

Distinguished religious and civil leaders,
Ladies and Gentlemen,
Al Salam Alaikum! Peace be with you!

Celebrating the first anniversary of the signing of the *Document on Human Fraternity* represents for me, and for all of us, an opportunity to renew a commitment and a mutual promise: the commitment to always be instruments of peace, even – or perhaps above all – in the way in which we communicate; the promise to continue without hesitation on the path undertaken.

First of all I want to express my gratitude to the Muslim Council of Elders for having organized this Convention on a shared vision of human fraternity in the media world. We all know how important is, as the secretary general of the Muslim Council of Elders said, to develop a vision of media policy based on human fraternity and peaceful coexistence.

I'm also grateful to the Higher Committee for the implementation of the *Document on Human Fraternity*, which since last August has continuously promoted the achievement of the Abu Dhabi declaration goals.

We are all aware, on the one hand, of how important are the means of communication and communication itself, generally speaking, in building universal fraternity, and how, on the contrary, they may be the means to continue fomenting misunderstandings, resentments, enmity, which have until now made an unfortunate tangled mess of our present and have threatened our future.

For these reasons, the Holy See's Dicastery for Communication has dedicated and continues to dedicate its energies toward making the principles of the *Declaration on Human Fraternity* known to everyone, and of course to our Catholic readers.

At this regard I want to share with you some data.

The Apostolic Journey to Abu Dhabi was one of the major moments in which Pope Francis' captured people's attention world-wide.

Vatican communications registered spikes in its own visibility and reached new audiences. This graphic demonstrates the sharp increase at the beginning of February in those following our Global Facebook Page).

As is always the case during an Apostolic Journey, the Dicastery concentrated considerable energy toward producing not only textual content, but video content as well.

In particular, the conference on Human Fraternity was followed live through the web portal, YouTube Channel and Facebook Page.

The live streaming of the event was visualized (in the original sound version as well as in the version with simultaneous translation in the 6 main languages and in Arabic) 163,000 times on YouTube, and an additional 400,000 times on Facebook on the English, Spanish and Portuguese pages.

The post on the English page regarding the live event reached one million users.

Moreover, in addition to the live broadcasts, which were followed by the highest number of people and received the greatest coverage, the articles that appeared on Vatican News and in *L'Osservatore Romano* (the Holy See's newspaper) have contributed to the narrative surrounding the Conference and the entire journey, and covered all that subsequently happened throughout the course of 2019 until now, with special regard to the work of the Higher Committee.

The core of the journalistic work produced by Vatican News is our website published in 35 languages. Themes associated with the *Document on Human Fraternity* were continually published throughout last year. Taking into consideration only the 6 principle languages plus Arabic, there were 350 articles published (41 in Arabic, 29 in French, 43 in Italian, 40 in English, 85 in Portuguese, 48 in Spanish, 63 in German).

To this can be added the audio productions from Vatican Radio broadcasted in areas where the respective language is predominant.

The visit in itself and, in particular, the moment when the Document was signed, were among the moments that received the most attention on the Vatican News social networks: we had a spike in interactions on Twitter recorded from January (World Youth Day in Panama) to the beginning of February (Abu Dhabi).

From February 2019 till today every language program has covered the theme "Human Fraternity" with an average of 20 posts per language on Facebook. A third of these posts were posted during Pope Francis' visit to the United Arab Emirates; the others were posted throughout the succeeding months, as the process of promoting the Document unfolded: the creation of the Higher Committee (19 August), the first two meetings (11 and 20 September), up until the joint proposal to the UN (5 December) to propose that a World Day of Human Fraternity be introduced.

The highest amount of attention to the Holy Father's words came from social media users on his official social media accounts: the tweets posted on @Pontifex during his visit were read by more than 7 million users in English, 5.5 million in Spanish and about a million in Portuguese and Italian.

A photo gallery was created on the Instagram account @Franciscus and reached 1.8 million users.

It also needs to be said that the Holy Father has also been personally promoting awareness of the *Document on Human Fraternity*, given that everywhere he goes, he gives it as a gift.

Finally, agreements are underway for some television productions that the Dicastery intends to promote together with external partners in order to communicate the principles of the *Document* not only as information, but as true training for dialogue and mutual knowledge, and to have it as a guideline in our daily work.

