Office of the General Secretary

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MEMORANDUM

To: All Bishops

From: Reverend Monsignor Jeffrey D. Burrill, General Secretary

Date: February 1, 2021

Subject: International Day of Human Fraternity

Your Eminence / Your Excellency,

On behalf of Most Reverend José H. Gomez of Los Angeles, USCCB President, and by the request of Cardinal Miguel Ángel Ayuso Guixot, M. C. C. J., President, Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, I share with you information regarding the International Day of Human Fraternity.

Thank you for your kind attention to this memorandum.

PONTIFICIUM CONSILIUM
PRO
DIALOGO INTER RELIGIONES

From the Vatican, 1 February 2021

Dear Brother Bishop,

I am very pleased to be able to reach out to you in order to continue the journey of communication and communion begun with the promulgation of the encyclical *Fratelli tutti*.

I am writing to you now because, in December 2020, the General Assembly of the United Nations declared 4 February as the **International Day of Human Fraternity**.

For this reason, we thought it would be opportune to highlight this auspicious occasion. We wish to provide you with particularly pertinent selections from the encyclical *Fratelli tutti* (appendix 1); with information on the journey made in recent years, especially with the other Abrahamic religions (appendices 2-3); and with other materials that can help spread the message of fraternity so necessary in this world enveloped in common suffering (appendix 4).

To find all the available and updated information, you can visit the following site: www.HumanFraternityDay.org

The meeting will be broadcast in several languages from 2.30 p.m. (Rome time), 1.30 p.m. (GMT), on the Vatican News website.

Deepening, promoting and implementing *Fratelli tutti* helps to build up the unity of the Church. This year, because of the narrow window of time for preparation, we can celebrate the International Day of Human Fraternity in simple ways: with prayer, meditating beforehand on the title of the document, preaching about it, perhaps issuing a press release or accepting an interview invitation.

Looking ahead to 2022, however, we can foresee interesting initiatives for marking the International Day of Human Fraternity: making the contents of *Fratelli tutti* well known to presbyters, deacons, pastoral workers, and the lay faithful; engaging in fruitful exchanges with the Catholic and secular media; participating in ecumenical and interreligious dialogue; interacting with civil institutions and political figures - all these will display the intra-ecclesial communion and sacramental grace that binds us together and makes us one body *cum Petro* and *sub Petro* as we celebrate that "fraternity and social friendship" to which the Encyclical and the International Day of Human Fraternity call us.

Let us pray for one another, for the clergy, for the religious, for the faithful, and for all with whom we share this common home.

Devotedly yours in Christ,

✠ ***Card. Miguel Ángel Ayuso Guixot, M.C.C.J.***
President, Pontifical Council
for Interreligious Dialogue

To His Excellency

Appendix 1

Human Fraternity in *Fratelli tutti*

If the conviction that all human beings are brothers and sisters is not to remain an abstract idea but to find concrete embodiment, then numerous related issues emerge, forcing us to see things in a new light and to develop new responses (FT 128).

Without an openness to the Father of all, there will be no solid and stable reasons for an appeal to fraternity (FT 272). The human family [has the] innate vocation to fraternity (FT 26).

Fraternity is born not only of a climate of respect for individual liberties, or even of a certain administratively guaranteed equality. Fraternity necessarily calls for something greater, which in turn enhances freedom and equality (FT 103).

The process of building fraternity, be it local or universal, can only be undertaken by spirits that are free and open to authentic encounters (FT 50). Social friendship and universal fraternity necessarily call for an acknowledgement of the worth of every human person, always and everywhere (FT 106). Our love for others, for who they are, moves us to seek the best for their lives. Only by cultivating this way of relating to one another will we make possible a social friendship that excludes no one and a fraternity that is open to all (FT 94).

Every human being has the right to live with dignity and to develop integrally. Unless this basic principle is upheld, there will be no future either for fraternity or for the survival of humanity (FT 107). Justice is an essential condition for achieving the ideal of universal fraternity (FT 173).

Only when our economic and social system no longer produces even a single victim, a single person cast aside, will we be able to celebrate the feast of universal fraternity (FT 110).

One fundamental human right must not be forgotten in the journey towards fraternity and peace. It is religious freedom for believers of all religions (FT 279).

