

Press Release from the Pontifical Council for Culture, Vatican - Oct. 1, 2021

THE HOLY SEE PAVILION AT EXPO 2020 DUBAI

From October 1, 2021, to March 31, 2022, the Holy See has its own Pavilion at Expo 2020 in Dubai.

The Pavilion is intended to be an encounter between aesthetics, science and faith under the banner of fraternity and intercultural and interreligious dialogue. Its symbols are two historical encounters: St. Francis and Sultan Malik Al-Kāmil, which took place 800 years ago; and Pope Francis with the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar, Ahmad Al-Tayyib, in Abu Dhabi, on 4 February 2019. The Holy Father's desire is to give continuity to the *Declaration on Human Fraternity for World Peace and Common Coexistence*. Despite the covid-19 pandemic and the economic crisis, the choice has been to be present, with the sobriety that has distinguished the Holy See pavilions of recent Universal Exhibitions, not least because this is the first one celebrated in a Middle Eastern country with a Muslim majority.

The theme of the Pavilion is "Deepening the Connection," underlining the need to build increasingly solid relationships between peoples, cultures and faiths, and is placed within the general Expo theme "Connecting minds, Creating the Future."

The composition of the Pavilion – designed by Mons. Tomasz Trafny and architect Giuseppe Di Nicola – includes a reproduction of Giotto's fresco "Francis Meets the Sultan" in the Basilica of Assisi, a video-installation, and the display of the precious edition of the Abu Dhabi *Declaration on Human Fraternity*, edited by the LEV. The edition has a bilingual English-Arabic text and contains introductory contributions by H.H. Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Emir of Dubai, and Pope Francis. There are also reproductions of Michelangelo's "Creation of Adam" from the Sistine Chapel, a digital version of the Tower of Winds made by NTT Data, as well as some uniforms of the Papal Swiss Guard.

Particularly noteworthy is the exhibition of the originals of some important manuscripts from the Vatican Library: 1) The incipit of an Arabic translation (ca. 800-830) of Theon of Alexandria's Manual Tables (palimpsest fragment from the Bayt al-Ḥikmah in Baghdad); 2) the *Liber Abbaci* by Leonardo Pisano (Fibonacci, c. 1170 - c. 1250) (on the introduction of Arabic numerals in the West) and 3) Observations on the Gregorian calendar reform by the Portuguese astronomer Tomás de Orta (d. 1594). The exhibition is accompanied by a short documentary made by the Vatican Library.

Franciscan Youth are welcoming and accompanying visitors.

Cardinal Gianfranco Ravasi, President of the Pontifical Council for Culture, attended the opening ceremony, while the National Day of the Holy See will be celebrated on March 19, 2022.

An app to make the experience accessible to those unable to visit Dubai in person is being finalised.