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Words of the Holy Father during the Holy Mass at the Casa Santa Marta

This morning, as usual, the Holy Father Francis celebrated Holy Mass at the Casa Santa Marta. Today the Pope did not pronounce a homily, but gave a brief explanation of the meaning of the day's celebration. The Patriarch of the Church of Antioch of the Greek Melkites, Youssef Absi, concelebrated with the Holy Father. At the end of the Holy Mass, the Patriarch thanked the Holy Father in French, and upon invitation by the Pope, they imparted the final blessing together.

The following are the Holy Father's brief words during the Mass, and the Patriarch's words of thanks to the Pope.

Words of the Holy Father

This Mass with our brother, Patriarch Youssef, will be the *apostolica communio*: he is the father of a Church, of an ancient Church, and he comes to embrace Peter, to say "I am in communion with Peter". This is what today's ceremony means: the embrace of the father of a Church with Peter. A rich Church, with its own theology within Catholic theology, with its own wonderful liturgy and with a people; at this time, a great part of these people are crucified, like Jesus. We offer this Mass for the people, for the suffering people, for the Christians persecuted in the Middle East, who give their lives, their belongings, their homes, because they are driven away. And we also offer Mass for the ministry of our brother Youssef.

The Patriarch's words of thanks to the Holy Father

Holiness,

I would like to thank you for this beautiful Mass of communion, on behalf of the whole Synod of our Greek-Melkite Catholic Church. Personally, I am truly moved by your fraternal charity, by the gestures of fraternity and of solidarity that you have shown to our Church during this Mass. We promise to keep it always in our hearts, in the heart of us all, clergy and faithful, and we will always remember this event, these historical moments, this moment that I cannot describe, as it is so beautiful: this fraternity, this communion that binds all the disciples of Christ. Thank you, Holiness.