

حبيب نور الدين هشام فاد

Diocese of Oran



We are brothers and sisters, born of one and the same Father.
With different cultures and traditions, but brothers and sisters all.
And it is in respect of our different cultures and traditions,
of our different citizenships, that **this fraternity needs to be built.**

(Message for the 1st International Day of Human Fraternity, February 4, 2021)

طوبى لهم !
BIENHEUREUX !
Building fraternity
pastoral letter

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Diocese of Oran

Building Fraternity

Pastoral letter

+ Bishop Jean-Paul Vesco op

*Dear brothers and sisters,
of the diocese of Oran and elsewhere,
Christians, Muslims and others ...*

Introduction

On February 4, 2019, I followed on television the meeting in Abu Dhabi between Pope Francis and the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar. Looking at the faces of these two men, I see the same light as that which illuminated the faces of all the participants, Christians and Muslims, during the beatification of Bishop Pierre Claverie and his eighteen companions and martyrs in Oran in the beautiful winter sun of that December 8, 2018. I become aware of the symbolic significance of the gesture made and the call to human fraternity launched to the world by these two important religious dignitaries.

A few weeks later, the visit of the Holy Father to Morocco confirms my conviction of something new which our Church cannot ignore. What followed for me was a long period of maturation and of finding the right perspective. The force of Pope Francis' words and gestures multiplied, to the point of constituting a veritable corpus of fraternity in action.

In this letter, I would like to:

- Take the time to walk with you on this path of fraternity that Pope Francis outlines from his different encounters;
- Enter a little further into the understanding of this fraternity which has its roots in the most depths of life and leads to the heights of faith;
- Look again the life of our Church through the prism of this fraternity offered as an outstretched hand;
- Present the project: Building fraternity, which outlines the shape of our Church's diakonia for the coming years.

I have come to the conviction that fraternity, which allows us to address God as Our Father, carries within it an essential theological key to the life of our Church. Fraternity expresses the urgency today of our encounters: Which each encounter we help to build fraternity.

Francis, a path of fraternity

In the plane that brought him back from Iraq, at the end of perhaps the most symbolic trip of his pontificate, Pope Francis openly responds to questions from journalists:

*"Very often you have to take risks to advance fraternity. You know that there are criticisms, that the Pope is not courageous, that he is oblivious, that he takes steps against Catholic doctrine, that he is one step away from heresy. These are risks. But these are decisions that are always taken in prayer, in dialogue, by asking for advice. This is a reflection, not a whim. This is also the line that the council taught us."*¹

These words from Pope Francis had the effect of an electric shock on me. They resonated with what we sometimes hear about our Church here in Algeria. A Pope therefore experiences the same questions that we do, struggles with the same questions that we carry deep within ourselves, individually and collectively. This is not about looking in from the outside – even if the regard might be benevolent – on a proclamation of the gospel sometimes considered a little dumbed-down but excused by the particular local context.

1.1 Why?

The fact of being a Christian presence in the Muslim world means that our Church cannot be satisfied simply asking **how** to live this presence, it is constantly questioned, and it questions itself, on the **why** of this presence. Why is the Church present here, in a country almost without Christians? For Christians elsewhere, the question sometimes hides a suspicion of being lukewarm and lack of courage. Muslims here might suspect ulterior motives of proselytization.

The question of why can be more unsettling than the mere question of how but it is also much more stimulating. This unceasing quest to understand the significance of the Church's presence in the Muslim world – lacking the continuity of an ancient Christian community, even an ultra-minority as in the countries of the Middle East – has, for decades, been the source of a theological creativity way beyond the size of our Church.

¹ Apostolic voyage of Pope Francis to Iraq – Press conference on the return flight, March 8, 2021

We can mention here some of the documents of CERN²:

- Christians in the Maghreb: Making sense of our Encounters (1979);
- God's Call to his Church in the Maghreb (1990);
- The Churches of the Maghreb in the Year 2000;
- Servants of Hope (2014).

We could add the reflections and publications of the two quasi-synodal interdiocesan assemblies of 2004 and 2014, as well as sessions for priests which have punctuated the life of our Church for decades. And we should not forget the theological contribution of Cardinal Duval, Henri Teissier, Pierre Claverie, Christian de Chergé and his Cistercian brother Christophe Lebreton, to name a few.

Each of these reflections demonstrates a desire to reflect on a Christian presence in touch with the circumstances of the time. It is the same Church of the Maghreb that looks at itself afresh, that must constantly repeat to itself the meaning of its presence, with new words: Church of the Encounter, Citizen Church, Servants of Hope, ...

And all of a sudden, a Pope comes to join us on this theological journey somewhat off the beaten track, on the peripheries of the Church, and places what is on the edges at the centre of his pontificate. This journey has a name: fraternity.

1.2 First fruits

John Paul II was considerate enough to visit our region twice, Morocco in 1985 and Tunisia in 1996. Each of these memorable trips communicated his interest in what our Churches were experiencing. Between the two trips, the gathering in Assisi on October 27, 1986 proved to be a foundational event in interreligious dialogue placed under the sign of fraternity and respect for the variety of expressions of faith.

So very often the bishops, during the various *ad limina* visits, had to answer recurring and somewhat condescending questions of how many – how many seminarians? how many priests? how many Christians? how many baptisms? However, when John Paul II received them, he told them in substance: "Fundamentally, you are living what the Council proposes for the Church. That it be a sacrament, that is to say a sign, and we do not measure a sign by numbers. John Paul II understood that the number of conversions to Christianity was not the best indicator to judge the fruitfulness of our presence.

² North African Bishops' Conference (Conférence Episcopale de la Région Nord de l'Afrique)

In the first encyclical letter of his pontificate, *Deus Caritas Est*, Benedict XVI resituates the diaconal dimension of the universal Church and distinguishes it from a simple social action to which this essential dimension of our witness could easily be reduced: *"The Church's deepest nature is expressed in her three-fold responsibility: of proclaiming the word of God (kerygma-martyria), celebrating the sacraments (leitourgia), and exercising the ministry of charity (diakonia). These duties presuppose each other and are inseparable. For the Church, charity is not a kind of welfare activity which could equally well be left to others, but is a part of her nature, an indispensable expression of her very being."*³

Francis follows the same movement as his predecessors, but gives it an unprecedented impetus, to the point that it is possible to see it as an unique and founding moment, a real *kairos* in the life of the Church in general, and of ours in particular.

