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Audience with a group of Muslims from Bologna

This morning, before the General Audience, the Holy Father received in audience a group of Muslims from Bologna, to whom he addressed the following greeting:

Greeting of the Holy Father

Dear brothers and sisters!

I am pleased to welcome you, and I thank you for your visit.

Jesus taught us to welcome each other as brothers. And this applies first of all to us, Christians, Jews and Muslims, who worship the One God and who refer, albeit in different ways, to Abraham as the father of the faith. In today's world, our witness of fraternity is indispensable and very precious.

And we, who have received the gift of this religious affiliation, are called upon to be open and welcoming towards those who do not share it, because they, like all of us, are members of the single human family.

In particular, sincere and respectful dialogue between Christians and Muslims is a duty for us who wish to obey God's will. Indeed, a Father's will is for his children to love each other, to help each other, and should some difficulty or misunderstanding arise between them, to come to an agreement with humility and patience.

This dialogue requires the effective recognition of the dignity and rights of every person. At the forefront of these rights is freedom of conscience and religion, which means that every human being should be fully free with regard to his or her religious choices. Furthermore, every believer must feel free to propose – never to impose! – his or her own religion to other people, believers or otherwise. This excludes any form of proselytism, understood as exerting pressure or threats; he must reject every type of financial or work favours; he must not take advantage of people's ignorance. In addition to this, marriage between people of different religions must not

be an occasion to convert the spouse to one's own religion.

Dear friends, I hope that, wherever you live, you may maintain good relations with the Catholic Church: with the bishop, the clergy and the faithful, in mutual respect and friendship.

The world, especially at this historical moment, needs coherent believers, strongly engaged in building and keeping social and world peace. I thank you for also being, together with your communities, among these "artisans" of peace.

I assure you of my prayers and I ask you, please, to remember me in yours. Thank you!
