The Holy See

APOSTOLIC JOURNEY OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS
TO **INDONESIA**, PAPUA NEW GUINEA,
TIMOR-LESTE AND SINGAPORE
(2-13 September 2024)

INTERRELIGIOUS MEETING

ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS

Istiqlal Mosque (Jakarta, Indonesia)
Thursday, 5 September 2024

[Multimedia]

- Address of the Holy Father
- Greeting of the Holy Father in the Tunnel of Friendship
- Joint Declaration of Istiqlal 2024

Dear brothers and sisters, good morning!

I am happy to be here, in the largest Mosque in Asia, together with all of you. I greet the Grand Imam and thank him for his words, reminding us that this place of worship and prayer is also “a great house for humanity”, where everyone can enter and take time for themselves, in order to make space for that yearning for the infinite that each one of us carries in our hearts, and to seek an encounter with the divine and experience the joy of friendship with others.

Moreover, I would like to recall that this Mosque was designed by the architect Friedrich Silaban, a Christian who won the design competition. This testifies to the fact that throughout the history of this nation and in the very fabric of its culture, the Mosque, like other places of worship, are spaces of dialogue, mutual respect and harmonious coexistence between religions and different spiritual sensibilities. This is a great gift that you are called to cultivate every day, so that religious experiences may be reference points for a fraternal and peaceful society and never reasons for

close-mindedness or confrontation.

In this regard, mention should be made of the underground tunnel, the “tunnel of friendship”, connecting the Istiqlal Mosque and the Cathedral of Saint Mary of the Assumption. This is an eloquent sign, allowing these two great places of worship not only to be “in front” of each other, but also “connected” to each other. Indeed, this passageway allows for encounter, dialogue and a real possibility for “finding and sharing a ‘mystique’ of living together, mingling and encounter […] stepping into this flood tide which, while chaotic, can become a genuine experience of fraternity, a caravan of solidarity, a sacred pilgrimage” (Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, 87). I encourage you to continue along this path so that all of us, together, each cultivating his or her own spirituality and practicing his or her religion, may walk in search of God and contribute to building open societies, founded on reciprocal respect and mutual love, capable of protecting against rigidity, fundamentalism and extremism, which are always dangerous and never justifiable.

Bearing in mind all that has been said, which is symbolized by the tunnel, I would like to leave you with two suggestions to encourage you on the path of unity and harmony that you have already embarked upon.

The first is *always look deeply*, because only in this way can we find what unites despite our differences. Indeed, on the surface there are spaces in both the Mosque and the Cathedral that are well defined and frequented by their respective faithful, but below ground in the tunnel, those same people can meet and encounter each other’s religious perspectives. This image reminds us of the important fact that the visible aspects of religions – the rites, practices and so on – are a heritage that must be protected and respected. However, we could say that what lies “underneath”, what runs underground, like the “tunnel of friendship”, is the one root common to all religious sensitivities: the quest for an encounter with the divine, the thirst for the infinite that the Almighty has placed in our hearts, the search for a greater joy and a life stronger than any type of death, which animates the journey of our lives and impels us to step out of ourselves to encounter God. Here, let us remember that by looking deeply, grasping what flows in the depths of our lives, the desire for fullness that dwells in the depths of our hearts, we discover that we are all brothers and sisters, all pilgrims, all on our way to God, beyond what differentiates us.

The second suggestion is *to preserve the bonds between you*. The tunnel was built in order to create a link between two different and distant places. This is what the tunnel does: it connects, creating a bond. Sometimes we think that a meeting between religions is a matter of seeking common ground between different religious doctrines and beliefs no matter the cost. Such an approach, however, may end up dividing us, because the doctrines and dogmas of each religious experience are different. What really brings us closer is creating a connection in the midst of diversity, cultivating bonds of friendship, care and reciprocity. These relationships link us to others, allowing us to commit ourselves to seek the truth together, learning from the religious tradition of others, and coming together to meet our human and spiritual needs. They are also bonds that

allow us to work together, to move forward together in pursuit of the same goals: defence of human dignity, the fight against poverty and the promotion of peace. Unity is born from personal bonds of friendship as well as mutual respect and defence of the ideas of others and their sacred spaces. May you always cherish this!

