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**BOLLETTINO**

HOLY SEE PRESS OFFICE BUREAU DE PRESSE DU SAINT-SIÈGE PRESSEAMT DES HEILIGEN STUHLS  
OFICINA DE PRENSA DE LA SANTA SEDE SALA DE IMPRENSA DA SANTA SÉ  
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N. 240528b

Tuesday 28.05.2024

## Message of the Dicastery for Evangelization on the occasion of World Tourism Day

The following is the message sent by Archbishop Rino Fisichella, pro-prefect of the Dicastery for Evangelization, Section for Fundamental Questions regarding Evangelization in the World, on the occasion of the 45th World Tourism Day, to be held on 27 September 2024, on the theme “Tourism and Peace”:

### Message

#### *“Tourism and Peace”*

“Tourism and Peace”: with this pairing the United Nations World Tourism Organization intends to celebrate the traditional *World Day* this coming 27 September. In a period as troubled as ours, one could not think of a better choice to offer, to those who will travel, a moment of reflection and personal commitment. Cultural exchange between peoples, which finds its privileged form in tourism, can also be transformed into a concrete commitment to peace.

Where there are outbreaks of war, it is clear that tourism suffers, because every necessary form of security is disrupted. The lack of tourists, however, creates a further form of poverty among the population, which finds itself deprived of a source of income necessary for living with due dignity. War brings with it a range of consequences of which people are often not fully aware, and yet they directly affect people’s lives. Where there is the violence of war, everyone is affected, no one excluded.

The Dicastery for Evangelization, which is responsible for religious tourism, feels called to act in this situation, and intends to offer its contribution so that the message of peace may reach those working in the tourism sector, so that through them a chain of genuine peacemakers may be built. First and foremost, there emerges the great pastoral ministry carried out by many priests and laypeople, who devote their lives to making tourism and pilgrimages active and fruitful. A thought of gratitude goes to them all. One understands the difficulties that arise for this sector due to the restrictions caused by the lack of security, and despite this, they are invited to open up to new paths, keeping alive the possibility that pilgrimages will soon be resumed in the countries that traditionally

preserve the richness of our faith and history.

The interest that moves millions of tourists can easily be linked with the commitment to brotherhood, so as to constitute a network of “messengers of peace” who speak to the entire world to invoke the end of all war and the reopening of territories full of history, culture and faith. On the other hand, the path of beauty that characterizes these destinations cannot and must not be obscured by the ugliness of destruction and rubble that come to replace what the ingenuity of previous generations had built as an emblem of peace and sharing.

The beauty of landscapes unleashes true life and the desire to exist. Tourism can promote, in a decisive way, the recovery of the interpersonal relationships for which we all feel deep nostalgia.

In a period like ours, marked by the massive presence of technology, which limits relationships between people, it is good for a renewed commitment to a *culture of encounter* to be nurtured and supported, as strongly advocated by Pope Francis. It needs to be restored to the centre of our pastoral commitment to tourism.

Indeed, encounter is an instrument of dialogue and mutual knowledge; it is a source of respect and recognition of the dignity of others; it is the indispensable prerequisite for building lasting bonds. Religious tourism cannot disregard this perspective, and is called to be a credible promoter of these links. May the call and prayer for peace in the world, and at the same time the pacification of interpersonal relationships, never be lacking. They are profoundly joined to each other, and constitute the premise for lasting peace. Besides, it is an illusion to think that war is merely an event that touches other nations. Peace begins when the charity that leads to respect for the other, and the sense of fraternity that unites everyone, is installed in a stable way in the heart of every person. Being peacebuilders is not only possible; it is required of those who embark on a journey.

In his Encyclical Letter *Fratelli tutti*, Pope Francis urges us to live “an appropriate and authentic openness to the world... [with] the capacity to be open to one’s neighbour within a family of nations” (151). A true programme to be inserted in one’s baggage when one departs for a well-earned rest or to find moments of respite in which to contemplate the beauty of creation.

This year will be characterized by the beginning of the Ordinary Jubilee 2025. Indeed, on 24 December, the Pope will open the Holy Door of the Papal Basilica of Saint Peter in the Vatican, enabling millions of pilgrims to come to the city of Rome to live the experience of Jubilee indulgence. In the Bull of Indiction, *Spes non confundit*, Pope Francis writes: “Everyone knows what it is to hope. In the heart of each person, hope dwells as the desire and expectation of good things to come, despite our not knowing what the future may bring” (1). It is an expectation that accompanies any person who travels, because the hope of living moments of serenity and joy is an irrepressible desire.

Tourism characterized by this hope can become a concrete and tangible sign also for the building of peace. Pope Francis again interprets this when he writes: “Heedless of the horrors of the past, humanity is confronting yet another ordeal, as many peoples are prey to brutality and violence. What does the future hold for those peoples, who have already endured so much? How is it possible that their desperate plea for help is not motivating world leaders to resolve the numerous regional conflicts in view of their possible consequences at the global level? Is it too much to dream that arms can fall silent and cease to rain down destruction and death? May the Jubilee remind us that those who are peacemakers will be called ‘children of God’ (*Mt 5:9*). The need for peace challenges us all, and demands that concrete steps be taken” (*Spes non confundit*, 8).

Tourism and peace, joined with hope, therefore become the compelling message, on this *World Tourism Day 2024*, for those who are workers in tourism and for those who embark on a journey with sentiments and the desire for serenity and concord.

Archbishop Rino Fisichella

Pro-Prefect

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