in Jerusalem. AP photos/Sipa

Pope Francis in the Holy Land

A Glimpse of Unity Amid Deep Divisions

BY JOAN FRAWLEY DESMOND
SENIOR EDITOR

The key moments of Pope Francis' pilgrimage to the Holy Land confirmed that history and geography often constrain efforts to overcome long-standing conflicts, and those same moments also showcased the power of symbolic actions that can touch hearts and revitalize high-wire diplomacy.

Experts are skeptical about whether the pilgrimage will yield concrete successes, especially in the wake of the failed U.S.-led peace talks between Israel and Palestine.

Still, many applauded the Pope for extending an invitation to President Abbas and Israeli President Simon Peres to join him for a joint prayer service in the Vatican — an invitation the two leaders accepted and which was sched-

uled for June 8, Pentecost Sunday.

But even as the global media focused on Pope Francis' outreach to Jews and Muslims — from his visit to the Western Wall to his stop at the Dome of the Rock — his call for dialogue as a path to unity was primarily directed to his fellow Christians.

"The Pope's main theme was unity, against various divisions: unity in the Christian Church and overcoming the division between Roman Catholics and the Orthodox faithful; unity between Christians and Jews and among believers of all faiths; and unity among those who live in the region," said Joseph Wood, who teaches at the Institute of World Politics in Washington and has published extensively on U.S. foreign-policy issues.

Indeed, the central purpose of Pope Francis' trip was to meet with Patriarch Bartholomew I of Constantinople to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the landmark

meeting between Pope Paul VI and Patriarch Athenagoras.

This time, Pope Francis and Patriarch Bartholomew made history at the Church of the Holy Sepulcher, where they led an ecumenical prayer service for Catholics and Orthodox that served as a powerful testimony of Christian unity and a sign of solidarity for the region's beleaguered Christians.

"So my meeting with His Holiness Bartholomew, beloved brother in Christ, was the highlight of the visit," Pope Francis explained during a May 28 papal audience in St. Peter's Square, where he seemed intent on advancing the mission of his pilgrimage.

The festering divisions between Christians, he said, make "my heart sick." Yet, while kneeling in prayer with Patriarch Bartholomew before the tomb of Jesus, "we heard the strong voice of the Good Shepherd, of the Risen One who wants us to all be one."



ANTICIPATION. A young boy holds a green balloon as he waits in Manger Square for Pope Francis to celebrate Mass on May 25 in Bethlehem, West Bank. Iliia Yefimovich/Getty Images



RELAXED MOMENT. Israeli soldiers pose for a photo before a welcome ceremony for Pope Francis at Ben Gurion International Airport on May 24. Sipa via AP Images

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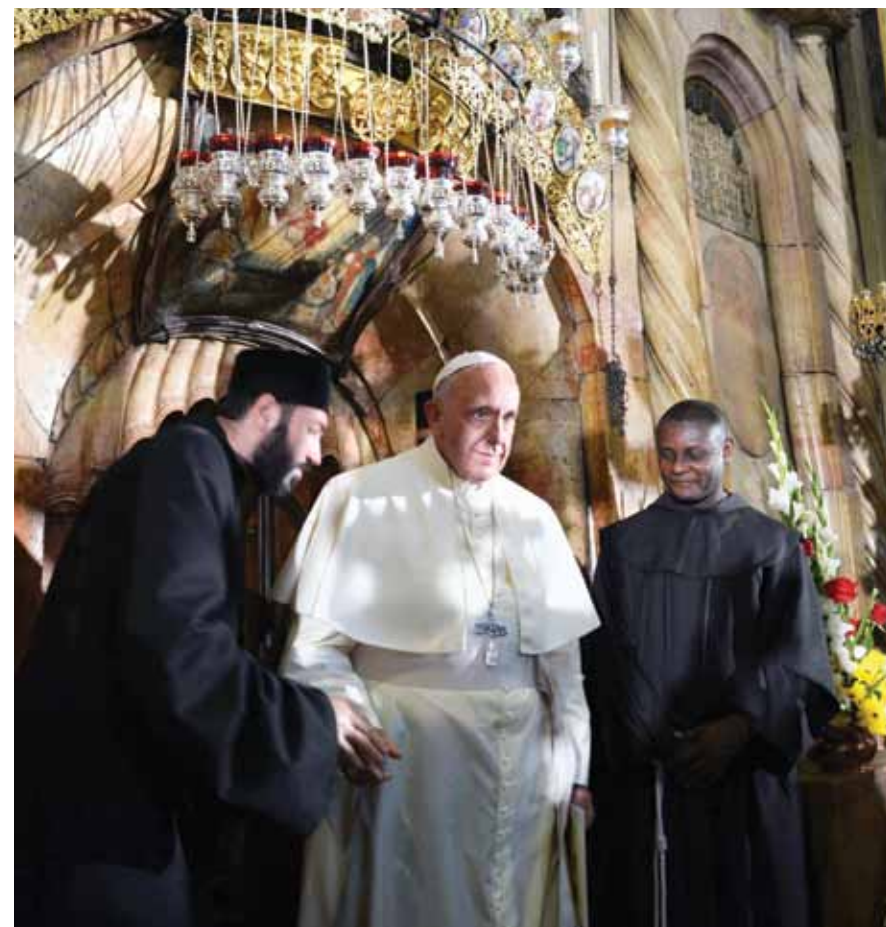
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PILGRIMS AND FRIENDS. At left, Pope Francis prays at the Church of the Holy Sepulcher May 25 in Jerusalem. Amos Ben Gershon GPO/Pool/NurPhoto/Sipa USA Below, Rabbi Abraham Skorka (second from left) and the rabbi of the Western Wall, Shmuel Rabinovitz (l), leave the Western Wall compound with Pope Francis after the Holy Father prayed there on May 26. Rabbi Skorka and the Pope are longtime friends from Francis' days as archbishop of Buenos Aires, Argentina. Lior Mizrahi/Getty Images



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