1.3 Francis, a *kairos* in the life of our Church

On March 31, 2019, seated in the cathedral of Rabat, I listen to Francis's address to the clergy and to members of consecrated life. The proof is there, the Holy Father is really addressing us, he has understood what we are experiencing and want to live:

*"This means, dear friends, that **our** mission as baptized persons, priests and consecrated men and women, is not really determined by the number or size of spaces that **we** occupy, but rather by our capacity to generate change and to awaken wonder and compassion. **We** do this by the way we live as disciples of Jesus, in the midst of those with whom **we** share our daily lives, joys and sorrows, suffering and hopes."*⁴

Pope Francis not only addresses us, but he speaks within us, that is, in the first-person plural. He includes himself, and through him, he includes the universal Church in that us in which we find ourselves so perfectly. Suddenly, it becomes clear that there is no longer, to push the idea further, the great universal Church and its dream of new evangelization on one side and, on the other side, our Church of the Maghreb, clinging a little too jealously to its particularity. Of all the powerful gestures made during this voyage, it was with us, heard in a particular way, that I returned to Oran.

Of all the symbolic gestures and speeches of Pope Francis around the theme of Fraternity, I would simply like to identify here three attributes: for Francis, fraternity is a journey, it is urgent, and it requires daring.

³ Encyclical Letter of Pop Benedict XVI, *Deus Caritas Est*, 25

⁴ Apostolic journey of Pope Francis to Morocco – Meeting with priests, religious, consecrated persons and the Ecumenical Council of Churches, Rabat Cathedral, March 31, 2019

Fraternity is a journey

Looking back across the years, it is surprising to note that the expression journey of fraternity appears among the very first words pronounced by Cardinal Bergoglio, who became Pope Francis, that evening of March 13, 2013, from the balcony of St Peter's Basilica:

*"And now, we take up this journey: Bishop and People. This journey of the Church of Rome which presides in charity over all the Churches. A journey of fraternity, of love, of trust among us. Let us always pray for one another. Let us pray for the whole world, that there may be a great spirit of fraternity. It is my hope for you that this journey of the Church, which we start today, and in which my Cardinal Vicar, here present, will assist me, will be fruitful for the evangelization of this most beautiful city."*⁵

No one is yet aware of the unexpected turn that this path will take, of the strong movement in direction of Islam, something with which the Argentinian Jorge Bergoglio has had very little contact. But of fraternity which goes beyond religious difference, and is even enriched by it, he has nonetheless already had experience, notably through his friendship with Rabbi Abraham Skorka, director of the Latin American rabbinical seminary.

Pope Francis himself does not know the path this journey will take. It emerges in the course of his encounters. He undoubtedly owes a lot to the relationship of fraternal friendship forged with the Grand Imam of al-Azhar, who will be directly at the origin of the document signed on February 4, 2019 in Abu Dhabi on human fraternity. He explains this on his return from the trip to Iraq, when a journalist asks him whether the meeting with the Grand Ayatollah al-Sistani might produce a counterbalance in the Shiite world what had been developed in Sunni world:

*"The Abu Dhabi document was prepared with the Grand Imam in secrecy, over six months, praying, reflecting, correcting the text. It was, I will say – it is somewhat presumptuous, take it as a presumption – a first step toward what you are asking me. We could say that this [with Al-Sistani] would be the second. And there will be others. The path of fraternity is important. Then, as to the two documents: that of Abu Dhabi left me with a strong sense of the need for fraternity, and Fratelli Tutti resulted. Both documents should be studied because they go in the same direction, they seek fraternity."*⁶

This path of fraternity does not respond to a pre-established, cleverly calculated strategy. It is the fruit of encounters. That reflects our own experience, as individuals and as a

⁵ Apostolic blessing "Urbi et Orbi", First Greeting of the Holy Father, Vatican, March 13, 2013

⁶ Apostolic voyage of Pope Francis to Iraq – Press conference on the return flight, March 8, 2021

church. Our Church can only call itself Church of the Encounter because it is first and foremost a church of encounters.

Given that fraternity is a journey, it has no end. We know from experience that we can't assume having achieved anything, but that doesn't mean that, in ways still unknown, a path has not been travelled. After the incredible moment of fraternity during the celebration of the beatification, we might have thought that nothing would be the same, that there would be a before and after in our personal and institutional relationships. It wasn't totally so, life goes on... big steps, little steps? It doesn't matter. All depends on what point of view you take.

Francis said he went to Iraq as a pilgrim and penitent. As such he elevates the journey of fraternity to the status of pilgrimage. It reveals its sacredness and indicates the spiritual nature of the fruits that can be expected from it.

Fraternity is urgent

The Abu Dhabi declaration is something completely new. Two believers, who have forged a bond of friendship and who are aware of their responsibility as important spiritual leaders, launch an appeal to human fellowship, raising the alarm. There is an urgency to look the world in the face, to denounce injustice and oppression in all its forms including economic, to denounce violence including when it is done in the name of God. They declare themselves as wanting to adopt "a culture of dialogue as the path; mutual cooperation as the code of conduct; reciprocal understanding as the method and standard": ⁷

*"We, who believe in God and in the final meeting with Him and His judgment, on the basis of our religious and moral responsibility, and through this Document, call upon ourselves, upon the leaders of the world as well as the architects of international policy and world economy, to work strenuously to spread the culture of tolerance and of living together in peace; to intervene at the earliest opportunity to stop the shedding of innocent blood and bring an end to wars, conflicts, environmental decay and the moral and cultural decline that the world is presently experiencing."*⁸

Two years later, on the occasion of the first International Day of Human Fraternity, Pope Francis reiterates the urgency of fraternity which he defines as the new frontier of humanity for today: *"Thanks to everyone for having bet on fraternity, because today fraternity is humanity's*

⁷ Document on "Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together", signed by His Holiness Pope Francis and the Grand Imam of Al Azhar, Ahmad Al-Tayyeb, February 4, 2019

⁸ Ibid

*new frontier. Either we are brothers and sisters or we destroy each other. Today there is no time for indifference. We cannot wash our hands of it, with distance, with disregard, with disinterest. Either we are fratelli — if I may — or everything collapses. It is the frontier. The frontier on which we have to build; it is the challenge of our century; it is the challenge of our times."*⁹

The encyclical letter *Fratelli Tutti* should also be read in order to understand the urgency that grips Pope Francis to build fraternity. *"Let us dream, then, as a single human family, as fellow travellers sharing the same flesh, as children of the same earth which is our common home, each of us bringing the richness of his or her beliefs and convictions, each of us with his or her own voice, brothers and sisters all."*¹⁰

These might seem nothing more than empty phrases, lovely words somewhat bland – except that they are the words of a Pope, guarantor of the deposit of the Catholic faith. In the battle for fraternity launched by Pope Francis, one cannot dissociate the message from the quality of the messenger. To say this, does he have to fall back on the proclamation of the gospel and the urgency of conversion? Obviously, he and the Grand Imam of al-Azhar did not seek to convert one another to the other's faith. They recognize each other as true believers and this recognition might even be seen as the cement of their friendship and their commitment, shoulder to shoulder, in this struggle for fraternity. This stance, which they present as so natural that one might forget its revolutionary character, is costly for both. But Francis does not lack daring.