Dear brothers and sisters, “fostering religious harmony for the sake of humanity” is the path that we are called to follow. It is also the title to the joint declaration prepared for this occasion. By adhering to it, we take on the responsibility to address the serious and sometimes dramatic crises that threaten the future of humanity such as wars and conflicts, which are unfortunately caused at times by the manipulation of religion, and the environmental crisis, which is an obstacle to the growth and coexistence of peoples. In the face of these crises, it is important that the values common to all religious traditions be effectively promoted in order to help society “defeat the culture of violence and indifference” (*Joint Declaration of Istiqlal*) and promote reconciliation and peace.

I thank you for the common path you are taking. Indonesia is a great country, a mosaic of cultures, ethnicities and religious traditions, a rich diversity, which is also reflected in the varied ecosystem. If it is true that you are home to the world’s largest gold mine, know that the most precious treasure is the determination that differences can be harmonized through concord and mutual respect instead of being a cause for conflict. You are known for this harmony. Do not lose this gift! Do not impoverish yourselves of this great treasure. On the contrary, cultivate it and pass it on, especially to the young. May no one succumb to the allure of fundamentalism and violence. May everyone instead be awestruck by the dream of a free, fraternal and peaceful society and humanity!

Thank you for your kind smiles, which always shine on your faces and are a sign of your beauty and inner openness. May God preserve this gift. With his help and blessing go forth, *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika*, united in diversity. Thank you!

Greeting in the Tunnel of Friendship

Dear brothers and sisters,

I congratulate you all because the purpose of this “Tunnel of Friendship” is to be a place of dialogue and encounter.

When we think of a tunnel, we might easily imagine a dark pathway. This could be frightening, especially if we are alone. Yet here it is different, for everything is illuminated. I would like to tell you, however, that you are the light that illuminates it, and you do so by your friendship, by the

harmony you cultivate, the support you give each other, and by journeying together, which leads you in the end towards the fullness of light.

We who belong to different religious traditions have a role to play in helping everyone pass through the tunnels of life with our eyes turned towards the light. Then, at the end of the journey, we will be able to recognize in those who have walked beside us, a brother, a sister, with whom we can share life and support each other.

In the face of today's many challenges, we respond with the sign of fraternity. Indeed, by welcoming others and respecting their identity, fraternity urges them on a common path travelled in friendship and leading towards the light.

I am grateful to those who work with the conviction that we can live in harmony and peace, and are aware of the need for a more fraternal world. I hope that our communities may increasingly be open to interreligious dialogue and be symbols of the peaceful coexistence that characterizes Indonesia.

I pray to God, the Creator of all, that he will bless everyone who will pass through this Tunnel in a spirit of friendship, harmony and fraternity. Thank you!

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Joint Declaration of Istiqlal 2024*
***Fostering Religious Harmony for the Sake of Humanity*,**
signed by Pope Francis and Grand Imam Nasaruddin Umar
during the Interreligious Meeting in the Jakarta Istiqlal Mosque

As can be seen from the events of recent decades, our world is clearly facing two serious crises: dehumanization and climate change.

1. The global phenomenon of dehumanization is marked especially by widespread violence and conflict, frequently leading to an alarming number of victims. It is particularly worrying that religion is often instrumentalized in this regard, causing suffering to many, especially women, children and the elderly. The role of religion, however, should include promoting and safeguarding the dignity of every human life.

2. The human exploitation of creation, our common home, has contributed to climate change, leading to various destructive consequences such as natural disasters, global warming and unpredictable weather patterns. This ongoing environmental crisis has become an obstacle to the harmonious coexistence of peoples.

In response to these two crises, guided by our respective religious teachings and recognizing the contribution of Indonesia's philosophical principle of "Pancasila", we, together with the other religious leaders present, call for the following:

I. The values shared by our religious traditions should be effectively promoted in order to defeat the culture of violence and indifference afflicting our world. Indeed, religious values should be directed towards promoting a culture of respect, dignity, compassion, reconciliation and fraternal solidarity in order to overcome both dehumanization and environmental destruction.

II. Religious leaders in particular, inspired by their respective spiritual narratives and traditions, should cooperate in responding to the abovementioned crises, identifying their causes and taking appropriate action.

III. Since there is a single global human family, interreligious dialogue ought to be recognised as an effective instrument for resolving local, regional and international conflicts, especially those incited by the abuse of religion. Moreover, our religious beliefs and rituals have a particular capacity to speak to the human heart and thus foster a deeper respect for human dignity.

IV. Acknowledging that a healthy, peaceful and harmonious living environment is vital for becoming true servants of God and custodians of creation, we sincerely call on all people of good will to take decisive action in order to maintain the integrity of the natural environment and its resources, for we have inherited them from past generations and hope to pass them on to our children and grandchildren.

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