



*To His Holiness Tawadros II  
Pope of Alexandria  
Patriarch of the See of Saint Mark*

Your Holiness, beloved brother in Christ,

In the joy of this Easter season, allow me above all to offer Your Holiness and all the holy Coptic Orthodox Church my best wishes in the Risen Lord. In that same Paschal joy, our Churches are today commemorating the eighth *Day of Friendship Between Copts and Catholics*. On this auspicious occasion, I assure Your Holiness of my closeness in prayer and gratitude for the bonds uniting the See of Saint Peter and the See of Saint Mark.

On this day, we not only celebrate the friendship between Copts and Catholics, but the very closeness of Jesus Christ himself who calls us his friends (cf. *Jn 15:15*). In this mutual bond of friendship, we are sustained by the powerful intercession and example of all those who have suffered in Christ's name, as a sign that "no one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends" (*Jn 15:13*).

Among this "cloud of witnesses" (*Heb 12:1*), I call to mind particularly the twenty-one Coptic martyrs killed on 15 February 2015, whose blood is not only the "seed of Christians", but also, I am deeply convinced, a seed that will bear rich fruit for Christian unity. Thanks to their powerful witness, many Christians in our world have come to realize that the ranks of the martyrs include not only saints of the early Church depicted in ancient icons, but also men and women



of our day, our contemporaries. They too are saints, saints of every Christian tradition.

Beloved brother in Christ, united with you in prayer for the whole world in this difficult time of pandemic, I thank you once more for your friendship. In particular, I am grateful for the thoughtful Preface you have written for my book devoted to peace, shortly to be published by the *Libreria Editrice Vaticana*. Your gracious gesture is a testimony of our brotherhood in Christ, along the path toward full communion between our Churches.

On that path, we are, like the disciples walking to Emmaus, accompanied by Christ himself, who will lead us, I pray, to the greatly desired day when we will celebrate together at the same altar his death and resurrection.

With these sentiments, I exchange with Your Holiness a fraternal embrace in the Risen Christ.

Rome, from Saint John Lateran  
10 May 2021

Francis