



The Holy See

Dear brothers and sisters,

With great joy I extend my cordial greetings to all of you, Representatives of other Churches and Ecclesial Communities, as well as of other religions, who participated in the inaugural celebration of my ministry as Bishop of Rome and Successor of Peter. I express fraternal affection to His All Holiness Bartholomew, His Beatitude Theophilos III and His Holiness Mar Awa III, and to each of you I am deeply grateful for your presence and prayers, which are a great comfort and encouragement.

One of the strong emphases of Pope [Francis](#)' pontificate was that of universal fraternity. In this regard the Holy Spirit really "urged" him to advance with great strides the initiatives already undertaken by previous Pontiffs, especially since Saint [John XXIII](#). The Pope of [Fratelli Tutti](#) promoted both the ecumenical path and interreligious dialogue. He did so above all by cultivating interpersonal relations, in such a way that, without taking anything away from ecclesial bonds, the human trait of the encounter was always valued. May God help us to treasure his witness!

My election has taken place during the year of the 1700th anniversary of the First Ecumenical Council of Nicaea. That Council represents a milestone in the formulation of the Creed shared by all Churches and Ecclesial Communities. While we are on the journey to re-establishing full communion among all Christians, we recognise that this unity can only be unity in faith. As Bishop of Rome, I consider one of my priorities to be that of seeking the re-establishment of full and visible communion among all those who profess the same faith in God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Indeed, unity has always been a constant concern of mine, as witnessed by the motto I chose for my episcopal ministry: *In Illo uno unum*, an expression of Saint Augustine of Hippo that reminds us how we too, although we are many, "in the One — that is Christ — we are one" (*Enarr. in Ps.*, 127, 3). What is more, our communion is realised to the extent that we meet in the Lord Jesus. The more faithful and obedient we are to him, the more united we are among ourselves. We Christians, then, are all called to pray and work together to reach this goal, step by step, which is and remains the work of the Holy Spirit.

Aware, moreover, that synodality and ecumenism are closely linked, I would like to assure you of my intention to continue Pope [Francis](#)' commitment to promoting the synodal nature of the Catholic Church and developing new and concrete forms for an ever stronger synodality in ecumenical relations.

Our common path can and must also be understood in the broad sense of involving everyone, in the spirit of human fraternity that I mentioned above. Now is the time for dialogue and building bridges. I am therefore pleased and grateful for the presence of representatives of other religious traditions, who share the search for God and his will, which is always and only the will of love and life for men and women and for all creatures.

You have witnessed the remarkable efforts made by Pope [Francis](#) in favour of interreligious dialogue. Through his words and actions, he opened new avenues of encounter, to promote "the culture of dialogue as the path; mutual collaboration as the code of conduct; reciprocal understanding as the method and standard" ([*A Document on Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together*](#), Abu Dhabi, 4 February 2019). I thank the [Dicastery for Interreligious Dialogue](#) for the essential role it plays in this patient work of encouraging meetings and concrete exchanges aimed at building relationships based on human fraternity.

In a special way I greet our Jewish and Muslim brothers and sisters. Because of the Jewish roots of Christianity, all Christians have a special relationship with Judaism. The conciliar Declaration [*Nostra Aetate*](#) (no. 4) emphasises the greatness of the spiritual heritage shared by Christians and Jews, encouraging mutual knowledge and esteem. The theological dialogue between Christians and Jews remains ever important and close to my heart. Even in these difficult times, marked by conflicts and misunderstandings, it is necessary to continue the momentum of this precious dialogue of ours.

Relations between the Catholic Church and Muslims have been marked by a growing commitment to dialogue and fraternity, fostered by esteem for these our brothers and sisters who "worship God, who is one, living and subsistent, merciful and almighty, the Creator of heaven and earth, who has also spoken to humanity" ([*ibid.*](#), 3). This approach, based on mutual respect and freedom of conscience, is a solid foundation for building bridges between our communities.

To all of you, representatives of other religious traditions, I express my gratitude for your participation in this meeting and for your contribution to peace. In a world wounded by violence and conflict, each of the communities represented here brings its own contribution of wisdom, compassion and commitment to the good of humanity and the preservation of our common home. I am convinced that if we are in agreement, and free from ideological and political conditioning, we can be effective in saying "no" to war and "yes" to peace, "no" to the arms race and "yes" to disarmament, "no" to an economy that impoverishes peoples and the Earth and "yes" to integral development.

The witness of our fraternity, which I hope we will be able to show with effective gestures, will certainly contribute to building a more peaceful world, something that all men and women of good will desire in their hearts.

Dear friends, thank you again for your closeness. Let us ask for God's blessing in our hearts: may his infinite goodness and wisdom help us to live as his children and as brothers and sisters to each other, so that hope may grow in the world. I offer you my heartfelt gratitude.