Fraternity is daring

Fraternity offers a magnificent illustration of Francis' theological and human daring, the two go hand in hand. He concedes nothing of the truth of doctrinal statements and the deposit of faith. Simply, the fundamental truth and complexity of the human person, which cannot be reduced to a doctrine however holy that may be, are given first place. It would be wrong to accuse Francis too quickly of relativism on the grounds that he does not make adherence to the same faith the prerequisite for a meeting, including spiritual ones, in truth.

The experience of spiritual encounter with a great believer of another religion, the Holy Father also lived with the Grand Ayatollah Sistani. He said: *"I felt the duty, on this pilgrimage of faith and penance, to go to find a great and wise man, a man of God. And we see this just by listening to him ... he was very respectful, very respectful in the meeting, and I felt honoured. Even in his greeting: he never stands up, and he stood up, to greet me, twice. He is a humble*

⁹ First International Day of Human Fraternity – Message of Pope Francis, February 4, 2021

¹⁰ Encyclical Letter of Pope Francis, *Fratelli Tutti* no.8

*and wise man. This meeting did me good. It is a light. These wise men are everywhere, because the wisdom of God has been spread throughout the world."*¹¹

We have all undoubtedly known, in a sufficiently exceptional way for it to create an inner upheaval, this experience of spiritual encounter with a believer from another religion whom we recognise, and who recognises us, as a true believer. How good it is to sense that the Pope also knows this experience which is the salt of our lived reality as Church in Algeria. The pictures of that meeting made this communion of hearts discernible.

The Holy Father continues: *"The same thing is true with the saints, not only those who are canonized, but the everyday saints, those whom I call "the saints next door", saints – both men and women – who live their faith, whatever it may be, with consistency, who live human values with consistency, fraternity with consistency. I think we have to discover these people, to make them known, because there are so many of them."*¹²

What do we mean by this expression the same thing? Does the Holy Father say that we can officially recognize saints in Islam? In any case, we have all met these saints next door, and some of them are of the Muslim faith. These men and women who do good in the name of their faith, who engage in a social-minded and selfless in civil society, who battle so that their families might live in dignity, who struggle with a child severely handicapped, who, in the face of illness, demonstrate hope in the highest degree, ...

Listening to Pope Francis talk about his meeting with Grand Ayatollah Sistani, I remembered our questions during the preparation for the celebration of the beatification: what place should be reserved for Mohammed Bouchikhi, the young Muslim murdered at the same time as Pierre Claverie? Could his photo appear among the blessed on the banner that would be displayed during the celebration, or as it appears on the icon (which the artist felt inspired to depict)? We did not feel authorized to do so, but his name was inscribed in colour after that of Pierre Claverie and the nineteen beatified. A discreet nod, rich in meaning. How wonderful it is to sense that others share and understand our experience of Church in the Muslim world, in what is best and most beautiful, not only in what is most difficult.

The meeting between the Holy Father and the Grand Ayatollah Sistani, like that with the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar, reminds us that it is not possible to speak of fraternity without living concrete experiences of fellowship which give flesh to fraternity. Then, for a time, fraternity has almost no need for words. However, we still need to articulate these experiences. What do we mean when we say fraternity?

¹¹ Apostolic voyage of Pope Francis to Iraq – Press conference on the return flight, March 8, 2021

¹² Ibid.

Fraternity – what do we mean?

Far from being some feeble aspiration which everyone can support, fraternity is in reality an exacting value. It is chosen as much as it is received, and it plunges its roots deep in the mystery of the cross.

2.1 Fraternity is difficult

We do not choose our brothers and sisters, nor do we choose to be brother or sister. We are born human and share bonds of blood, tribe, ethnicity, religion. Far from the idealistic dream of "all people in the world linking arms", fraternity draws boundaries, designates memberships. As much as they might be life-giving, they are not necessarily havens of peace. The Bible opens with the murder of Abel, who farms animals, by Cain, who farms the land. The first murder in the Bible is fratricide. Fraternity is not in itself a fortress against violence. It may be the crucible, the closed space where all sorts of mockery and jealousy ferment. Our religious and parish communities, very human realities, are no exception. These boundaries, without which fraternity lacks its constitutive "we", create an inside and an outside. We are or we are not.

We experience this feeling in a particular way in Algeria, where the fraternity linked to cultural and religious affiliation holds such an important place. We may feel close to our friends, co-workers and neighbours, feel welcome and accepted, but never be entirely. This is both poverty and richness. Those of us who have made the choice for Algeria, for decades, even for life – some of whom have been able to obtain Algerian nationality – know that the strength of our witness in this country lies in the fact of, at the same time, being part of and not being part of. Likewise, Christians born in Algeria, even if they do not feel the same cultural gap, they also have the painful experience of distance, including sometimes with those closest to them. Discreetly, with humility and understanding, they need to work harder at fraternity and resist the temptation to set themselves apart. In the name of their faith, they need to be even better parents, spouses, friends, co-workers, citizens.

2.2 Fraternity, received and chosen

If human fraternity needs limits – an us – in order to exist, it needs at the same time to go beyond these limits. Without this, fraternity turns inwards and becomes but a shadow of itself. Our fraternities are plural: family, national, cultural, religious. One is not meant to erase the others. Each enriches the other and shapes us as human beings, with all the depth of our

individual histories and our relationships. They are not mutually exclusive. The awareness of belonging to a fundamental, visceral "us" is a necessary first step to break free from it, to discover these other "us", until becoming aware of an "us" which is large enough to embrace the whole of humanity. This is the necessary transition from received fraternity to chosen fraternity.

Chosen fraternity, with a strong taste of friendship, this is what we experience here on a daily basis. Despite appearances, there is nothing commonplace about it. It has had to overcome the obstacles of religious difference, prejudices and fear on both sides. We know its value.

