

# LETTER OF POPE FRANCIS TO POPE TAWADROS

## Day of Friendship between Copts and Catholics 2024

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

Your Holiness, dear brother in Christ,

Drawing strength from the celebration of the victory of Jesus Christ over death, I wish to extend Easter greetings to Your Holiness and to the entire Holy Coptic Orthodox Church, as I proclaim with all of you: *Al Messih garn! Haggan garn!*

During this Easter season, our Churches also commemorate the eleventh *Day of Friendship between Copts and Catholics*. I recall with gratitude your memorable visit to Rome last year on the auspicious occasion of the tenth anniversary of our first meeting and the fiftieth anniversary of the historic encounter between Pope Paul VI and Pope Shenouda III. Your presence on that occasion strengthened the bonds that already unite the See of Peter and the See of Mark and was an encouragement to continue on the path towards full communion begun by our venerable predecessors. I am particularly grateful for the precious relics of the 21 Coptic martyrs of Libya, which you so generously offered to me.

Indeed, on our journey of friendship we are accompanied by many saints and martyrs who gave their lives for Christ, reminding us 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), the 21 Coptic martyrs of Libya have a special place, since they are now also included in the Roman Martyrology as a sign of the spiritual communion that unites our two Churches. Moreover, their blood is a seed of unity for all the followers of Christ and I entrust to their intercession our ongoing pilgrimage of Christian friendship, especially the theological dialogue which has borne much good fruit in the relations between our Churches for more than five decades.

Dear brother in Christ, as our Churches prepare for the great feast of Pentecost, I pray that the Holy Spirit will unite us ever more closely and bring comfort to the many suffering members of our human family, especially in these turbulent times.

With the assurance of my spiritual closeness, I offer my prayerful good wishes for Your Holiness's health and serenity, and willingly exchange with you a fraternal embrace of peace in Christ the Risen Lord.

Rome, from Saint John Lateran, 7 May 2024

FRANCIS