



The Holy See

MESSAGE OF THE HOLY FATHER FRANCIS TO MARK THE XVII INTER-CHRISTIAN SYMPOSIUM

[Trani, 28-30 August 2024]

*To my Venerable Brother
His Eminence Cardinal Kurt Koch
Prefect of the Dicastery for Promoting Christian Unity*

With sentiments of cordial closeness, I greet the distinguished speakers and all the participants at the 17th Inter-Christian Symposium, organized jointly by the Franciscan Institute of Spirituality of the Pontifical University Antonianum and the Department of Theology of the Orthodox Theological Faculty of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, which will take place from 28 to 30 August 2024 in Trani, on the theme of “What is man?” (*Ps* 8:4) in the time of anthropological mutation”. In particular, I would like to congratulate the organizers of this unique experience of practical collaboration between Catholics and Orthodox, which has become a now beautiful tradition.

The title of the Symposium refers to the time of anthropological mutation, but what is happening nowadays could be defined as a full-fledged revolution. The changes brought about by the technological revolution, such as, for example, the development of artificial intelligence, and the incredible scientific developments, are forcing men and women of today to rethink their identity, their role in the world and in society, and their vocation to transcendence. Indeed, the specific nature of human beings in creation as a whole, their uniqueness compared to other animals, and even their relationship with machines, are constantly being questioned. Furthermore, the way in which today’s men and women understand the fundamental experiences of their existence, such as creating, being born, and dying, is structurally changing. It is not possible to react with only denial and criticism in the face of this ongoing anthropological revolution. Instead, deep reflection is needed to be able to renew the thought and the choices to be made (cf. [*Video Message on the occasion of the Plenary Assembly of the Pontifical Council for Culture on the theme “Towards a Necessary Humanism”*](#), 23 November 2021).

This challenge affects all Christians, regardless of the Church they belong to. For this reason, it is particularly interesting that the Catholics and the Orthodox are promoting this reflection together. In particular, in light of the teaching of the Sacred Scripture and Christian tradition, it is necessary to reiterate that every human being is endowed with dignity by simply existing, as a spiritual entity, created by God and destined for a filial relationship with Him (cf. *Eph* 1:4-5), regardless of whether or not they act in accordance with this dignity, the socio-economic situations in which they live, or their existential conditions. Defending this dignity against concrete threats such as poverty, war, exploitation and more is a common task for all Churches to work on together.

I gladly accompany the work of the 17th Inter-Christian Symposium with my prayers and, through the intercession of Saint Nicholas the Pilgrim, patron saint of Trani, I invoke the Lord's blessing on all participants, trusting that they too will have the goodness to remember me in their prayers.

From the Vatican, 17th July 2024

FRANCIS

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