

July 19, 2011

To his Holiness,
Pope Benedict XVI

I, Rabbi Moshe Yosef Lefkowitz, son and grandson of families of Holocaust survivors, who remained sole and lone legacies of their families, was a guest at Mr. Kiko's concert held at the Domus Galilaeae International Center, in memory of innocent victims and all the millions who were murdered during the horrendous World War Two and the Holocaust.

I would like to convey to you my feelings and emotions, which I spoke of before the hundreds of Jews and Christians who had gathered at the impressive location of the Domus Galilaeae, a site symbolizing love and peace. The music I heard that day expressed such intense pain and came the depths of the heart and engraved in my heart a spark and shiver that I have never before sensed.

When I was invited to speak, I said that it is a pity that politicians around the world could not be replaced with musicians, and that they would be taught to speak in trans-national song; in tunes that join worlds, instead of constantly sharpening swords and talking of war. As the son of Holocaust survivors, I emphasized the difference between victims of natural disasters, such as tsunamis and earthquakes, and those of the gruesome Holocaust, during which millions were slaughtered and murdered by brutal human animals, by premeditated murder, only because of their faith and religion. Many died with the words of the Shema - Hear, O Israel! Hashem is our God! Hashem is One - on their lips.

Standing in this very special place in the north of Israel, experiencing unity and love between nations, I cried tears of happiness and of pain, because sixty years after the Holocaust there is a change and a connection coming out of this place. I felt also a profound pain that my grandfather, grandmother and their families did not merit to experience this love and connection, and this great big hug that would have been so important to them.

I will tell you of a Talmudic legend of a gentile who came to Shammai asking to become a Jew "while standing on one foot". He was thrown out of the building. He went to Hillel, known for his patience, with the same request. Hillel told him that the entire Torah could be summed up in one sentence: "Love thy neighbor as you love yourself." If we all adopt this doctrine, the world will be a different place.

I will end with the quote "Love thy neighbor as you love yourself, I am God." The Torah states that when God sees love between human beings, then "I am God", He joins in this love, and I am sure that your Holiness can be blessed by such good people as Fr. Rino Rossi, Francesco Giosue Voltaggio and this Center, which joins people in love and unity.

I wish and pray that we will merit love, unity, peace and affection, abundant blessing, no wars, and no pain, as quoted by King David: "A Psalm of David, The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want ... Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life."

With sincere respect and appreciation,

Rabbi Moshe Yosef Lefkowitz
Jerusalem