

HOLY SEE PRESS OFFICE
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BOLLETTINO

SALA STAMPA DELLA SANTA SEDE

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Apostolic Trip of Pope Francis to the United Arab Emirates (3 to 5 February 2019) – Departure from Rome, Telegrams to Heads of State during the flight from Rome to Abu Dhabi, and Official Welcome at the Abu Dhabi Presidential Airport

Departure from Rome

Telegram to the President of the Italian Republic

Telegrams to Heads of State during the flight from Rome to Abu Dhabi

Official Welcome at the Abu Dhabi Presidential Airport

Departure from Rome

This morning, after the recitation of the Angelus prayer, the Holy Father Francis departed for his 27th Apostolic Trip, this time to the United Arab Emirates.

Before reciting the Marian prayer, at Santa Marta, the Pope met a group of a dozen people from various Middle Eastern countries, Christians and Muslims, received by the Apostolic Almoner and the Sant'Egidio Community.

Upon arrival at Fiumicino, the Holy Father visited the structure used for the assistance of homeless people provided by the Airports of Rome. It forms part of the project “Lives in transit, the human face of an airport”, and ensures support to the homeless who seek shelter at Fiumicino Airport. Initiated in 2017, by means of a Memorandum of Understanding the project involves the Airports of Rome, Caritas of the diocese of Porto-Santa Rufina and the airport parish, and provides the possibility of assistance to the homeless in the airport.

The Pope then boarded an Alitalia B777, which departed from Rome-Fiumicino Airport at 13.27. The aircraft landed at the Abu Dhabi Presidential Airport at 21.55 (18.55 in Rome).

Telegram to the President of the Italian Republic

At the moment of leaving Italian territory, the Holy Father Francis sent the following telegram to the President of the Italian Republic, Hon. Sergio Mattarella:

HIS EXCELLENCY
HON. SERGIO MATTARELLA
PRESIDENT OF THE ITALIAN REPUBLIC
QUIRINAL PALACE 00187 ROME

AS I LEAVE ROME DESTINED FOR THE UNITED ARAB EMIRATES, AS A PILGRIM OF PEACE AND FRATERNITY AMONG PEOPLES, I WISH TO ADDRESS TO YOU, MR. PRESIDENT, MY RESPECTFUL GREETING, WHICH I ACCOMPANY WITH SINCERE WISHES FOR THE GOOD OF THE DEAR ITALIAN POPULATION, TO WHOM I GLADLY SEND MY APOSTOLIC BLESSING.

FRANCISCUS PP.

Telegrams to Heads of State during the flight from Rome to Abu Dhabi

During the flight to Abu Dhabi, while flying over Malta, Greece, Egypt, Saudi Arabia and finally Bahrain, the Holy Father Francis sent the following telegrams to the respective Heads of State:

Overflight Malta

HER EXCELLENCY MARIE-LOUISE COLEIRO PRECA
PRESIDENT OF MALTA
VALLETTA

AS I FLY OVER MALTA ON MY WAY TO THE UNITED ARAB EMIRATES FOR A PASTORAL VISIT, I SEND CORDIAL GREETINGS TO YOUR EXCELLENCY AND YOUR FELLOW CITIZENS. I PRAY THAT ALMIGHTY GOD MAY BLESS YOU ALL WITH PEACE AND STRENGTH, AS I INVOKE DIVINE BLESSINGS UPON THE NATION.

FRANCISCUS PP.

Overflight Grecia

HIS EXCELLENCY PROKOPIS PAVLOPOULOS
PRESIDENT OF THE HELLENIC REPUBLIC
ATHENS

I EXTEND CORDIAL GREETINGS TO YOUR EXCELLENCY AND THE PEOPLE OF GREECE AS I FLY OVER YOUR COUNTRY ON MY WAY TO THE UNITED ARAB EMIRATES FOR A PASTORAL VISIT. INVOKING THE BLESSING OF ALMIGHTY GOD UPON THE NATION, I PRAY THAT HE MAY GRANT YOU ALL PEACE AND WELL-BEING.

FRANCISCUS PP.

Overflight Egypt

HIS EXCELLENCY ABDEL FATTAH AL-SISI
PRESIDENT OF THE ARAB REPUBLIC OF EGYPT
CAIRO

I EXTEND CORDIAL GREETINGS TO YOUR EXCELLENCY AND THE PEOPLE OF EGYPT AS I FLY OVER YOUR COUNTRY ON MY WAY TO THE UNITED ARAB EMIRATES FOR A PASTORAL VISIT. INVOKING THE BLESSING OF THE ALMIGHTY UPON THE NATION, I PRAY THAT HE MAY GRANT YOU ALL PEACE AND JOY.

FRANCISCUS PP.

Overflight Saudi Arabia

HIS MAJESTY SALMAN BIN ABDUL AZIZ AL-SAUD
KING OF SAUDI ARABIA
RIYADH

I OFFER BEST WISHES AND THE ASSURANCE OF MY PRAYERS AS MY JOURNEY TO THE UNITED ARAB EMIRATES TAKES ME OVER SAUDI ARABIA. ENTRUSTING YOUR MAJESTY AND THE PEOPLE OF SAUDI ARABIA TO THE ALMIGHTY, I WILLINGLY INVOKE UPON YOU THE BLESSINGS OF JOY AND PEACE.

FRANCISCUS PP.

Overflight Bahrain

HIS MAJESTY SHEIKH HAMAD BIN ISA AL-KHALIFA
KING OF BAHRAIN
MANAMA

I EXTEND CORDIAL GREETINGS TO YOUR MAJESTY AND THE PEOPLE OF BAHRAIN AS I FLY THROUGH YOUR AIRSPACE ON MY WAY TO THE UNITED ARAB EMIRATES FOR A PASTORAL VISIT. INVOKING THE BLESSING OF THE ALMIGHTY UPON THE NATION, I PRAY THAT HE MAY GRANT YOU ALL PEACE AND WELL-BEING.

FRANCISCUS PP.

Official Welcome at the Abu Dhabi Presidential Airport

Upon arrival at the Abu Dhabi Presidential Airport at 21.55 local time (18.55 in Rome), the Holy Father Francis was received at the entrance to the passenger boarding bridge by the Crown Prince His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan. A boy and a girl in traditional dress presented a floral tribute to the Pope. The Holy Father and the Crown Prince then walked past the Guard of Honour and greeted the respective delegations. The Holy Father then greeted the Grand Imam of al-Azhar Ahmad al-Tayyib and transferred with him to the Al Mushrif Palace.
