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Audience with a delegation of the “Joint Working Group for Dialogue”

This morning, the Holy Father received in audience the participants in a discussion of the Joint Working Group for Dialogue between the Dicastery for Interreligious Dialogue and the Palestinian Commission for Interreligious Dialogue.

The following are the Pope’s words of greeting to those present at the audience:

Greeting of the Holy Father

Dear Brothers and Sisters, good morning and welcome!

I thank Cardinal Coccopalmerio for his kind words of introduction and I am pleased to welcome all of you taking part in this meeting of the Joint Working Group for Dialogue.

With gratitude I think of Cardinal Jean-Louis Tauran who initiated this Group, together with Sheikh Mahmoud Al-Habbash, who is present with us and whom I respectfully greet. May the late Cardinal’s zeal and wisdom continue to inspire your efforts and your undertakings.

As the theme for this present Meeting, you have chosen the spiritual significance of Jerusalem, the Holy City for Jews, Christians and Muslims alike. In this regard, I would reiterate the appeal I made in 2019, together with His Majesty the King of Morocco, that Jerusalem be considered, “the common patrimony of humanity and especially of the followers of the three monotheistic religions, as a place of encounter and as a symbol of peaceful coexistence.”

In the Gospels, Jerusalem was the setting of numerous events in Jesus’ life. As an infant, he was presented in the Temple, and in the company of his parents he travelled to Jerusalem each year for the feast of Passover. In the Holy City Jesus taught and performed many of his miracles. There, most importantly, he completed his

mission through his passion, death and resurrection, the paschal mystery at the heart of the Christian faith. In Jerusalem the Church was born, when the Holy Spirit descended upon the disciples gathered in prayer with the Virgin Mary and sent them forth to proclaim to all peoples the message of salvation.

At the same time, Jerusalem also has universal value, as seen from its very name, which means "City of Peace". Here I think of the moment in Jesus' life, when, just a few days before his passion, he came to the Holy City. "As he drew near and saw the city he wept over it, saying, 'Would that even today you knew the things that make for peace!'" (*Lk 19:41-42*). Jesus wept over Jerusalem. We should not pass over these words in haste. These tears of Jesus should be contemplated in silence. Brothers and sisters, how many men and women, Jews, Christians, and Muslims, have wept and in our day continue to weep for Jerusalem! At times, we too are moved to tears when we think of the Holy City, for she is like a mother whose heart cannot be at peace due to the sufferings of her children.

This Gospel passage reminds us of the value of compassion. God's compassion for Jerusalem must become our own, more powerful than any ideology or political alignment. Even greater must be our love for the Holy City, as for a mother who deserves respect and reverence on the part of all.

Dear brothers and sisters, in sharing these thoughts and sentiments with you, I thank you for your visit and I heartily encourage your work of interreligious dialogue, which is so important. May the Most High accompany your work and enable it to bear fruit. May he grant you his abundant blessings. Thank you!