Fraternity, taken in its most ordinary as much as its most transcendent sense, is an essential sign of our humanity. Indeed, there is no human without fraternity, taken in its existential meaning. At the same time, humanity as a whole cannot survive if it does not find the way to move beyond fraternity through fraternity itself.

How then can we see in fraternity an ordinary value, in the sense of a value shared across humanity rather than a value specific to Christianity? All the more so since fraternity has its roots in the heart of the Gospel and carries within it the pinnacle of Christian witness.

2.3 And the Verb became brother

This expression of Christian de Chergé shows the extent to which, far from being a theologically weak and ordinary value, fraternity is at the heart of the Christian experience, from the incarnation to the cross.

From the mystery of the incarnation ...

One of the great revolutions of Jesus is to break with the concept of brotherhood by blood or lineage which clearly the case for the Jewish world in which he grew up. In the gospel, mention is made of his family's incomprehension in the face of his public life. When they come and say to him: "Here are your mother and your brothers standing outside. They want to talk to you", Jesus answers: "Who is my mother, who are my brothers? (...) Whoever does the will of my Father in heaven, that is my brother, my sister, my mother"¹³. This response, shocking at a certain level shocking but liberating at another, forces us to consider as our brothers and our sisters all those who do good, whatever their religion, or their lack of religion.

¹³ Matt 12: 47-50

Renouncing the primacy of blood allegiance makes Jesus available for all the encounters that enfold the Gospels. This availability gives shape to a new form of fraternity which will become an ideal of Christian life offered to all. It is the basis of the consecrated Christian life which has been so important in structuring the life of our Church in Algeria. Choosing consecrated celibacy means renouncing a conjugal and familial "we", and that comes at a cost. But this cost is the price to pay for a unique relationship with the world which finds its meaning only in a profusion of fraternity.

This relationship with the world has, for centuries, provided the impetus for all the Church's charitable and educational activity. The Church cannot allow itself to be confined within confessional boundaries without betraying itself. Holding firmly to one's specific identity is not to be confused with a narrowing of the breadth of our fraternity. On the contrary, the vitality of our Christian identity is measured by our capacity to be a brother and sister.

It is part of the DNA of our Church in Algeria not to limit the horizon of fraternity to the Christian community. Almost all of our action, personal and collective, is not only blind to religious affiliation, it is directed entirely towards the Muslim human situation in which we live and which is given to us to love. This is obvious to us, but it is not obvious to all. A troublesome question always resurfaces: "But why are they doing this?" It is in this open question that we discover the force of our witness, more than in the words we use to try to answer it.

In his quest for universal brotherhood, Charles de Foucauld, after his sudden conversion, explores without ceasing to experience what "universal brother" means. And he will be a universal brother, not by announcing the gospel as he had initially imagined, but by passionately studying the language and culture of the Tuareg populations. It is he who writes the first dictionary of the Tamasheq language and transcribes a whole body of poetry previously handed down orally from generation to generation. He becomes more of a universal brother by taking seriously the specific "we" of his Tuareg brothers, and not from the ideal of brotherhood that he had formulated in his head. It takes two to be brother or sister.

... to the mystery of the cross

If fraternity has a price, it is because it costs us something. A brother or sister forces us beyond predefined limits. We sign up to a solidarity which does not calculate at the outset what that solidarity might imply. In his encyclical letter *Fratelli tutti*, the Holy Father offers a commentary on the parable of the Good Samaritan who takes care of a stranger-enemy. He doesn't know where this detour will take him, nor does he know how much it will cost him, but the Samaritan gives his time and opens a line of credit with the innkeeper.

To commit to fraternity is to accept going into deep water until you lose your footing. Sometimes we become discouraged, we feel unaccepted, we want to give up. It is at these times too, and not just when all is well, that we can feel a form of grounding that is more about inner command than love. It was in the moments when I felt Bishop Teissier seized by incomprehension, faced with this or that reaction or situation, that I sensed most his unwavering attachment to Algeria.

At its purest, fraternity finds its summit in Christ's gift of his life for the salvation of the whole world. This ultimate gift is the model of Christian martyrdom. *"There is no greater love than to lay down your life for those you love."*¹⁴ The decision made by Pope Francis to declare blessed the 19 members of our Church who were assassinated between May 1994 and August 1996, is a recognition of the evangelical value of the witness given by all the members of our Church during this difficult period. It presented a challenge to explain the meaning of beatification outside of its usual context, the Catholic Church. The solidarity of these men and women with a people, at the risk of their lives, has been understood as a sign of fraternity in the highest sense. It was this sign of fraternity that touched hearts.

"My life is given to God and to Algeria": the expression of Christian de Chergé in his spiritual testament perfectly expresses this double horizon of a given life, eyes both raised to God and turned towards our brothers and sisters in humanity. There is no One without the others.

¹⁴ John 15: 13

Relooking at the life of our Church, some ideas

3.1 A fraternal Church

Our Church is fraternal. Even if from the inside we often see the back of the canvas, with its knots and threads that seem to go all over the place, this is the image we give; and this image is not only true, but is an important part of our witness. "By this everyone will know that you are my disciples if you have love for one another."¹⁵

In our religious communities

We live this fraternity within communities of consecrated life. This form of fraternal life is a sign of contradiction for the world in general, and for the Muslim world in particular, which has no equivalent. Its importance is all the greater. How do we explain that in Tiaret, it is important that four men live as brothers a life of sharing goods, prayer, and hospitality, when a single priest would suffice for the service of the small student Christian community? Consecrated community life is difficult and is sometimes the cause of real suffering, especially because of the small size of our religious communities. This difficulty is not meant to make us feel guilty, but rather should be understood as an essential part of our specific witness. It is good to show in the concrete reality of our lives that we are not angels, but that we carry an ideal that goes beyond us in *clay vessels*.

In our parishes

We live this fraternity in our parish communities. Their size is modest, and none of the priests devotes all his time to the service of the Christian community. We are thus given the opportunity to live more fully a fraternity and a co-responsibility that does not pay too much attention to the distinction between clergy and laity. We can undoubtedly go even further on this path of co-responsibility, especially in sharing the Word of God.

