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Address of the Holy Father to participants in the World Meeting on Human Fraternity

This afternoon, in Saint Peter's Square, the World Meeting on Human Fraternity, entitled *Not Alone*, took place in Saint Peter's Square. The meeting was promoted and organized by the *Fratelli tutti* Vatican Foundation, in collaboration with Saint Peter's Basilica, the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development, and the Dicastery for Communication.

The following is the Holy Father Francis' address to the participants in the meeting, which was read out by His Eminence Cardinal Mauro Gambetti, O.F.M. Conv., president of the *Fratelli tutti* Foundation:

Address of the Holy Father

Dear brothers and sisters, good afternoon!

Even though I am unable to greet you in person, I would like to welcome and thank you wholeheartedly for coming. I am happy to affirm together with you the desire for fraternity and peace in the world. An author placed the following words on the lips of Francis of Assisi: "The Lord is where his brothers are" (E. Leclerc, *La Sapienza di un povero*). Indeed, the heavens above invite us to walk together, to rediscover each other as brothers and sisters and to believe in fraternity as the foundation of our pilgrimage.

In the Encyclical *Fratelli tutti*, I wrote: "Fraternity necessarily calls for something greater, which in turn enhances freedom and equality" (n. 103), since the one who sees the other as a brother or sister sees in him or her a face, not a number. The other is always "someone" who has dignity and merits respect, and not "something" to be used, exploited or thrown away. In our world torn apart by violence and war, tweaks and adjustments are not enough. Only a great spiritual and social covenant born from the heart and centered on fraternity can restore the sacredness and inviolability of human dignity as the core of relationships.

This does not require theories on fraternity but concrete gestures and shared decisions that make it a *culture of peace*. The question to ask ourselves is not what society and the world can give me, but what can I give to my

brothers and sisters. When we return home, let us think of some concrete gesture of fraternity that we can make: reconciling with family members, friends and neighbours, praying for those who hurt us, recognizing and helping those in need, speaking words of peace at school, university or in society, “anointing” with closeness those who feel alone...

We should feel ourselves called to apply the balm of tenderness within relationships between persons and peoples that have become gangrenous. Let us not tire of crying out “no to war”, in the name of God and in the name of every man and woman who aspires for peace. I am reminded of some verses written by Giuseppe Ungaretti. In the midst of war, he felt the need to speak of brothers as “Trembling word/in the night/Leaf just born”. Fraternity is fragile and precious. Brothers and sisters are the anchor of truth in the stormy sea of conflicts that spread falsehood. To evoke brothers and sisters is to remind those who are fighting, and all of us, that the feeling of fraternity uniting us is stronger than hatred and violence. In fact, it unites everyone through the same pain. We start and start again from here, from the sense of “feeling together”, a spark that can rekindle the light that stops the night of conflicts.

To believe that the other is our brother or sister and to greet him or her as such is not meaningless. The most concrete thing each of us can do. Indeed, it means freeing myself from the poverty of believing that I am the only child in the world. It means, at the same time, choosing to overcome the *mindset of partners or associates*, who stay together only for the sake of personal advantage. It also means knowing how to go beyond the limits of blood or ethnic ties, which only recognise similarities and reject differences. Here, I think of the parable of the Samaritan (cf. *Lk 10:25-37*), who stops with compassion before the Jewish man in need of help. Their cultures were at odds, their histories different, their regions hostile to each other; but for that man, the person in the street and his needs came first.

When people and societies choose fraternity, policies also change: The person once again takes precedence over profit and the home we all inhabit over the environment to be exploited for one’s own interests. A just wage is paid for work, welcome becomes wealth, life becomes hope, justice opens up to reparation, and the memory of evil done is healed in the encounter between victims and perpetrators.

Dear brothers and sisters, I thank you for organizing this meeting and for bringing to life the “Declaration on Human Fraternity”, drafted this morning by the distinguished Nobel Laureates present. I believe that it offers us a *grammar of fraternity* and is an effective guide for living it and witnessing to it every day in a concrete way. You have worked well together, and I thank you very much! Let us ensure that what we have experienced today is the first step on a journey and can begin a process of fraternity. I greet with gratitude and affection those gathered in plazas in various cities around the world, which, linked together, testify both to the richness of diversity and to the possibility of being brothers and sisters even when we are not close, as has happened to me. Go forward!

I would like to leave you with an image, that of an embrace. As a fruit of this afternoon spent together, I wish you to keep in your hearts and memories the desire to embrace the women and men of the world in order to build together a culture of peace. Indeed, peace needs fraternity and fraternity needs encounter. May the embrace given and received today, symbolized by the square in which you are meeting, become a commitment of life and a prophecy of hope. I myself embrace you and, as I repeat my thanks, I say to you from my heart: I am with you!
