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## Message of the Holy Father Francis for the opening in Brazil of the Campaign for Fraternity 2018

The following is the text of the Message sent by the Holy Father Francis to His Eminence Cardinal Sérgio da Rocha, archbishop of Brasilia and president of the National Conference of Bishops of Brazil (CNBB) for the opening of the Campaign for Fraternity 2018, which this year takes as its theme “Fraternity and overcoming violence”, and the motto “You are all brethren”, a verse from the Gospel (Matthew 23: 8).

### Message of the Holy Father

Dear brothers and sisters of Brazil!

In this Lenten time, I gladly join the Church in Brazil to celebrate the Campaign for “Fraternity and Overcoming Violence”, whose aim is to build fraternity and to promote a culture of peace, reconciliation and justice, in the light of the Word of God, as a way to overcome violence. In this way, the 2018 Campaign for Fraternity invites us to recognize violence in so many areas and manifestations and, with confidence, faith and hope, overcome it through the path of love seen in Jesus Crucified.

Jesus came to give us a full life (cf. *Jn* 10:10). Inasmuch as He is in our midst, life becomes a space of fraternity, justice, peace, dignity for all (cf. Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, 180). This penitential time, when we are called to live the practice of fasting, prayer and alms, makes us realize that we are brothers. Let the love of God become visible among us, in our families, in the communities, in society.

“Now is the favourable time; behold, now is the day of salvation” (2 *Cor* 6: 2, cf *Is* 49: 8), which brings us the grace of forgiveness received and offered. The forgiveness of offences is the most eloquent expression of merciful love, and for us Christians, it is an imperative that we can not do without. Sometimes how difficult it is to forgive! And yet, forgiveness is the tool placed in our fragile hands to achieve serenity of the heart, and peace. Setting aside resentment, anger, violence and revenge are necessary conditions for living as brothers and sisters and overcoming violence. Let us therefore accept the Apostle's exhortation: “Let not let the sun go down on your anger” (*Eph* 4:26).

Let us be protagonists in overcoming violence by being heralds and builders of peace. A peace that is the fruit of the integral development of all, a peace that is born of a new relation also with all creatures. Peace is woven in day-to-day life with patience and mercy, within the family, in the dynamics of community, in work relations, in relation to nature. It consists of small gestures of respect, listening, dialogue, silence, affection, acceptance, integration, which create spaces where one breathes brotherhood: “You are all brothers” (*Mt* 23: 8), as the motto of this year’s Campaign for Fraternity. In Christ we are of the same family, born of the blood of the cross, our salvation. The communities of the Church in Brazil announce the conversion, the day of salvation, to live without violence.

I ask the Lord that this year’s Campaign for Fraternity will encourage everyone to find ways to overcome violence by living increasingly as brothers and sisters in Christ. I invoke the protection of Our Lady of the Conception Aparecida for the Brazilian people, granting my Apostolic Blessing. I ask you all to pray for me.

Vatican City, 27 January 2018.

FRANCISCUS PP.