It is the same *Document*, signed last year, that asks us to take up this common responsibility; in the name of the truth, in the name of what we believe in; in the name of our belief in the transcendent, the absolute, the sacred. It asks us to work together, as people of good will, so that

the digital era, the era of the mass media, the era of communication might lead us to the culture of mutual respect.

The *Document* is a bridge that we are all called to cross. It can be a long way, it can require time, but it is the right one.

But there is a road that lies beyond the bridge that needs to be indicated so that the way can be understood and undertaken.

The *Document* sketches a possible storyline, a story not yet written. We are the ones who need to live and to tell that story, building a better future through mutual knowledge.

Good will is what we need above all.

The world's religions have an educational task: to draw out the best from each person.¹ Religions are not the problem. They are part of the solution because they can remind us that it is necessary to raise the heart upwards to the Most High to learn how to build the city of man.²

Every communicator (regardless of his or her own religious beliefs) needs to personally feel constantly called to this task, concretizing the spirit of the document on human fraternity. As Pope Francis strongly affirmed: the means of communication and communication itself have to be constructive, instead of destructive; means for bringing people together instead of keeping people apart; means of dialogue instead of monologue; means providing orientation instead of disorientation; means promoting understanding instead of misunderstanding; means for walking in peace rather than disseminating hate.

Evil cannot be fought with evil. Truth cannot be served with misinformation. It is also up to communicators to spread this culture, this awareness, this mutual understanding. Removing the false necessity of controversy, the false imperative that one's identity depends on having an enemy, also depends on communicators. We need to unmask how false is the dilemma between repudiating oneself and repudiating others. Ours is the task of guarding and handing on the values of peace, justice, the common good, beauty, human fraternity. We need to understand that fraternity requires courage as well as the acceptance of otherness, in diversity, recognizing the fact that although we are different we are brothers and sisters.

We communicators need to say that a person can remain him or herself while at the same time recognizing another person as a brother or sister, a companion on the way, one with whom – notwithstanding diversity – many things are shared – many more than we are often aware of.

There is a “No” that must be said to violence, terrorism, fanaticism, corruption, discrimination. We have to say no to the use of religion to incite hatred, violence, extremism, blind fanaticism, or to justify acts of murder, terrorism, oppression.

¹ Cf. Pope Francis, *International Meeting with the Sheikh and with the Representatives of the Different Religious Communities of Azerbaijan* (2 October 2016).

² Cf. *Address of His Holiness Pope Francis to the Participants in the International Peace Conference* (28 April 2017).

And there is a “Yes” that must be said to the protection of creation, to an equitable distribution of resources, to the care of life from its conception to natural death, to the family as the fundamental nucleus of society, to liberty as a gift of God.

There are thousands of stories of good needing to be told.

Freedom of worship as well as religious freedom need to be defended.

In addition, the concept of citizenship has to include both duties and rights for both men and women, adults and children, and the elderly.

As Pope Francis wrote in his *Message for the 54th World Day of Social Communications*, to understand this we need to “rediscover stories that help us not to lose the thread amid today’s many troubles. We need stories that reveal who we truly are”.

To accomplish this, all the means of information in the Vatican are constantly dedicated to implement in all we do as communicators the process that the *Document* initiated.

Talking about fraternity is the best way to reconstruct the fabric of the consciousness of the unity of humanity and to build a peaceful future.

Exposing the short sightedness and unraveling the lie that hate is the best tactic in making sure that the same errors are not committed again.

The world is thirsty for peace, truth and justice.

“Amid the cacophony of voices and messages that surround us, we need a human story that can speak of ourselves and of the beauty all around us. A narrative that can regard our world and its happenings with a tender gaze. A narrative that can tell us that we are part of a living and interconnected tapestry. A narrative that can reveal the interweaving of the threads which connect us to one another.”³

This truth invigorates the activity of all those who today work in the Holy See’s Dicastery for Communication and in the Catholic Church.

Every day they weave the torn tapestry of fraternity. They come from all parts of the world, they speak all the world’s languages, but they are united by the same awareness, the same perseverance in spreading, through every means, the culture of tolerance and peaceful co-existence.

Thus, today, we are happy to be here with you to reiterate our commitment.

Together we can offer a great service toward peace and fraternity.

³ Pope Francis, *Message for the 54th World Day of Social Communications*.