This simplicity of relationship does not escape the students with whom we live in a fraternal union, which softens the differences of status. How many tell us that before coming to Algeria, they had never had the experience of a close relationship with their parish priest, much less with their bishop. This relationship of fraternity is verified by the involvement of some of them in the life of our parish communities, to the point of becoming key members. When they leave Algeria, we are sorry to see the departure of brothers and sisters, who have become friends. Living with them closely but respectfully is not an obstacle to the pastoral accompaniment of these young adults; on the contrary, it is an opportunity for them, and for us.

¹⁵John 13, 25

With our migrant brothers and sisters

We live this fraternity also with our brothers and sisters who are migrants, in particular by visiting them in prison. These relationships work deeply in us. They help us move from a form of fraternalism to a true fraternal relationship. We must shed the superiority of one who is in a position to help, so as to enter into a relationship of greater regard for the other. Feeling admiration for this or that person has helped me make this transition, especially the fundamental awareness that he or she could have been in my place and I in theirs. I believe I perceived this transition in the life of Father Thierry Becker. As his strength left him, he seemed to feel closer to his migrant brothers and sisters, to the point that one morning, after a bad night in the hospital, he confided to me that he had prayed to a young migrant whom he had accompanied in his dying moments and felt himself accompanied in getting through the trials of the night.

With the Algerian people

We live this fraternity with the inhabitants of this country. This fraternity, as individual Christians and as a Church, with men and women of the Muslim religion, is the singular vocation of our Church since the independence of Algeria. This fraternity, which holds out its hand, transcending religious prejudices and the wounds of history, is not self-evident, and that is what makes it so precious. Our institutions, our activity and education centres, our libraries, these "platforms of encounter", to use Pierre Claverie's expression, are at the service of this fraternity. There they find their true purpose, even more than in rendering services even of high quality. Our initiatives have a twofold value, as a real service and as a precious sign.

This fraternal link to Algerian society was obvious to the great men and women who preceded us, who made the choice of Algeria for themselves, because of their personal history. It is not the same today, with the internationalization of the members of our Church. This situation should not lead us to relativize the particular vocation of our Church, but on the contrary to appreciate it. In fact, we do not last long in Algeria if we are not seized, without always being able to put it into words, by this fraternity freely chosen for a people whom we did not have to choose.

The arrival over the past twenty years of students and people on the move may have raised fears of a pastoral refocusing on the Christian community to the detriment of the relationship with the Algerian world. Not only has this not been the case, but our brothers and sisters who are students or migrants are privileged agents in building up fraternity. They experience it in the places where they live, at university, in their neighbourhoods, at work, in prison. It is beautiful to feel the bonds being forged, to the point that this or that person feels at home in an Algerian family.

3.2 A citizen Church, of Algeria and the world

Our Church is often seen as a foreign institution, even though it has the status of an Algerian association. Nevertheless, it wants to exercise the right of citizenship that is tacitly acknowledged because of its history in independent Algeria. The only right it claims is the right to exercise its duties as a citizen in Algerian society today, with the discretion of those who know they are guests. That is already a lot, and it can never be taken for granted. It can be painful not always to be able to do the good one would like to do.

Speaking of a citizen Church does not mean taking sides or supporting political demands. The Church's duty of discretion has to do with the fraternal attitude of one who accompanies with good will and at a certain distance, who perhaps enlightens, but who never dictates or commands. The Church is in the world but not of the world. It cannot be confused with any political party in any country in the world, especially not in Algeria.

In helping migrants, for example, we do not join the advocacy campaigns led by NGOs or Algerian associations whose purpose that is, and which have the legitimacy to do so. We favour the discreet pastoral care of the Good Samaritan. By acting in this way, we are aware of participating in the life of society by providing emergency aid and support to highly vulnerable people. Here as elsewhere, these people challenge society with questions that range from very broad issues of social justice at the global level to very concrete matters of daily subsistence and the most basic human dignity. Both enter fully into the field of citizenship and fraternity.

The Church has wanted to behave as a citizen in many ways, first by commitment to the service of education and health, then, after the nationalization of these two sectors in 1975-76, by libraries and other activity centres. We can legitimately hope that the tens and tens of thousands of students who have visited our libraries for several decades have been marked, in addition to the acquisition of university knowledge, by the welcome, the service, the relationship from which they benefited during their studies. The absolute absence of any proselytizing aim, the profound disinterestedness of the one who gives without expecting anything in return, may have given them a taste for a world that does not need cultural and religious barriers in order to be constructed. What is true for young Algerian students is just as true for women, children, the elderly, the sick, people in great human and material difficulty whom we can reach. Or again, for all the people who have found or rediscovered the happiness of going out on Fridays to discover nature, the beauty of their country, and to taste the joy of sharing moments of conviviality and friendship. This pastoral care of the outstretched hand, with a strong flavour of the Gospel, participates in the construction of a more fraternal world.

We then begin to dream of a world where each religious tradition would be keen to bring the best of itself, not to win over others, but to build with others a plural and fraternal society, respectful of everyone's beliefs. We have this dream in common with Khaled Ben Tounès, sheikh of the Sufi brotherhood al-Alawiyya. It is at the origin of the International Day of Living Together in Peace (May 16) supported by Algeria and voted by the UN General Assembly unanimously on December 8, 2017. We wanted this initiative to give its name to the esplanade of the sanctuary of Our Lady of Santa Cruz. Providence willed that the "Living Together in Peace" esplanade was inaugurated on the occasion of the beatification on December 8, 2018, one year to the day after the UN vote!

3.3 A confessional but not proselytising Church

A confessional Church ...

We are a "confessing Church" in an environment that does not hesitate to confess its faith and ceaselessly challenges us regarding our own beliefs. Our life constantly sends us back to our anchorage in Christ, without which it would immediately lose its essential meaning and quickly sink into the absurd. Christ is for each of us the ultimate answer to the question of the meaning of our presence, this question of why? Living our faith in Algeria stimulates our faith, which does not remain "under a bushel measure".

This is true for us, who are active in the life of this Church. It is also true for many students who appropriate the faith of their childhood and find themselves involved in the life of a Church in which, in their own country, they were only more or less passive consumers - to the point that some of them ask to receive the sacraments of baptism and confirmation. We are so impressed and touched by the human and spiritual journey taken by so many of them. It is true for some of our migrant brothers and sisters, who find in prayer and fraternal attention the strength to face the hardships of their lives and the trials they encounter. Prison chaplains are privileged witnesses to overwhelming faith journeys which no doubt do not leave their Muslim cellmates indifferent. This is true for those born in this country for whom the mysterious irruption of Christ into their life radically changes its course, in its smallest everyday details.