[There is] the need for a greater spirit of fraternity, but also a more efficient worldwide organization to help resolve the problems plaguing the abandoned who are suffering and dying in poor countries (FT 165).

Can there be an effective process of growth towards universal fraternity and social peace without a sound political life? (FT 176)

The Church has a public role over and above her charitable and educational activities .She works for the advancement of humanity and of universal fraternity (FT 276).

For us [Christians] the wellspring of human dignity and fraternity is in the Gospel of Jesus Christ. From it, there arises, for Christian thought and for the action of the Church, the primacy given to relationship, to the encounter with the sacred mystery of the other, to universal communion with the entire human family, as a vocation of all (FT 277).

For many Christians, this journey of fraternity also has a Mother, whose name is Mary (FT 278).

In my fraternal meeting, which I gladly recall, with the Grand Imam Ahmad Al-Tayyeb, "we resolutely [declared] that religions must never incite war, hateful attitudes, hostility and extremism, nor must they incite violence or the shedding of blood. These tragic realities are the consequence of a deviation from religious teachings. They result from a political manipulation of religions and from interpretations made by religious groups who, in the course of history, have taken advantage of the power of religious sentiment in the hearts of men and women… God, the Almighty, has no need to be defended by anyone and does not want his name to be used to terrorize people". For this reason I would like to reiterate here the appeal for peace, justice and fraternity that we made together: the *Document on Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together* (FT 285).

Appendix 2

Historical overview 2019-2021

On 4 February 2019, during the apostolic journey of His Holiness to the United Arab Emirates, Pope Francis and the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar (Cairo), Ahmad Al-Tayyeb (Egypt, 1946), signed the Document on Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together, also known as the Document on Human Fraternity.

In order to implement the Document, the Higher Committee on Human Fraternity (HCHF) was established on 20 August of the same year. There is a project to create an Abrahamic Family House, with a synagogue, a church, and a mosque, on Saadiyat Island, the cultural heart of Abu Dhabi in the United Arab Emirates.

The HCHF established the Zayed Award for Human Fraternity in honor of Sheikh Zayed, one of the UAE founders. The award committee consists of prominent personalities. In 2019 it was symbolically awarded first to Pope Francis and the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar Ahmad Al-Tayyeb. The 2021 Award will be presented on 4 February.

On 3 October 2020, in Assisi, Pope Francis signed Fratelli tutti, the Encyclical Letter on Fraternity and Social Friendship. "The present Encyclical takes up and develops some of the great themes raised in the Document that we both signed" (FT 5).

On 21 December 2020, the United Nations General Assembly declared 4 February as the International Day of Human Fraternity (IDHF), to be celebrated as each country sees fit.

On 4 February 2021, there will be a virtual celebration of the IDHF at Abu Dhabi with the participation of Pope Francis and Cardinal Ayuso Guixot, MCCJ, president of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue (PCID).

IDHF 2021

The Holy Father directed that the Holy See join in marking the IDHF as fully as possible, under the leadership of the PCID and in collaboration with the Dicastery for Communication.

Initiatives being prepared include a brief message about the International Day of Human Fraternity by the Holy Father at the General Audience of 3 February, communication materials such as a distinctive logo, a brief multi-lingual video, a poster, a brief summary of *Fratelli tutti* to highlight the Day, press materials, and an IDHF landing page on the PCID website.

IDHF 2022

Next year, when there is sufficient time to prepare, IDHF will be a good opportunity to deepen the Teaching of the encyclical *Fratelli tutti*, dedicated to fraternity and social friendship. The Holy See's contribution will be to facilitate the participation of the local Church in interreligious activities marking the IDHF, as well as coordination with the United Nations and with Al-Azhar University. I would be happy to receive your suggestions at humanfraternityday@interrel.va

Appendix 3

Press Release: International Day of Human Fraternity

Pope Francis to participate in its first celebration

The Holy Father will mark the International Day of Human Fraternity in a virtual meeting on 4 February, the date set by the United Nations General Assembly for this new annual occasion. He will do so together with the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar, Ahmad Al-Tayyeb. The event will be held in Abu Dhabi, in the presence of the Sheikh Mohammed Bin Zayed.

