

toward a more fruitful co-existence.» [news.smh.com.au]

«... Above all it is the first visit of Benedict XVI to a majority Christian Orthodox country. Cyprus is not only a crossroads, said Father Lombardi, a bridge between Europe and the Middle East, but was also a very important land in the life of the early Christian community (referring to St. Barnabas and St. Paul) and for centuries has been linked to the Holy Land, so beloved by Christians.

... Of course, Father Lombardi stresses, the choice of Cyprus to present the preparatory document of the Synod of Bishops of the Middle East is a clear sign that the Pope considers Cyprus a privileged meeting point for Christians of the region and certainly wants to speak not only to Catholics but to all inhabitants of the region including those of other religions, Muslims and Jews, as part of the Catholic Churches commitment to human and spiritual development and a dialogue that builds peace.» [www.asianews.it]

«Pope Benedict (R) talks with Sufi mystic Sheikh Nazim, surrounded by other Muslim clergymen, during their meeting before the mass at the Church of the Holy Cross at the U.N.-controlled buffer zone of the divided capital of Nicosia June 5, 2010.

Pope Benedict held a surprise meeting with a Turkish Cypriot Islamic leader from the divided island on Saturday, underscoring his view that inter-religious dialogue should be used as an inspiration for reunion.» [REUTERS/Osservatore Romano]

«Benedict had a brief encounter with Sheikh Nazim, the 88-year-old head of the Naqshbandi-Haqani Sufi order based in northern Cyprus, the Vatican said.

A moderate Muslim leader, Sheikh Nazim is the 41st sheikh in the line of the order. It claims hundreds of thousands of followers and is growing in popularity across Europe and the US. The brief but symbolic encounter took

place outside the small Church of the Holy Cross, which is in the buffer zone, a no-man's land splitting Cyprus into a north and south and patrolled by United Nations troops.

“I am happy to come here to visit a great man... May God grant him a good life here and in the hereafter,” Sheikh Nazim told reporters as he arrived in the church complex, which has served as the pope’s residence during his three-day trip.

Benedict XVI is only visiting the south of the island, territory run by the Greek Cypriot administration, and Nazim came from the Turkish north for the meeting. “I am happy... I hope that despite our faults our hearts are moving in the same direction,” said Sheikh Nazim, whose followers include singer Yusuf Islam, formerly known as Cat Stevens.

The pope has said his visit is not political and has mostly skirted around the highly complex issue of Cyprus’ division. But in a speech to Archbishop Chrysostomos II, head of Cyprus’ Orthodox Church, Benedict said he hoped all “could find the wisdom and strength to work together for a just settlement.”

He urged all to “strive for peace and reconciliation and to build for future generations a society distinguished by respect for the rights of all, including the inalienable rights to freedom of conscience and freedom of worship.” [w.w. todayzaman.com]

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WEEKLY FROM CYPRUS

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Mawlānā Sheikh Nāzīm meets Pope Benedict XVI



Saturday, June 5, 2010, a short refreshing meeting between Mawlānā Sheikh Nazim and His Holyness Pope Benedict XVI took place in front of the Apostolic Nunciature in Nicosia. (Photo: AP)

The film of the meeting can be watched on SALTANAT.ORG



Benedict XVI and Sheikh Nāzim embrace each other. Photos from the film Saltanat.org

The dialogue between Mawlānā and the Pope:

Benedict XVI: ... Thank you!
Mawlānā: Thank you, Sir!

Reports in the Press

«One interesting encounter happened on the way to the Mass. The Pope met with Shaykh Muhammad Nazim Adil Al-Haqgani, a leading Sufi Muslim leader from Northern Cyprus. He lives near the Church in the Turkish part of Nicosia. The two men met, and both mentioned how old they were, since they are both in their

