

A document for study, a document for life

Roadmap for the One Human Family

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Pope Francis' recent trip to Abu Dhabi was unprecedented. It was the first time a pontiff traveled to a world region like the Arabian Peninsula, where Muslims have been present since the time of the prophet, Mohammed, and where Christians arrived only in more recent times.

A real and lasting mark of the pope's visit there was the signing of a joint document approved by both the Catholic Church and Imam Ahmed Al-Tayyeb, Grand Imam of Al-Azhar in Cairo, who is an important reference point for Sunni Islam. It was the first time the Holy See, in the name of the Pope himself, signed such a document with a leader of another religion. Entitled, *A Document on Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together*, it is hoped that it will serve as a vehicle for proclaiming, as the text states, that "Faith leads a believer to see in the other a brother or sister to be supported and loved." and "Through faith in God, who has created the universe, creatures and all human beings (equal on account of his mercy), believers are called to express this human fraternity by safeguarding creation and the entire universe and supporting all persons, especially the poorest and those most in need." During the pontiff's customary press conference on the return flight, he affirmed that the document, jointly prepared by the closest collaborators of the pope and the imam, is in line with Second Vatican Council teachings. The Council declaration, *Nostra Aetate*, highlights precisely this unity of the human family which should bind all human beings as persons sharing a common origin, and destined for the same end, God.

The joint signing, which took place during a conference on fraternity taking place at *Founders Memorial*, was a historic and unexpected moment in Pope Francis' trip to the Emirates. The importance of the conference was underscored not only by the joint document, but by the entire event itself, which will be taken up again in a future issue of *Ekklesia*. Iconic images from that meeting, like Crown Prince Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Imam Ahmed Al-Tayyeb, and Pope Francis entering the conference hall, hand in hand, and the repeated embraces between the pope and the imam, are indelibly etched in our minds forever. They are a confirmation of the sincere intentions of both parties and cannot be allowed to pass unnoticed.