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Sent: Thursday, February 24, 2011 10:20 PM
To: Webmaster@Adventistlaymen. Com
Subject: Articles of interest...

POPE-SULEIMAN Feb-24-2011 (330 words) With photos. xxxi

Pope discusses interreligious harmony with Lebanese president

By Carol Glatz
[Catholic News Service](#)

VATICAN CITY (CNS) -- Pope Benedict XVI and Lebanese President Michel Suleiman met for a private audience in which Lebanon was highlighted as a nation that embodies the principles of freedom and interreligious harmony.

The pope welcomed Suleiman to the Vatican Feb. 24.

In addition to the 30-minute papal audience, Suleiman also met with Cardinal Tarcisio Bertone, the Vatican secretary of state, and Archbishop Dominique Mamberti, the Vatican foreign minister.

The Vatican said the meetings "served to highlight how Lebanon, because of the presence of various Christian and Muslim communities there, stands as a message of freedom and respectful coexistence, not only for the region, but for the whole world."

"In this context, it is increasingly necessary to promote collaboration and dialogue between religious confessions," the Vatican said.

The talks also included a discussion about "the importance of civil and religious authorities being committed to educating consciences in peace and reconciliation," it said.

"The hope was expressed that the formation of the new government may favor the desired stability of the nation, which is called to face important internal and international challenges," the Vatican said.

The discussions also touched on the situation in the Middle East, especially regarding recent events "in certain Arab states, with the parties expressing their shared conviction that it is vital to resolve the ongoing conflicts in the region," it said.

The leaders also spoke about the "delicate situation of Christians in the entire region, and to the contribution they can make for the good of society as a whole," the Vatican said.

Before the private talks began, the pope and Suleiman talked about a Feb. 23 ceremony in which the pope blessed a statue of St. Maron, the fourth-century hermit who founded the Maronite Catholic Church.

Suleiman and the Maronite patriarch, Cardinal Nasrallah P. Sfeir, attended the ceremony, which took

place in front of the niche where the enormous marble statue was placed on the outer wall of St. Peter's Basilica.

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to the chief mufti of Lebanon, told the conference that the Middle East is changing, but it is not clear exactly how the changes will impact the region's Christian minority.

"Liberal democracy is advancing, but the question is: Do political freedom and religious freedom always go together?" he asked.

Al-Sammak said the answer may not always be "yes," and he pointed to the countries of the former Soviet bloc where the post-1989 freedoms have led to a surge in secularism and materialism, not religiosity.

Pro-democracy demonstrators in Egypt were very careful to focus on the fact of citizenship and on bringing Muslims and Christians together, he said, "but this does not mean that the (extreme) Islamists won't try to hijack the process."

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Rev 14:6 And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people,

Rev 14:7 Saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come: and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters.

Rev 14:8 And there followed another angel, saying, Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication.

Rev 14:9 And the third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand,

Rev 14:10 The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb:

Rev 14:11 And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name.

Rev 14:12 Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus.

Rev 14:13 And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them.

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