

Here is the address of Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew in Assisi.

Address of Greek Orthodox Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew of Constantinople

“Our thirst for peace is quenched”

*Your Holiness,
Eminences, Excellencies,
Distinguished Representatives of Religions and Cultures,
Authorities,
Brothers and Sisters,*

By gathering us all together, this International Meeting has given us the chance to look into each other's eyes, to speak honestly, to listen to each other, to enjoy each other's riches, and, essentially, to be “Friends.”

And in this friendship, true unconditional love for each other, our thirst for peace is quenched.

It is quenched, because peace is free, profound, and rooted in the heart of every human being, who for believers are made in the image and likeness of God, and for cultures and for humanist thinkers are part of the same human family.

Indeed, we have not only commemorated an extraordinary event held by our predecessors thirty years ago.

We have also renewed our commitment to peace with a new spirit, in Friendship, through courageous gestures, opening up new paths to dialogue and cooperation between Cultures and the great Religious Families of the world.

However, Peace needs a few cornerstones to uphold it even when it is endangered.

There can be no peace without mutual respect and acknowledgment.

There can be no peace without justice, there can be no peace without fruitful cooperation among all the peoples in the world.

In these years, we can again see ethnic, religious, and cultural majorities sense their respective minorities as alien bodies, dangerous for their integrity, as something to be marginalized, expelled, and sometimes, unfortunately, annihilated.

We witness minorities that close themselves in their own ghettos out of fear of disappearance, fearful of comparisons, too often turning to violence.

This is discouraging, it causes mass migration, and it creates problems in welcoming, solidarity, and humanity.

But peace also needs justice.

Justice is a world economy renewed, that cares for the needs of the poorest; it is paying attention to our planet's situation, safeguarding its natural environment, which is the work of God for believers, but also a Common Home for everyone.

It also means to safeguard the cultural, religious, and artistic traditions of every people of the earth.

It means being capable of solidarity, not as mere assistance, but feeling the need, the pain, the joy of the other as if it were our own.

Justice is consistency with what we profess and believe in, while being capable of dialogue with the other, capable to see the riches of the other, capable of not overpowering the other, of not feeling above or below our neighbour.

Justice is making it possible for everybody to keep living in his or her own forefathers' land, in peace and love, for everybody to return to his or her own home for the growth of human society.

Therefore, peace comes from mutual knowledge and cooperation.

As Faiths, as Humanist Cultures, as Human Beings, today we must revive all this, in a new way, through new gestures.

However, as we return to our homes, we believe that every Religious Family, every Culture — in this precise moment in history — must look within itself; we believe, while respectful of every religious or humanist belief, that self-critic and self-analysis are necessary.

We need to be able to ask ourselves where we may have been wrong, or where we have not been careful enough; because fundamentalisms have risen, threatening not only dialogue with others, but even dialogue within our own selves, our very own consciences.

We have to be able to isolate them, to purify them, in the light of our faiths, to transform them into richness for all.

If we are able to do so, then dialogue will become real and vital, because cooperation will not be subjugation, but a chance to intervene together in history, the chance to write its fates, together.

We have the obligation to commit ourselves together for the preservation of every Human Being from his or her conception to natural end, respectful of every stage of his or her life.

We must commit ourselves for the preservation of our Common Home and all that is in it.

Because, in creating it, God did not want to have one plant, one animal, one single person, one planet, one star.

He wanted many of them, all different, each with its own specificity and peculiarity, interconnected in a communion of purpose and love.

This is the richness we need to proclaim, safeguard, and live together.