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Message of the Holy Father on the occasion of the reopening of the Cathedral of Notre-Dame, Paris

The following is the Message sent by the Holy Father Francis to Archbishop Laurent Ulrich of Paris on the occasion of the reopening of the Cathedral of Notre-Dame, read out by Archbishop Celestino Migliore, apostolic nuncio in France:

Message

To His Excellency
Archbishop Laurent Ulrich of Paris

It gives me great pleasure to join you, Your Excellency, in thought and prayer, as well as all the faithful people gathered here, and all those present, on this solemn day when your Cathedral is reopened to worship. We all still remember the terrible fire that seriously compromised the building five years ago. Our hearts ached at the risk of seeing a masterpiece of Christian faith and architecture, an age-old witness to your national history, disappear. Today, sadness and mourning have given way to joy, celebration and praise.

I salute all those, especially the firefighters, who worked so courageously to save this historic monument from wreckage. I salute the determined commitment of the public authorities and the great outpouring of international generosity that contributed to the restoration. This momentum is a sign not only of our attachment to art and history, but also - and how encouraging this is! - the sign that the symbolic and sacred value of such an edifice is still widely perceived, from the smallest to the largest.

I would also like to pay tribute to the remarkable work carried out by the many craftsmen and women involved, who generously gave their all to restore Notre-Dame to its former splendor. It's beautiful and reassuring that the skills of yesteryear have been wisely preserved and improved. But it is even more beautiful that so many of the workers and craftsmen involved in this restoration adventure have experienced it as an authentic spiritual journey. They followed in the footsteps of their forefathers, whose faith alone, lived in their work, could have built

such a masterpiece, where nothing profane, unintelligible or vulgar belongs.

May the rebirth of this admirable church be a prophetic sign of the renewal of the Church in France. I invite all the baptized who will joyfully enter this Cathedral to feel a legitimate sense of pride, and to reclaim their faith heritage. Dear faithful of Paris and France, this dwelling, which our heavenly Father inhabits, is yours; you are its living stones. Those who preceded you in the faith built it for you: the countless representations and symbols it contains are intended to guide you more surely towards an encounter with the God-made-man, and a rediscovery of his immense love.

In addition, Notre-Dame will soon once again be visited and admired by huge crowds of people from all walks of life, religions, languages and cultures, many of them in search of the absolute and meaning in their lives. I know, Your Excellency, that your doors will be wide open to them, and that you will be committed to welcoming them generously and freely, as brothers and sisters. In the witness of the Christian Community, may they perceive the peace that dwells in its praise, may they sense the joy of knowing and loving the Lord who has made himself closeness, compassion and tenderness. Lifting their eyes to these vaults that have regained their light, may they share his invincible hope.

Imploring upon the Church of France, and upon all the French people, the protection of *Notre-Dame de Paris*, I impart to you and to all present my heartfelt Blessing.

Saint John Lateran, 21 November 2024

FRANCIS
