



## **Remarks in the Holy Land to Presidents of Israel and the Palestinian Authority**

**A statement read by Bishop William Skylstad  
at meetings between**

**Members of the Episcopal Co-Ordination for the Holy Land and  
President Moshe Katsav of Israel on January 11, 2005 and  
President Mahmoud Abbas of the Palestinian Authority on  
January 13, 2005**

Mr. President,

Thank you for giving us this opportunity to meet you.

We come in the footsteps of two pilgrims to the Holy Land, Pope Paul VI and Pope John Paul II. We are completely united with the Christians of the Holy Land as they affirm the teaching of Pope Paul VI that peace is brought about through justice for all, and as they stand resolutely with Pope John Paul II in his consistent rejection of any form of violence as a road to peace.

We visit you at a time of great political potential. We know our native countries have helped to shape the history of this Land. We are determined that the issues which touch the lives and hopes of all in the Holy Land shall not be neglected. On our return, we will use every opportunity to share with our own communities and governments what we have heard and seen in parishes, in Bethlehem's wonderful university—whose story is followed with great interest in many countries—and in schools and hospitals, as well as in Galilee.

At this important moment, we seek to encourage and support all who strive for justice and so pursue peace and those practical steps that will enable the Israeli and Palestinian peoples to live in this Land, with dignity, in two states, in security and equity.

We affirm and stand with the Church in the Holy Land, with the Patriarch, the pastors and people, in their unique witness to the faith we share with them. With the whole Church, we are committed to the survival and vitality of the Christian community in this Land where Jesus was born, died, was buried and rose again.

The importance of the Fundamental/Basic Agreement between Israel/the PLO and the Holy See is clear to us, and we urge its full enactment and implementation without delay.

We will work for a just peace in this Land and seek to engage our local Churches and countries in this task. The entire world has a stake in justice and peace here.

At this hopeful moment our prayers are with all who share this Land: Israelis and Palestinians, Christians, Jews and Muslims, that we will very soon see decisive action and courageous steps to bring an end to violence and injustice and accomplish peace and reconciliation in the Land we all call Holy.

Thank you, Mr. President, and Shalom/Salaam.