Benedict XVI: We regret for ... unfortunate ...
Mawlānā: Very happy. Very happy, God bless you.
Benedict XVI: Thank you. God bless you also.
Mawlānā: Pray for me.
Benedict XVI: I will pray for you ...
Mawlānā: ... I am so old one.
Benedict XVI: I am also old.
Mawlānā: And this area is my home, just here. Behind this my house, I am growing. *Subhānallah*. One day I am meeting His Holiness to be here, that is most surprising event. *Māhā'allāh, māhā'allāh*.
Benedict XVI: God bless you. Give my greetings to all brothers and sisters ... God bless you.
Mawlānā and Pope hug each other.
Mawlānā: Good one. Open it [the present for the Pope].
Exchange of presents.
Few later in the car: I am happy with ... Only I was thinking that His Holiness is younger than me. But he is more than me. — I am happy. And I hope that the Lord of Heavens makes our hearts on the same direction to love each other and to help each other here and hereafter under the flags of Prophets, under the flags of holy ones. Holy ones' love gives life ...
Reporter woman: What did you say with the Pope, Sir?
Others: Peace, peace of all!
Woman's voice: Thank you people, thank you so much for your help.
[The film in full length can be watched on Saltanat.org.]

80s. The two men exchanged gifts and embraced, and then the Pope proceeded to Mass.

Pope Greets Muslim Leader in Cyprus

(02 Jun 10 – RV) On Saturday Afternoon, ahead of Mass with the priests, deacons, religious and ecclesial movements in Holy Cross Church, Nicosia, Pope Benedict XVI met with the spiritual

leader of a Sufi movement in Cyprus. Vatican Press Office Director, Fr. Federico Lombardi, says that Sheik Mohammed Nazim Abil Al-Haqgani, the spiritual leader of a Sufi movement, was seated along the Pope's processional route towards the Church of the Holy Cross. Fr Lombardi said: "The Pope stopped to greet the 89 year old religious leader, who welcomed him by saying "I am very old" to which the Pope replied "so am I". He then told the Pope that he lived close to the Church and had wanted to come to greet him, and he gifted Pope Benedict with an decorated piece of wood, a plaque with an Islamic inscription and a rosary. The Pope gifted the religious leader a medal and they embraced". Fr Lombardi commented that Sheik Mohammed Nazim Abil Al-Haqgani is active in inter faith dialogue and described his gesture as one of "Islamic fraternity". Earlier today Fr Lombardi held a press conference on the progress of the Papal trip so far.» [Radio Vatican]

«Pope Benedict XVI held an unscheduled meeting with Mawlānā Sheikh Nāzim in the afternoon of June 5.

During his visit to Cyprus June 4-6, Pope Benedict stayed at the nunciature, which is located on the edge of the line separating the South from the North. Pope Benedict did not visit the northern part of the island during his trip; the chief mufti of Cyprus — the religious leader of the Muslim community — invited the pope to cross the U.N.-patrolled buffer zone, but refused to go south to meet the pope.

Jesuit Father Federico Lombardi, Vatican spokesman, said Sheikh Nazim was seated on a chair on the street leading from the nunciature to the church where the pope was about to celebrate Mass.

As the pope passed in procession on the way to the church, he stopped to greet the sheik, Father Lombardi said.

The sheik told the pope, "I'm sorry. I'm very old, so I sat to wait." the spokesman said. "The pope responded, "I'm old, too," he said. Sheik Nazim brought the pope a walking stick and a set of Muslim prayer beads, Father Lombardi

said. The pope gave the sheik commemorative medals of his pontificate.
The sheik asked the pope if he could embrace him, the pope said, "yes," and the whole thing was over in just 3 or 4 minutes, the spokesman said. "It was brief and very beautiful." »



«Sufi mystic Sheikh Nazim (seated) waits with other Muslim clergymen and aides for an audience with of Pope Benedict XVI outside Nicosia's Latin Church of the Holy Cross on the Green Line in the divided capital of Cyprus where the pontiff celebrated mass on June 5, 2010, on the second day of his visit to the mainly Greek Orthodox east Mediterranean island.» [topics.abnewsws]

«While the pontiff did not specifically mention Islam in his remarks, he is known to be keen for closer dialogue.

The pope was not scheduled to visit the north of Cyprus. However, a prominent Sufi Muslim mystic who lives in the north, Sheikh Nazim, travelled to Nicosia's Franciscan church of the Holy Cross, in the UN buffer zone, and met him just before he celebrated mass on Saturday. Nazim asked the pope to pray for him, and he responded: „I will pray for you, and you pray for me.“

On Friday, on his flight to Cyprus, he told journalists that „we must be able to talk to our Muslim brothers and pursue this dialogue