

Vatican stamps highlight papal engagement in interreligious dialogue

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The four designs in the series show: The pope’s January 2016 meeting with Rabbi Riccardo Di Segni, chief rabbi of Rome; his February 2019 meeting with Sheikh Ahmad el-Tayeb, grand imam of Egypt’s al-Azhar mosque and university; Pope Francis’ November 2019 meeting with Somdej Phra Maha Muneewong, supreme patriarch of Thailand’s Buddhist community; and his January 2015 meeting with Ndu-Kurukkal SivaSri T. Mahadeva, a Hindu leader, in Sri Lanka.

ROME — Pope Francis’ ongoing efforts to promote interreligious dialogue will be highlighted in a new series of Vatican stamps.

The series, which will be released in late February, feature photographs of some of the pope’s meetings over the past six years with leaders of other world religions. At the end of his weekly general audience Feb. 3, Pope Francis praised the decision of the United Nations to mark an International Day of Human Fraternity Feb. 4.

“I am very pleased that the nations of the entire world are joining in this celebration aimed at promoting interreligious and intercultural dialogue,” the pope said. The U.N. resolution establishing the day “recognizes ‘the contribution that dialogue among all religious groups can make toward an improved awareness and understanding of the common values shared by all humankind.’ May this be our prayer today and our commitment every day of the year.”

The Vatican Philatelic Office said the stamp series illustrates Pope Francis’ teaching in his encyclical “Fratelli Tutti” that, as the encyclical said, “the different religions,

based on their respect for each human person as a creature called to be a child of God, contribute significantly to building fraternity and defending justice in society.”

“Dialogue between the followers of different religions does not take place simply for the sake of diplomacy, consideration or tolerance. In the words of the bishops of India, ‘the goal of dialogue is to establish friendship, peace and harmony, and to share spiritual and moral values and experiences in a spirit of truth and love,’” the pope wrote in the encyclical.

The stamp series marks the beginning of the ninth year of Pope Francis’ pontificate, which begins March 13.