Accompanying them on the pathway of their faith challenges the lukewarmness and comfort in which our own faith always runs the risk of withering away.

... but not proselytising

If ours is a “confessing Church”, it does not, however proselytize. The difference may appear slight, but it is nevertheless a difference of nature and not only of degree. This difference has a theological foundation and has little to do with the prohibition enacted by Law.¹⁶ Pope Francis, in a manner as vigorous as it is surprising from a pope, himself pronounced this prohibition in the cathedral of Rabat and put us on the track of its deep meaning:

*“And here there comes to mind the advice that Saint Francis gave to his brothers when he sent them out: ‘Go and preach the Gospel: and if necessary, also with words’. This means, dear friends, that our mission as baptised, as priests, and as consecrated persons is not determined particularly by our number or by the space that we occupy, but by our capacity to produce and create change, wonder, and compassion; by the way we live as disciples of Jesus, among those with whom we share daily life, its joys, sorrows, sufferings, and hopes. In other words, **the paths of mission do not pass through proselytizing. Please don’t proselytize!** Let us remember Benedict XVI, who said: “The Church does not increase by proselytizing, but by attraction, by witness.” No, the paths of mission do not pass through proselytizing, which always leads to a dead end, but through our way of being with Jesus and with others. So, the problem does not lie in being few, but in being insignificant, a salt that no longer has the savour of the Gospel - that is the problem! - or a light that no longer illuminates anything.”¹⁷*

It is worth dwelling for a little while on this temptation to proselytize that Pope Francis asks us to resist. Proselytizing is so close to the command to bear witness to this Christ who gives us life, to proclaim the good news of salvation to all nations. But it spoils the construction of fraternity. We cannot call ourselves brothers and sisters, and at the same time claim to have the last word on the faith of others, to the point of wanting to turn them away from it.

The temptation to proselytise

The temptation to proselytise seems to find support in the commandment given by our sacred Scriptures - at least according to one possible way of reading them. For us Christians, however, it is important to keep in mind that the interfaith dimension is absent from the universe of the Gospels, which knows only Israel and the nations. The Gospel can therefore be used as an argument of authority only by adopting one interpretation and by putting greater value on one passage to the detriment of another. It is important to be aware of this.

Proselytizing also finds support in a negative judgment on the tradition and Scriptures of one believer, which may easily seem devoid of reason to the believer in another religion. It is a

¹⁶ cf. Ordinance n ° 06-03 of February 28, 2006

¹⁷ Apostolic journey of Pope Francis to Morocco - Meeting with priests, religious, consecrated persons and members of the Ecumenical Council of Churches, Rabat Cathedral, Sunday March 31, 2019.

fact that only when read with the eyes of faith can the element of truth that they convey be perceived. A pejorative understanding of the other's Scriptures and traditions, which is as painful as it is stupid, is generally part of a defensive reaction ... from which we must defend ourselves!

Do not fear the truth

What disturbs us in the religion of the other is that it exists, that it has a place in the Revelation of the unique plan of God, of which our religion gives an exhaustive account. We must therefore face the fact that what poses a problem to us is not only what seems obviously false to us, but also that element of truth which gives life to trustworthy men and women, and which escapes us. Subtly and unconsciously, part of the temptation to proselytize is motivated by the need to attack the other's truth even more than his "error". This is not the least of its paradoxes. Awareness of this opens up a possible way to overcome the temptation to proselytize. What in fact is there to fear from the truth, even from the truth that escapes us?

Accept that we don't know all about God

This transcendence was perfectly put into words by Pierre Claverie: *"I am a believer, I believe that there is a God, but I do not claim to possess this God, neither through Jesus, who reveals him to me, nor through the dogmas of my faith. No one possesses God, no one possesses the truth, and I need the other's truth."*¹⁸

Are these words of a bishop, who is responsible for proclaiming the Gospel and defending its truth, pure madness, or great wisdom? In any case, they are a formidable antidote to the temptation to proselytize. I can rightly believe that my religious tradition designates God to me with certainty, as one indicates a direction; but no religion can claim to enclose God in a dogmatic definition however correct. God necessarily overflows it on all sides. As a Christian, I profess a Christ, true God and true man, the bearer of a plan of salvation for all humankind. But it would be foolish to claim to have the last word on this Christ and his project of Salvation, so much does it infinitely transcend the knowledge and awareness that I can humanly have of it.

Those words of Pierre Claverie carry two essential consequences.

The first is to dare to recognise that we don't know everything about God. Fundamentalisms feed on certainties about God: they have in common the insane claim to possess God. As long as we refuse to admit ignorance about God, we can have no real respect for the other's freedom of conscience. We would only be recognising their freedom to be in error and to persevere in it!

¹⁸ Pierre Claverie, *Humanité Plurielle*, Ed du Cerf, 2008, p 141 20

The second beneficial consequence is that we do not have to be afraid of our differences of creed, of the different formulations of our respective faiths. In other words, between believers of different religions, the question is not first that of orthodoxy, of believing rightly, but that of orthopraxy, of acting rightly. If our differences of faith come up against an unsurpassable mystery, which no theological disputation will resolve, we can on the other hand challenge ourselves very concretely on our action. And there is plenty to do, as our action is so much conditioned by our faith. Show me how you live, and I'll see what you believe. The marvel is to be able to work together, believers of different religions, in the name of the faith that dwells in us, to build a more just society in which everyone is respected in their dignity. Believers of different religions doing good together speak loudly of this God whom they can never enclose in words.

The Pope and the Imam

This is exactly the position of Pope Francis and the Grand Imam of al-Azhar. It is not about two religious dignitaries who bring face to face their respective truth about God in an interfaith dialogue, no matter how fruitful and benevolent, in the secret hope of convincing the other for his good. These are two men who recognise each other as trustworthy believers, even if they cannot recognise themselves in the dogmatic content of the other's faith, and who together have a convergent outlook on the world as kingdom of God.

They do not seek to convert each other. Are they therefore unfaithful to their personal vocation and to the high mission entrusted to them? Do they show a lack of courage, when they both know that their approach will not be understood and will be contested, even in their close entourage? Is Pope Francis a tepid disciple of Christ, on the grounds that his Holy Name is hardly mentioned in the Abu Dhabi declaration, and so little in the encyclical letter *Fratelli tutti*? Is this common view of the world, this common orthopraxy, a first step before moving on to serious matters, namely the confrontation of our orthodoxies, of our certainties about God? I do not believe that.

