



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS
TO THE STUDENTS OF THE "THEOLOGISCHES STUDIENJAHR"
OF THE ABBEY OF THE DORMITION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY IN JERUSALEM**

*Clementine Hall
Friday, 18 December 2020*

[Multimedia]

Dear friends, good morning!

I am pleased to welcome all of you, students and leaders of the *Theologisches Studienjahr* of the Abbey of the Dormition of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Jerusalem. Due to the current pandemic, this year, for the first time, the study programme cannot take place in the Holy Land, but is hosted at the Pontifical Athenaeum Sant'Anselmo in Rome. In this way, divine providence has granted us this opportunity to meet in the Vatican.

The *Studienjahr* is an opportunity for Catholic and Protestant theology students to get to know the biblical sites and to encounter the Eastern Churches, as well as the Jewish and Islamic worlds. Even if you cannot experience the Holy Land this year, being almost in "exile" - as Father Schnabel defines it - the in-depth study of sacred scripture, ecumenism and interreligious dialogue will always remain a distinctive feature of your programme. I am convinced that Rome too will offer you various possibilities in this regard.

As young people studying theology, you are witnesses for your peers and for the men and women of today to the importance of God in their lives and to the fullness which a lived faith brings. It will be your task to enter into dialogue with a world where there seems to be ever less space for religion. A task that we share with all believers of the different religions, knowing that making God present is good for our societies. We are convinced that religions make a valuable contribution to

building fraternity and defending justice in society. On the other hand, we believe that when, for various reasons, people want to exclude God from society, they end up worshipping idols, and man soon loses himself (cf. Encyclical *Fratelli tutti* 271; 274).

I hope that this *Theologisches Studienjahr* will be an important stage in your formative, spiritual and human journey, and that after this "exile" you will soon have the opportunity to get to know the "promised land", the holy places of the Bible. As we celebrate Holy Christmas in a week's time, we will all be pilgrims in spirit at the cave in Bethlehem. May the Emmanuel fill you with His joy and peace, and make you true witnesses of God-with-us. May the Lord bless and keep you and all your loved ones. And please do not forget to pray for me.

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