



The Holy See

**MESSAGE OF HIS HOLINESS POPE LEO XIV,
SIGNED BY THE SECRETARY OF STATE CARDINAL PIETRO PAROLIN,
TO MARK THE XLVI EDITION OF THE MEETING FOR FRIENDSHIP AMONG PEOPLES**

[Rimini, 22-27 August 2025]

From the Vatican, 11 August 2025

To His Most Reverend Excellency
Bishop Nicolò Anselmi
of Rimini

The theme of the 46th *Meeting for Friendship among Peoples*, which will take place in Rimini in the coming days, is an invitation to hope: “a stone, a cornerstone chosen and precious, and he who believes in him will not be put to shame” (cf. *1 Pt* 2:6). Indeed, hope does not disappoint (cf. *Rm* 5:5).

Deserts are generally places that are rejected and considered unsuitable for life. And yet there, where it seems that nothing can be born, the Sacred Scripture continually returns to narrate God’s passages. First of all, his people are born in the desert. Indeed, it is only on their journey through its harshness that the choice of freedom matures. The Biblical God – who observes, listens, knows the sufferings of his children and comes down to free them (cf. *Ex* 3:7-8) – transforms the desert into a place of love and decisions, makes it flourish like a garden of hope. The prophets recall it as the scene for a betrothal, to return to every time the heart grows lukewarm, to restart from God’s faithfulness (cf. *Hos* 2:16). Monks and nuns, for millennia, have dwelled in the desert on behalf of

all of us, representing all of humanity, with the Lord of silence and of life.

The Holy Father has appreciated that one of the exhibitions characterizing this year's *Meeting* is dedicated to the witness of the martyrs of Algeria. In them, the Church's vocation to dwell in the desert in deep communion with all humanity, overcoming the walls of indifference that set religions and cultures against one another, in full imitation of the movement of the incarnation and giving of the Son of God. This way of presence and simplicity, of knowledge and of "dialogue of life", is the true path of mission. Not self-exhibition, in the contraposition of identities, but self-giving to the point of martyrdom of those who, day and night, in joy and amid tribulations, worship Jesus alone as Lord.

There will be no shortage, as is customary, of dialogues between Catholics of various sensibilities and with believers of other denominations and non-believers. These are important listening exercises, which prepare the "new stones" with which to build the future that God already has in store for everyone, but which only unfolds when we welcome one another. We can no longer afford to resist the Kingdom of God, which is a Kingdom of peace. And where those responsible for state and international institutions seem unable to enforce the rule of law, mediation and dialogue, religious communities and civil society must dare to be prophetic. This means allowing ourselves to be driven into the desert and seeing now what can be born from the rubble and from so much, too much innocent suffering. Pope Leo XIV recommended to the Italian bishops that they "promote pathways of education in non-violence, mediation initiatives in local conflicts, and welcoming projects that transform fear of the other into an opportunity for encounter". He goes on to ask that "every community become a 'house of peace', where one learns how to defuse hostility through dialogue, where justice is practiced and forgiveness is cherished. Peace is not a spiritual utopia: it is a humble path, made up of daily gestures that interweave patience and courage, listening and action, and which demands today, more than ever, our vigilant and generative presence" (*Address to the Bishops of the Italian Episcopal Conference*, 17 June 2025).

The Holy Father, therefore, encourages us to give a name and shape to the new, so that faith, hope and charity may be translated into a great cultural conversion. Beloved *Pope Francis* taught us that "the option for the poor is primarily a theological category rather than a cultural, sociological, political or philosophical one" (*Evangelii gaudium*, 198). Indeed, God chose the humble, the small, the powerless, and from the womb of the Virgin Mary, made himself one of them, in order to inscribe his story in our history. Authentic realism, then, is that which includes those who have "another way of looking at things: they see aspects of reality that are invisible to the centres of power where weighty decisions are made" (*Fratelli tutti*, 215). Without the victims of history, without those who hunger and thirst for justice, without migrants and refugees, without the cry of all creation, we will not have new stones. We will continue to follow the delirious dream of Babel, deluding ourselves that touching the sky and making a name for ourselves is the only human way of inhabiting the earth (cf. *Gen* 11:1-9). However, from the outset, denying the voices of others and giving up on understanding one another are failed and dehumanizing experiences.

They must be opposed by the patience of encountering an ever-other Mystery, of which the difference of each person is a sign.

Unarmed and disarming, the presence of Christians in contemporary societies must translate, with skill and imagination, the Gospel of the Kingdom into forms of development that provide alternatives to paths of growth without equity and sustainability. In order to serve the living God, we must abandon the idolatry of profit, which has severely compromised justice, freedom of encounter and exchange, the participation of all in the common good, and ultimately peace. A faith that is estranged from the desertification of the world or that indirectly contributes to tolerating it would no longer be following Jesus Christ. The ongoing digital revolution risks accentuating discrimination and conflict: it must therefore be inhabited with the creativity of those who, obeying the Holy Spirit, are no longer slaves but children. Then the desert becomes a garden and the “city of God”, foretold by the saints, transfigures our desolate places.

Pope Leo invokes the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Morning Star, to support the commitment of each person in communion with the Pastors and the ecclesial communities to which they belong: “in cooperation with all the other members of the Body of Christ, all of us will then work together harmoniously as one. The challenges facing humanity will be less frightening, the future will be less dark and discernment will be less complicated... if together we obey the Holy Spirit!” (*Homily at the Vigil of Pentecost with Movements, Associations and New Communities*, 7 June 2025).

As I wholeheartedly add my personal good wishes to those of the Holy Father, I avail myself of the circumstance to confirm my distinguished respect to Your Reverend Excellency.

Yours faithfully,
Pietro Cardinal Parolin
Secretary of State

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