

Pope Says World Religious Leaders United by Truth, Beauty

By Estefania Aguirre

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Pope Francis told world religious leaders that the desire to search for truth, beauty and goodness is what keeps them all united.

“We feel close to all who, despite being from other traditions and religions, feel the desire to look for truth, beauty and goodness,” said the new Pope when he received the leaders at the Vatican today.

He met with Muslim leaders, the head of Rome's Jewish community Rabbi Riccardo di Segni and heads of other Christian denominations including Patriarch Bartholomew I of Constantinople in Turkey.

And it was the first time a Constantinople patriarch attended the Pope's inaugural Mass yesterday since the Great Schism between the Western and Eastern churches nearly 1,000 years ago.

“From my side I wish to ensure you my firm will to continue the path of ecumenical dialogue, which the (Second Vatican) Council initiated,” said Pope Francis at the Clementine Hall of his new home, the Apostolic Palace.

“The Catholic Church knows the importance of promoting friendship and mutual respect between men and women of diverse religious traditions,” he told the religious leaders and repeated the sentence twice.

Pope Francis noted that ecumenism can “do a lot for those who are poor, weak or suffer by promoting justice and peace.”

“But man reduces himself to the 'I' who produces and the 'I' who consumes,” he said.

The Pope thanked the Patriarch – who had initiated the gathering with a public speech to greet the pontiff – calling him Andrea, although his first name is Dimitrius. This acknowledgment has been regarded by some as thoughtful and ecumenically significant.

“By calling him 'Andrea,' – Andrew – the Pope was making an important statement,” explained Joan Lewis, EWTN's Rome bureau chief.

“For Catholics, the mandate was given by Jesus to Peter to found his Church and Popes are the successor of Peter.”

However, for the Orthodox, she told EWTN News, “that mandate was given to Peter's brother, Andrew, and that is why they believe they would be the one, true church founded by Jesus, that the patriarch is the successor of Andrew.”

“I am not sure Francis' predecessors ever referred to Bartholomew that way and it is ...

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