

APOSTOLIC JOURNEY  
OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI  
TO FRANCE ON THE OCCASION OF THE 150th ANNIVERSARY  
OF THE APPARITIONS OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY AT LOURDES  
(SEPTEMBER 12 - 15, 2008)

**GREETING FROM THE BALCONY OF THE APOSTOLIC NUNCIATURE**

***ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI***

*Paris*  
*Friday, 12 September 2008*

*Dear friends,*

Your warm welcome is most moving for the Pope! Thank you for waiting for me here with such enthusiasm, despite the lateness of the hour!

The prospect of the next few days, in Paris and in Lourdes, already gives me great joy. I give thanks to the Lord who has enabled me to accomplish this [my first pastoral visit to France](#) as the successor of Peter, and to receive such an encouraging response from the faithful.

I am glad to be joining the great throng of Lourdes pilgrims tomorrow to celebrate the Jubilee of the Apparitions of the Virgin. Catholics in France have greater need than ever to renew their trust in Mary, recognizing in her the model of their commitment to the service of the Gospel. But before my departure for Lourdes, I look forward to seeing all of you tomorrow morning for the celebration of the Eucharist on the *Esplanade des Invalides*.

I am counting on you and on your prayers for this visit to bear fruit. May the Virgin Mary keep you safe! With all my heart, I impart to you my Apostolic Blessing.