

## Pope Francis decries the burning of the Quran in Sweden



*Protest in Pakistan against burning of Quran copy in Stockholm (ANSA)*

In an interview with the United Arab Emirate's daily 'Al-Ittihad,' Pope Francis laments the burning of the Quran, Islam's holiest book, in Sweden, while urging individuals take to heart the values promoted in the Document on Human Fraternity.

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"I feel indignant and disgusted by these actions," Pope Francis expressed to Hamad Al-Kaabi, editor of the UAE's daily *Al-Ittihad*, regarding the burning of pages of the Quran in Sweden in recent days.

*"Any book considered sacred by its authors must be respected out of respect for its believers, and freedom of expression must never be used as an excuse to despise others, and to allow this, must be rejected and condemned."*

*Al-Ittihad* is an Arabic language newspaper published daily in the United Arab Emirates. It is part of the Abu Dhabi Media group, a government organization.

### **Health after surgery**

In the interview, Pope Francis spoke of his state of health after the recent abdominal surgery.

*"It was difficult, but now, thanks to God, I am better thanks to the commitment and professionalism of the doctors and nursing staff, whom I thank very much. I pray for them and their families, and for all the people who have written and prayed for me in these days."*

The Pope, recalling his visit to Abu Dhabi in 2019, expressed appreciation for the Commitment of the UAE and Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed for the path taken to spread brotherhood, peace and tolerance, and called for young people not to be left by adults in the grip of mirages and clashes of civilisations.

### **Protecting young people**

"In my opinion, the only way to protect young people from negative messages and false and fabricated news, and from the temptations of materialism, hatred and prejudice, is not to leave them alone in this battle, but to give them the necessary tools, which are freedom, discernment and responsibility.

"Freedom," he continued, "is what distinguishes a person. God created us free even to reject Him, freedom of thought and expression are essential to help them grow and learn." "We must never fall into the experience of treating young people as children incapable of choosing and making decisions," the Pontiff continued, "they are the present and investing in them means guaranteeing continuity," always following the golden rule of doing to others what you would like to be done to you.

Responding to a question about the Document on Human Fraternity, the Pope says he always gives it to the delegations he receives at the Vatican 'because I believe it is an important text not only for dialogue between religions, but for peaceful coexistence between all human beings. There will be the civilisation of brotherhood or that of enmity, either we build the future together or there will be no future.'

### **Need for builders of peace**

Pope Francis said he was pleased with the global community's acceptance of the document's message and objectives. "Human brotherhood is the antidote the world needs to heal from the poison of these wounds. The future of interreligious cooperation is based on the principle of reciprocity, respect for the other and truth'.

"Our task," adds Pope Francis, "is to transform the religious sense into cooperation, into fraternity, into concrete good works.

*"Today we need builders of peace, not makers of weapons; today we need builders of peace, not instigators of conflict; we need firefighters, not arsonists; we need advocates of reconciliation, not people who threaten destruction'."*

### **Concrete commitments**

Regarding concrete commitments in this regard, the Pope encouraging the charitable initiatives launched after the publication of the Document. "It is easy," the Pope said, "to talk about fraternity, but the true measure of brotherhood is what we actually do in a concrete way to help, support, nurture and welcome my brothers and sisters in humanity.

"Every good by its very nature must be for everyone indiscriminately. If I only do good to those who think or believe as I do, then my good is hypocrisy, because good knows no discrimination or exclusion."

Regarding the increase in terrorist threats, Pope Francis responded in the words of the document, condemning "all practices that threaten life such as genocide, terrorist acts, forced displacement, trafficking in human organs, abortion and euthanasia, and policies that support all of these."

### **Abrahamic House in Abu Dhabi**

The Pope expressed his appreciation for the Abrahamic House in Abu Dhabi, the space comprising a Church dedicated to St. Francis, a Mosque and a Synagogue, created to realise the principle of Human Fraternity. Underlining the climate and environmental emergency, the Holy Father appealed, "The only effective way to tackle this crisis is to find realistic solutions to the real problems of the ecological crisis. We must turn declarations into action before it is too late."