



The Holy See

INAUGURATION OF THE “FAITH PAVILION”

GREETING OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS

Expo City (Dubai)

Sunday, 3 December 2023

[[Multimedia](#)]

I have the honour to read the Greeting that His Holiness Pope Francis prepared for this occasion:

Your Highness,
Mr Secretary-General,
Dear brothers and sisters!

I would like to thank Dr Ahmad Al-Tayyeb, Grand Imam of Al-Azhar, who has assured me of his closeness, the Muslim Council of Elders, whom I met a year ago, the United Nations Environment Programme, and all the partners who organized and supported this Faith Pavilion. It is the first of its kind at the heart of a COP, and it shows that all authentic religious beliefs are a source of *encounter* and *action*.

Above all, *encounter*. It is important to see ourselves, beyond our differences, as brothers and sisters in the one human family, and, as believers, to remind ourselves and the world that, as sojourners on this earth, we have a duty to protect our common home. Religions, as voices of conscience for humanity, remind us that we are finite creatures, possessed of a need for the infinite. For we are indeed mortal, we have our limits, and protecting life also entails opposing the rapacious illusion of omnipotence that is devastating our planet. That insatiable desire for power wells up whenever we consider ourselves lords of the world, whenever we live as though God did

not exist and, as a result, end up prey to passing things. Then, instead of mastering technology, we let technology master us. We become mere commodities, desensitized, incapable of sorrow and compassion, self-absorbed and, turning our backs on morality and prudence, we destroy the very sources of life. That is why the problem of climate change is also a religious problem: its roots lie in the creature's presumption of self-sufficiency. Yet "without the Creator the creature disappears" (*Gaudium et Spes*, 36). May this Pavilion, for its part, become a place of encounter and may religions always be "welcoming spaces" that witness to our need for the transcendent, speak of fraternity, respect and mutual care, and refuse to justify in any way the mistreatment of creation (cf. *Document on Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together*, Abu Dhabi, 4 February 2019).

This brings us to the other central theme of this Pavilion and, indeed, of all religious belief: *action*. We need, urgently, to act for the sake of the environment. It is not enough merely to increase spending: we need to change our way of life and thus *educate everyone to sober and fraternal lifestyles*. This is an essential obligation for religions, which are called to teach *contemplation*, since creation is not only an ecosystem to preserve, but also a gift to embrace. A world poor in contemplation will be a world polluted in soul, a world that will continue to discard people and produce waste. A world that lacks prayer will speak many words but, bereft of compassion and tears, will only live off a materialism made of money and weapons.

We recognize the extent to which peace and the stewardship of creation are interdependent. Before our very eyes, we can see how wars and conflicts are harming the environment and dividing nations, hindering a common commitment to addressing shared problems like the protection of the planet. A home is only livable when a climate of peace reigns within. So it is for our earth, whose very soil seems to add its voice to those of the children and the poor who cry out to heaven pleading for peace! Peacekeeping is also a task for the religions. Please, let there be no inconsistency in this regard. May our actions not contradict the words we speak; may we not merely speak about peace, but take a stand against those who claim to be believers yet fuel hatred and do not oppose violence. Here I think of the words of Francis of Assisi: "As you proclaim peace with your lips, make sure that a greater peace is in your hearts" (*The Legend of the Three Companions*, XIV, 5: FF 1469). Brothers and sisters, may the Most High bless our hearts, so that we may be, together, builders of peace and guardians of creation. Thank you.