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Video Message of the Holy Father to the participants in the Congress on Religious Education (18-21 February 2021)

The following is the text of the video message sent by the Holy Father Francis, on the occasion of the opening of the works, to the participants of the Congress on Religious Education sponsored by the archdiocese of Los Angeles, taking place, in virtual form, from 18 to 21 February 2021, on the theme "Proclaim the Promise!":

Video Message of the Holy Father

Dear brothers and sisters, a warm greeting to all the participants in the Congress on Religious Education sponsored by the Archdiocese of Los Angeles, which is celebrating its 65th anniversary and the 50th anniversary of the "Youth Day". Congratulations for these initiatives, which have already undertaken a long and fruitful journey, and which are currently taking place in virtual form.

There is no doubt that we are in a difficult time for all, and it is a time of crisis. How relevant, in this context, is the appeal made by this congress: "Proclaim the promise! We need to proclaim and to remember that we have God's promise, and God always keeps His promises (cf. *1 Cor* 1:9-11). We must also remember that "every woman and man, and every new generation, brings the promise of new relational, intellectual, cultural and spiritual energies" (*Fratelli tutti*, 196).

The pandemic has marked the life of the people and history of our community. Faced with this and other situations, it is necessary to build tomorrow, to look to the future and, to do so, it takes effort, strength and dedication on the part of everyone. We need to act in the style of the Samaritan, which involves letting ourselves be affected by what we see, knowing that suffering will change us, and we must engage with the suffering of others. The witness of generous and gratuitous love that we have witnessed throughout these months, so many testimonies, have left an indelible mark on consciences and also on the social fabric of society, teaching us how much closeness, care, accompaniment and sacrifice are necessary to nurture brotherhood. They were the

proclamation and fulfilment of God's promise. Let us remember a universal principle: you never come out of a crisis the same, you come out better or worse, but you never come out of it the same. In crises, one's heart is revealed: its solidity, its mercy, its greatness, its meagreness. Crises confront us with the need to choose and to commit ourselves to a path.

“In this our time, by acknowledging the dignity of each human person, we can contribute to the rebirth of a universal aspiration to fraternity. ... We need a community that supports and helps us, in which we can help one another to keep looking ahead. How important it is to dream together”, and to look ahead! (*Fratelli tutti*, 8).

I greet young people especially. I invite you to hope, which “speaks to us of something deeply rooted in every human heart, independently of our circumstances and historical conditioning” (*Fratelli tutti*, 55). You young people, be the poets of a new human beauty, a new fraternal and friendly beauty!

And let us remember this other reality: “Dreams ... are built together. Let us dream, then, as a single human family, as fellow travellers sharing the same flesh, as children of the same earth which is our common home, each of us bringing the richness of his or her beliefs and convictions, each of us with his or her own voice, brothers and sisters all” (*Fratelli tutti*, 8).

I entrust you to the tenderness of Mary, Mother of the Church, and I heartily impart my blessing. Thank you ministers and teachers for what you do and please do not forget to pray for me. Thank you.