(Vatican City – 1 February 2021) - Pope Francis will celebrate the International Day of Human Fraternity on Thursday 4 February in a virtual event hosted 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; Secretary General António Guterres of the United Nations; and other personalities.

On the same occasion, the Zayed Award for Human Fraternity, which is inspired by the Human Fraternity Document, will be awarded. The meeting and the award ceremony will be streamed in several languages starting at 14:30 (Rome time) 13.30 (GMT time) by Vatican News, the multimedia information portal of the Holy See, and broadcast by Vatican Media.

"This celebration responds to a clear call that Pope Francis has been making to all humanity to build a present of peace in the encounter with the other," stressed Cardinal Miguel Ángel Ayuso Guixot MCCJ, President of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue. "In October 2020, that invitation became even more vivid with the Encyclical Fratelli tutti. These meetings are a way to achieve true social friendship, as the Holy Father asks of us," he added.

The date is no coincidence. On 4 February 2019, during an apostolic journey the Pope made to the United Arab Emirates, together with the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar (Cairo), Ahmad Al-Tayyeb, they signed the Document on human fraternity for world peace and living together. His Holiness the Pope and the Grand Imam spent almost half a year drafting this Document until they announced it together during such a historic visit

A few months later the Higher Committee of Human Fraternity was established to translate the aspirations of the Human Fraternity Document into sustained engagements and concrete actions to foster fraternity, solidarity, respect and mutual understanding. The Higher Committee is planning an Abrahamic Family House, with a synagogue, a church and a mosque, on Saadiyat Island, Abu Dhabi. It established an independent jury to receive nominations for the Zayed Award for Human Fraternity and choose winners whose work demonstrates a lifelong commitment to human fraternity. The 2021 prize will be awarded on 4 February.

On 21 December 2020, the United Nations General Assembly unanimously declared 4 February as International Day of Human Fraternity. "In this decisive phase of human history, we are at a crossroads: on the one hand, universal fraternity in which humanity rejoices, and on the other, an acute misery that will increase the suffering and deprivation of people,"[1] Judge Mohamed Mahmoud Abdel Salam, secretary general of the High Committee of Human Fraternity, underlined during his presentation of the encyclical Fratelli tutti on 4 October 2020.

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[1] SALA STAMPA DELLA SANTA SEDE, Conference on the Encyclical Letter "Fratelli tutti" of the Holy Father Francis on fraternity and social friendship, 04.10.2020
https://press.vatican.va/content/salastampa/en/bollettino/pubblico/2020/10/04/201004a.html

Pope Francis has encouraged the Holy See to join in the celebration of International Human Fraternity Day under the leadership of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue. In the January edition of the Pope's Video, "At the service of human fraternity," the Holy Father highlights the importance of focusing on what is essential to the faith of all faiths: worship of God and love of neighbour. "Fraternity leads us to open ourselves to the Father of all and to see in the other a brother, a sister, to share life, or to support one another, to love, to know," Pope Francis emphasises in the video.

About the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue

The Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue was instituted in 1964 by Pope Paul VI with the aim of working on relations and dialogue between the Catholic Church and the faithful of other religions.
It is currently chaired by Cardinal Miguel Ángel Ayuso Guixot, MCCJ. Among its main activities, it collaborates with bishops and episcopal conferences on matters related to interreligious dialogue; it holds meetings, visits and conferences with leaders of other religions; and it publishes various materials to promote dialogue between different faiths. More information here.

About the Higher Committee of Human Fraternity

The Higher Committee of Human Fraternity is made up of different international religious leaders, scholars and cultural leaders who were inspired by the 2019 Document on human fraternity for world peace and living together and are dedicated to sharing its message of mutual understanding and peace. Their main work is to act concretely according to the aspirations of the Document on Human Fraternity and to spread the values of mutual respect and peaceful coexistence. The Secretary General of the Higher Committee of Human Fraternity is Judge Mohamed Mahmoud Abdel Salam. More information here.

Appendix 4

→ Download the IDHF logo, poster and video here.

1. Logo:

2. Video: Download here

3. Poster:

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national
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4 FEBRUARY
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