This is a feat of athletes of the faith who bring about an essential shift in the dialectic of dialogue and proclamation. This dialogue, rather than being a preliminary to some hypothetical proclamation, constitutes the beginnings of a chosen fraternity that takes a leap of confidence to witness together to a God who is greater. That is why this document on human fraternity is not just one more text or initiative, but a paradigm shift, which is so closely linked to our life and mission in the Church in Algeria.

Mirror effect

Living in the other person's house ¹⁹ allows us to benefit from the mirror held out to me by what is beautiful or less beautiful in the other's life, in order to look at our own way of acting. It also allows us to refuse to do to others what we would not like them to do to us.

We meet people daily who tell us that they are acquainted with our religion and know why it is not a true path to God. We know how much we struggle to recognize our faith in the caricature that fills the speaker with certainties. In return, we should be wary whenever we are tempted to look negatively on Islam. There is perhaps, also in Islam, an element of truth that is "hidden from the wise and learned and is revealed to little ones" - those "saints next door" that Pope Francis talks about.

Likewise, we all have the experience of those people who feel compelled to proclaim their Muslim faith and try to convert us, as if to apologize for entering into a relationship with us, and often finding in it a sense of well-being. Conversely, let us feel free, with the freedom of the disciples of Jesus, to enter into fraternity and friendship with Muslims without feeling guilty about not seeking to proclaim explicitly to them the good news of the Risen Christ. No doubt Christ will know how to make his way into their hearts and ours, through a relationship free from any ulterior motives. No fraternal relationship or friendship is built without the recognition of the other in all that they are, starting with their faith.

We know how difficult it is for us to listen to self-referencing speeches with the Koran and the hadiths as irrefutable arguments of authority cutting short all debate. From the lectures I attended on Saint Thomas Aquinas, I have not forgotten the reversal that he wanted to bring about between the theological and philosophical approaches: it is not because an affirmation comes from God that it is true; it is because it is true that it comes from God. This reversal rules out an appeal to the argument from authority, but it gives the freedom to enter into relationship and debate with people of another religion without the immediate barrier of religious difference. This is what Pope Francis does extensively, notably in the encyclicals *Laudato Si* and *Fratelli tutti*. By limiting the number of references to the body of dogmas and the Bible, he reveals their deep meaning and richness to the greatest number, Christians and non-Christians alike.

So, let us feel free to confess this faith that makes us live – "if necessary, also with words" - on the condition of being aware and respectful of that which escapes us in the faith of the other. That is the necessary condition for entering into a real relationship of fraternity. Afterwards, the Spirit blows where he wills ...

¹⁹ Bernard Janicot, *Vivre dans la maison de l'autre*, Kartala 2010 22

3.4 A Church made of Christians and non-Christians

Far be it from me to want to make Muslim friends into Christians despite themselves! But we know that we cannot live and give our witness without our Algerian Muslim partners. These are the people who carry with us the responsibility for the animation of our centres, of our activities, and even of our ecclesial life. These are all the formators, the women who participate in the activities of the craft workshops, the students who study in our libraries, the parents of the children entrusted to us, the heads of associations with which we work. Without their trust, we cannot live our ideal of the Church in touch with the world. They are also our friends quite simply, or those who take the initiative to participate in a prayer for a particular occasion, or for the feasts of Christmas, Easter, or Pentecost. Everyone, in different ways, is aware that they are doing something that engages them. Perhaps they must face reproachful looks when they pass through the doors of our centres, when they entrust their children to us for activities. To do this, they need to take a big leap in confidence.

Once we know our witness is inseparable from this trust placed in us, what is the perimeter of our Church? It is not expressed in terms of territory but of relationship. Just as Pope Francis says that fraternity is "the new frontier of humanity", so we can think of fraternity as the frontier of the Church. Therefore, let us not be afraid to stretch out our hand tirelessly: we know from experience that there is always someone to take it. Hands are also constantly extended to us, which we must take hold of. Among the most symbolic for me was the invitation of members of the Alawiyya Sufi Brotherhood to celebrate together, but without confusion, the Christmas vigil and the birth of the Prophet, on the night of December 24, 2015, in the cathedral of Oran.

Muslims and Christians at the service of the same hope is a strong spiritual experience, which we are given to live daily, which it is important never to trivialize, but to marvel at constantly. In each of our simplest encounters something is played out of the meeting of Pope Francis and the Grand Iman of al-Azhar and gives life to their common hope.

The beatification and the meeting in Abu Dhabi sparked in the diocese, particularly in Oran, Mascara, Sidi Bel Abbès, the creation of small interfaith groups for meeting and exchange. A collection of texts by Pierre Claverie, especially conducive to these exchanges, has been prepared. We, Christians and Muslims, must repeat and multiply these initiatives of meetings and fraternity by every means.

In the diocese, we are fortunate to be privileged witnesses of the beautiful Islamic-Christian adventure of the Focolare initiated some forty years ago in Tlemcen. Christians and Muslims, of different status and ages, consecrated celibates or married, live a true communion at the service of the same charism of unity. Both are transformed by it. There again, no theological confrontation but the primacy of respect and taking seriously the faith of the other,

with eyes turned towards a world to be built and towards a single God intimately present in the life of each one.

We all know the happiness that comes from doing good. We know that when we can do it together, it's even better. But doing good together, Christians and Muslims, brings us into another dimension. Jesus says in the Gospel that when two or three are gathered in his name, he is among them. I feel this divine presence in a particular way when I am involved in a project, in the name of my faith, with Muslim partners. We do not call this presence by the same name, but we live the same spiritual experience of a God present in our midst. Dear God, how good that is!

Fraternity in action: the *Building Fraternity* project

It is impossible to think of fraternity apart from solidarity with our brothers and sisters in humanity. It demands charity (caritas) in action. That has strongly marked the history of the Church in general, and in Algeria in particular. The nationalization of the health and education sectors in the years 1975-76 has fostered creativity and the emergence of multiple initiatives until today. This diversity is a great richness for our diocese.

The “*Diakonia - Living stones*” project

For the past fifteen years, the “Diakonia - Living stones project” has been structuring and energizing the pastoral life of our diocese by permitting each “permanent person” (priests, consecrated persons, volunteers) to be accompanied, in order to integrate successfully into the Church and the country, and to receive an allowance that makes it possible for him or her to live the mission, whatever its form. The goal is to enable everyone to give the best of themselves, in a Church institution or in society, according to their talents and their own charisms, rather than being obliged to put themselves at the service of existing projects or institutions.

