

Address of Fr. Talal Hachem
President of USEK
For the Human Fraternity Roundtable
February 4, 2021

Good evening everyone,

Your Excellency Monsignor Joseph Spiteri, and our distinguished speakers: Mr. ... (UAE embassy), Monsignor Akasheh, Sheikh Nokari and Dr. Mawla, thank you all for your rich perspectives and insights on the Human Fraternity document, signed on this very same day two years ago between His Holiness Pope Francis and His Eminence Sheikh Ahmed Al-Tayyeb, Grand Imam of Al-Azhar, and hosted by His Highness Sheikh Mohammad Bin Zayed, Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi.

It is a pride for me personally and for USEK, our beloved community, that is driven by the teachings of our founding Order, the Lebanese Maronite Order, with the guidance of our Superior General, Most Reverend Abbot Neemtallah Al Hachem, it is a pride for us to be upholding today **Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together** and celebrating the signing of this historic document that gives Human Fraternity the place it deserves in our lives.

Today, as already mentioned, we are celebrating the **2nd anniversary** of the signing of this declaration, which paves the way for **a pure and compassionate journey** to world peace and living together, needed today more than ever before!

The first steps of this journey have been undertaken in a very symbolic place, the United Arab Emirates, where human fraternity is honored, world peace is endorsed and living together is hailed.

Why this event at USEK?

In fact, the document, or this declaration, at its very beginning, reminds us that God has called all human beings, He has called **us**, to live together and to advocate the great values of justice, love, and peace. The document is also written **in the name of God** and in the name of all human **“brothers”** especially the poor, the vulnerable, and those in need (all needs included), in the name of all those of good will. It is written **on the basis of unity and equality**, in other terms, it is written on the basis of **human dignity**, that transcends boundaries, constraints and limitations, to rather reach an ultimate and sublime goal, **the common good**. In fact, as expressed by His Holiness Pope Francis in his Encyclical, Fratelli Tutti (and I quote) “When the dignity of the human person is respected, and his or her rights recognized and

guaranteed, creativity and interdependence thrive, and the creativity of the human personality is released through actions that further the common good”.[18]

The document calls also upon us “*all intellectuals, philosophers, religious figures, artists, media professionals and men and women of culture in every part of the world, to rediscover the values of peace, justice, goodness, beauty, human fraternity and coexistence in order to confirm the importance of these values as anchors of salvation for all, and to promote them everywhere*”. Today, in a way or another, we are responding to the call! The declaration, as a matter of fact, relates to each and every one of us! And His Holiness Pope Francis and His Eminence Sheikh Al-Tayyeb are holding us all **responsible** for fostering, nurturing, and spreading human fraternity values.

Today, given the current global, regional and local contexts, that unfortunately sometimes “make us neighbors, but do not make us brothers”, which is a concern also shared by His Holiness Pope Francis in his Encyclical Fratelli Tutti, we must prove that we have “learned our lesson”; we must prove that living together, which is the core and the backbone of Lebanon the message, is a source of richness for us all, and only by spreading this living together culture, we would thrive, prosper, and reach a safe haven.

At USEK, promoting peace and spreading its culture are not new; they stem in fact from a tradition that is deeply rooted in our mission, and today, what would be better than putting all what has been already done, throughout the years, at the service of a greater cause, and what would be better than tailoring academic and scientific activities to fit for a greater purpose which is **human fraternity for world peace and living together**.

It is for all these reasons that, through this event, I announce the founding of a **Chair for Human Fraternity at USEK!**

The Chair will have the mission of advocating and promoting the Declaration of Human Fraternity through various activities, events and research undertaken by both faculty and students in order to continuously **fulfill the call** stipulated in the Document **“to spread the culture of tolerance and of living together in peace” and to live** our human fraternity.

May the work of this Chair be up to the intentions underlying the signing of the historic document and may it mark its message every day!

Thank you!