

HOLY SEE PRESS OFFICE
OFICINA DE PRENSA DE LA SANTA SEDE



BUREAU DE PRESSE DU SAINT-SIEGE
PRESSEAMT DES HEILIGEN STUHLS

BOLLETTINO

SALA STAMPA DELLA SANTA SEDE

N. 210204b

Thursday 04.02.2021

Words of the Holy Father on the occasion of the celebration for the first International Day of Human Fraternity and the presentation of the winners of the first Zayed Prize 2021 for Human Fraternity

Pope Francis celebrated the first International Day of Human Fraternity in a virtual meeting organised by Sheikh Mohammed Bin Zayed in Abu Dhabi, capital of the United Arab Emirates, with the participation of the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar, Ahmad Al-Tayyeb, the secretary general of the High Committee for Human Fraternity, Judge Mohamed Mahmoud Abdel Salam, the secretary general of the United Nations, António Guterres, and other figures.

The date was instituted by the General Assembly of the United Nations and coincides with the anniversary of the meeting in Abu Dhabi on 4 February 2019, when the Pope and the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar signed the “Document on Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together”.

During the event, the winners of the first Zayed Prize, inspired by the Document on Human Fraternity, was presented.

The following are the Holy Father’s words, pronounced during the Meeting:

Words of the Holy Father

Sisters and Brothers. This is the word: sisters and brothers. To affirm fraternity.

In a special way, to you, my brother, my friend, my companion of challenges and risks in the struggle for fraternity, Grand Imam Ahmed Al-Tayyib, whom I thank for his company in the journey of reflection and drafting of the document that was presented two years ago. His witness helped me a great deal because it was a courageous testimony. I know that it was not an easy task. But with you we were able to do it together, and to mutually help one another. The most beautiful thing is that that first desire for fraternity was consolidated in true fraternity. Thank you, brother, thank you!

I would also like to thank His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed for all the effort he put forth so that we could proceed in this journey. He believed in the project. He believed in it. And I think it is also right to thank — if you, Honourable Judge, will allow me the term — the “enfant terrible” of this entire project, Judge Abdel Salam, friend, worker, full of ideas, who helped us to make progress.

Thanks to everyone for having bet on fraternity, because today fraternity is humanity’s new frontier. Either we are brothers and sisters or we destroy each other.

Today there is no time for indifference. We cannot wash our hands of it, with distance, with disregard, with disinterest. Either we are fratelli — if I may — or everything collapses. It is the frontier. The frontier on which we have to build; it is the challenge of our century; it is the challenge of our times.

Fraternity means the hand outstretched; fraternity means respect. Fraternity means listening with an open heart. Fraternity means firmness in one’s convictions. Because there is no true fraternity if one’s convictions are negotiated.

We are brothers and sisters, born of one and the same Father. With different cultures and traditions, but brothers and sisters all. And it is in respect of our different cultures and traditions, of our different citizenships, that this fraternity needs to be built. Not by negotiating it.

It is the moment for listening. It is the moment for sincere acceptance. It is the moment for certainty that a world without brothers and sisters is a world of enemies. I wish to underscore it. We cannot say: either brothers or not brothers. Let us state it clearly: either brothers or enemies. Because disregard is a very subtle form of hostility. There is no need for war to make enemies. Disregard is enough. This technique suffices — it is transformed into a technique — it suffices with this attitude of looking the other way, not caring for the other, as if he or she did not exist.

Dear brother Grand Imam, thank you for your help. Thank you for your witness. Thank you for this journey that we have undertaken together.

I would like to congratulate the Secretary General of the United Nations for this award and thank him for all the efforts he has made for peace. A peace that can be obtained only with a fraternal heart. Thank you for what you do.

Dear sister, your last words were not said in order to be heard or for convention: “we are all brothers and sisters”. They are the conviction. And a conviction formed in the heart, in your wounds. You have spent your life for smiles; you have spent your life for non-resentment and, through the pain of losing a child — only a mother knows what it means to lose a child — through this pain you have the courage to say “we are brothers and sisters all” and to sow words of love. Thank you for your witness. And thank you for being mother to your son, to so many girls and boys; of being mother today to this humanity that is listening to you and learning from you: either the journey of fraternity, either brothers and sisters, or we lose everything.

Thank you, thank you!