Caritas Algeria

Faced with the need to find the means to finance our projects, in recent years we have worked a lot to organize a “Caritas Algeria”, in which the four diocesan “Caritas” bodies would be coordinated and supported by a national office. It is a tool that helps us move forward together in the direction of greater transparency, transferability, and visibility of our actions and our activity centres. It does not merge with the diaconal life of our diocese but supports it and provides it with a general framework.

The new project: *Building fraternity*

Starting from the letter “Caritas Algeria, Mission and Vision”²⁰ and the concrete reality of our diocese, we were able to construct the “Building fraternity” project. This project will be our horizon for the next few years.

From the actions proposed by each of the fifteen identifiable activity centres in the diocese, we have determined seven priority objectives. Each centre can identify with one or more of the priority objectives selected. Among these objectives, we became aware that

²⁰ “Caritas Algeria, Mission and Vision” letter from the four bishops of Algeria, August 2020

there is one that is found in each of the centres, and which explains the purpose of all our activities. This is why it gives the name to the whole project:

"Contribute to building fraternity: to change the way we look at cultural and religious differences, through concrete experiences of fraternization, promoting social mixing and dialogue between cultures and religions."

The "Building Fraternity" project brings together all our activities, whether in the cultural, educational, or social fields, in a single panorama. It thus promotes unity, while preserving autonomy. Each activity, in its individuality, is set in the context of a greater whole, which gives it an additional meaning, because it thus participates in a visible way in the totality of the mission of our diocesan Church. This project can be summarized in the following two tables:

- The first presents each of our activity centres with their various objectives in colour. It can be read horizontally, from the autonomous activity centres, or vertically, from the common objectives.
- The second indicates the objectives identified, with the results expected for each one: a common objective, to contribute towards the building of fraternity, and specific objectives which make it possible to trace different faces of fraternity.

The activity centres of the diocese	Goals						
Paroisse d'Oran - Pierre Claverie Centre							
Carteau Centre							
Centre for Economic and Social Documentation							
Sophia Library							
Sanctuary Notre-Dame de Santa Cruz							
Library of the White Sisters							
Women's Garden							
Biomedical Library							
"My House" (Little Sisters of the Poor)							
Parish of Mostaganem – Dar Toyor el Jennah							
Parish of Mascara –El Amel Centre							
Parish of Sidi Bel Abbès – La Chapelle Centre							
Centre El Hayat							
Parish of Tlemcen							
Paroisse de Tiaret							

Goals	Résultats
Contribute to building fraternity: to change the way we look at cultural and religious differences, through concrete experiences of fraternization, promoting social mixing and dialogue between cultures and religions.	"Fraternization processes" are created, where "human fraternity" is built over time.
Build a "culture of encounter" (FT 215) through all forms of cultural expression, the promotion of citizenship, awareness of ecology and the value of tangible and intangible heritage.	Knowledge, culture, citizenship, ecology, and heritage are promoted as so many shared values.
Work to increase self-esteem in women and, thus, to change the way society looks at them.	Women have spaces and opportunities for expression, responsibility, meeting, creativity, personal development. where they acquire greater self-esteem.
Promote the education of children and young people as an essential means of opening up to cultural, linguistic, and religious diversity, empowerment, and creativity.	Children and families benefit from quality activities, in suitable places, with motivated and trained supervisors.
Reach people in isolation from illness or age, supporting children with disabilities and their families, and taking care of elderly people in difficulty.	Children with disabilities (BMI, autism, etc.) and their families find support and care when these are lacking in local health structures. In our structures, elderly people who are isolated or in difficulty are welcomed and there are possibilities for training in personal care.
To be present to people on the move and to any vulnerable person, helping them to preserve their human dignity in fraternal attention.	The most deprived people (women, children, sick and prisoners) benefit from welcome, listening, support, support for emergency material needs and help with social integration (care, school, etc.).
Be attentive to all "permanent persons" (all people sent to Algeria for an ecclesial mission) of the Church in Oranie, by offering pastoral integration, support, and an allowance.	Every "permanent person" is accompanied to integrate successfully into the Church and into the country and receives an allowance regardless of the mission he or she fulfils.

Conclusion

In ending this letter, I realize how fortunate we are to commit our life to following Christ in this country. Through my poor words, it is the richness of each of our encounters that is heard.

The singularity of our Church life in the Muslim world obliges us constantly to refound the meaning of our presence, and this is a powerful stimulation to theological reflection. Seeing Pope Francis engage ever further on the path of fraternity, it occurred to me that there was, in his call to build fraternity, material for extending and renewing "the meaning of our encounters."²¹

What do we do when we visit a friendly family, visit prisoners or the sick, come to the aid of a person in a precarious situation, organize outings and celebrations, animate the life of our libraries, our craft workshops, or our parishes? With each person we meet, we build fraternity. Building fraternity is not about "doing" but about unveiling a fraternity already there, waiting to be revealed and named. And as soon as it becomes conscious, fraternity calls for fraternity and builds it.

I have chosen to quote Pope Francis extensively, so that together we can reassess this pilgrimage of fraternity to which he calls us. It would be misleading to see in it an excess of papal magisterium. It is true that for me what Pope Francis says about fraternity is "the word of the Gospel", not because it is a Supreme Pontiff who says it, but because I find in the commitment of the man and his boldness, the savour, the freedom, and the subversive power of the Gospel. I find there the ideal for which I felt the call to commit my life to following Christ.

For my part, I don't want to experience anything other than working to build this fraternity on the scale of God's plan for all of humanity. It is my happiness to be able to do so here in communion with people of a different religion, culture, and faith. Our common mission is based on the construction of this fraternity that is infinitely respectful of the mystery of the other, even as far as the inviolable sanctuary of his or her faith, whether or not this can be identified with the dogmas of a religion. Everything else is given in addition.

"May the Virgin Mary support us with her prayer, so that the fraternity and the communion that we experience in these Easter days, may become our style of life and the soul of our relationships."²²

²¹ cf. CERN document 1979

²² Pope Francis, Regina Coeli, April 2, 2018

It is the path of conversion of heart to which we, Christians and Muslims, are constantly called. May the Spirit of Pentecost, who blows where he wills, renew us individually and as a Church, may he urge us to move ever further on "this path of fraternity which starts from God and returns to God."²³

Oran, on the feast of Pentecost 2021

+ fr. Jean-Paul Vesco op

²³ Pope Francis, Angelus, August 2, 2020

