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BUREAU DE PRESSE DU SAINT-SIEGE
PRESSEAMT DES HEILIGEN STUHLS

BOLLETTINO

SALA STAMPA DELLA SANTA SEDE

N. 180623e

Saturday 23.06.2018

Audience with a delegation of the Emouna Fraternité Alumni Association

At 12.15 today, in the Sala dei Papi of the Apostolic Palace, the Holy Father Francis received in audience a delegation of the Emouna Fraternité Alumni Association.

The following is the Pope's address to those present:

Address of the Holy Father

Dear friends,

I welcome you with joy on the occasion of your trip to Rome. I thank the Co-Presidents for the presentation of the Association and I extend my cordial greeting to all of its members, as well as to the people of different religions and spiritualities with whom you are in relation.

I give thanks to God for the existence of your Association, which was established within the context of the "Emouna - L'Amphi des religions" programme, proposed and initiated by the Institute of Political Studies in Paris, with the participation of the great religions present in France. Indeed, I rejoice in the shared aspiration within your Association, which aims to strengthen the bonds of fraternity among the members of different religions, by furthering research work. In fact, within your course of study, whose initiators and participants I greet with gratitude, you demonstrate the possibility of living a healthy pluralism, respectful of the differences and values each of you brings.

You also witness, in a spirit of openness, the ability of religions to take part in public debate in a secularized society (see Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, 183; 255). And, moreover, thanks to the fraternal bonds established between you, you show that dialogue between believers of different religions is a necessary condition for contributing to peace in the world. I therefore encourage you to persevere on your path, taking care to combine three fundamental attitudes to foster dialogue: the duty of identity, the courage of otherness and the sincerity of intentions (cf. Address to participants in the International Peace Conference, Cairo, 28 April 2017).

You know, in fact, that true fraternity cannot be lived other than with this attitude of openness to others, which never seeks a conciliatory syncretism; on the contrary, it always seeks sincerely to enrich itself with differences, with the will to understand them in order to respect them better, because the good of each resides in the good of all. I invite you therefore to demonstrate with the quality of your relationships that “religion is not a problem but part of the solution: [...] it reminds us that it is necessary to raise the soul on High to learn to build the city of men” (*Ibid.*).

Thus, you can support each other to be like well-planted trees, rooted in the terrain of history and of your respective traditions; and, by doing so, contribute, with men and women of good will, to transform “every day the air polluted by hatred in the oxygen of fraternity” (*ibid.*). I encourage you to nurture a culture of meeting and dialogue, to promote peace and to defend, with gentleness and respect, the sacredness of every human life against any form of physical, social, educational or psychological violence. Urging you to pray for one another, I ask God for the gift of peace for each one of you. And I invoke the Father of all men to help you to walk as brothers on the path of encounter, dialogue and harmony in a spirit of collaboration and friendship.

With this hope, I invoke divine blessings on each of you and on the members of the “Emouna Fraternité Alumni” Association, as well as on all those participating in the “Emouna - L'Amphi des religions” programme. And do not forget, please, to pray for me too. Thank you.
