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Vatican Media Screenshot

Abu Dhabi: Pope Francis Brings Appeal for Peace, Dialogue, Religious Freedom

‘True religious piety consists in loving God with all one’s heart and one’s neighbor as oneself’

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Pope Francis on February 4, 2019, brought a fervent appeal for peace, dialogue, and religious freedom to the Global Conference on Human Fraternity being held in Abu Dhabi. It was a dramatic moment in the Holy Father's February 3-5 apostolic journey to the United Arab Emirates that [included a lengthy speech](#), as well as the signing of the Document on ["Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together"](#) by Francis and the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar.

In his speech, Pope Francis emphasized that "no violence can be justified in the name of religion." And he referred to the long-ago meeting of a Saint and Sultan:

"With a heart grateful to the Lord, in this eighth centenary of the meeting between Saint Francis of Assisi and Sultan al-Malik al Kāmil, I have welcomed the opportunity to come here as a believer thirsting for peace, as a brother seeking peace with the brethren. We are here to desire peace, to promote peace, to be instruments of peace."

The Holy Father drew a distinction between "fraternity" and "individualism," which can encourage a desire to put "oneself and one's group above others."

"True religious piety consists in loving God with all one's heart and one's neighbor as oneself," the Pope explained. "Religious behavior, therefore, needs continually to be purified from the recurrent temptation to judge others as enemies and adversaries. Each belief system is called to overcome the divide between friends and enemies, in order to take up the perspective of heaven, which embraces persons without privilege or discrimination."

Freedom of religion goes beyond "freedom of worship" and involves seeing others truly as brothers and sisters, the Holy Father continued. Calling for "courage of dialogue" that he said is the "heart of dialogue" he said this is essential for the future.

"There is no alternative: we will either build the future together or there will not be a future," the Pope warned. "Religions, in particular, cannot renounce the urgent task of building bridges between peoples and cultures. The time has come when religions should more actively exert themselves, with courage and audacity, and without pretense, to help the human family deepen the capacity for reconciliation, the vision of hope and the concrete paths of peace."

“I look forward to societies where people of different beliefs have the same right of citizenship and where only in the case of violence in any of its forms is that right removed.”

The Holy Father concluded with an appeal to ending war, which he said should be returned to its “miserable crudeness. In particular, he cited the conflicts in Yemen, Syria, Iraq, and Libya.



Document on [“Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together”](#) reflected the Pope’s many themes and stressed the following points:

- The firm conviction that authentic teachings of religions invite us to remain rooted in the values of peace;
- Freedom is a right of every person;
- Justice based on mercy is the path to follow in order to achieve a dignified life to which every human being has a right;
- Dialogue, understanding and the widespread promotion of a culture of tolerance, acceptance of others and of living together peacefully would contribute significantly to reducing many economic, social, political and environmental problems that weigh so heavily on a large part of humanity;
- Dialogue among believers means coming together in the vast space of spiritual, human and shared social values and, from here, transmitting the highest moral virtues that religions aim for. It also means avoiding unproductive discussions;
- The protection of places of worship – synagogues, churches, and mosques – is a duty guaranteed by religions, human values, laws, and international agreements. Every attempt to attack places of worship or threaten them by violent assaults, bombings or destruction, is a deviation from the teachings of religions as well as a clear violation of international law;

- Terrorism is deplorable and threatens the security of people, be they in the East or the West, the North or the South, and disseminates panic, terror and pessimism, but this is not due to religion, even when terrorists instrumentalize it;
- The concept of citizenship is based on the equality of rights and duties, under which all enjoy justice;
- Good relations between East and West are indisputably necessary for both;
- It is an essential requirement to recognize the right of women to education and employment and to recognize their freedom to exercise their own political rights;
- The protection of the fundamental rights of children to grow up in a family environment, to receive nutrition, education, and support, are duties of the family and society;
- The protection of the rights of the elderly, the weak, the disabled, and the oppressed is a religious and social obligation that must be guaranteed and defended through strict legislation and the implementation of the relevant international agreements.

[The Holy Father's Full Address](#)

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