

English

Brief

Dear Holy Father,

The Morisco Catholic community throughout the world is very grateful for your letters and for your sending priests to us. Our international community grew without any interaction from clergy for some years and there was no way to receive sacraments until they discovered us. Your letters brought us consolation in a difficult time and more, made us realise an opportunity for apostolic action. We assembled some members and friends in Canterbury for six days to produce this summary of our goals, motivations and some requests. We also produced a very heartfelt slightly longer letter which we humbly and with tears implore, knowing well that you are very busy, to read. It is attached below the petitorium.

We have three principal goals. The first is to make an explicit kerygma in a mode which honours our forefathers and renders the faith intelligible to our parental Muslim community, fosters mutual sincere understanding, and 'recognises, preserves, and promotes' the good things which they have for the good of all mankind.

Second, to inspire our youth to dedicated and devoted study of the Apostolic Deposit guarded by the Magisterium, with a special focus on Sacred Scripture. We want to cultivate the many latent special potentials present in our community which come from the *semina Verbi* we received from our Muslim predecessors.

Third, to establish an inculturation of the passing on of, celebration of, living of and prayer of our Faith. We work with experts to produce an "*Usus moriscus*" of the Roman Rite with an authentically Islamicate and Catholic character.

We are motivated by a threefold awareness of our baptismal and confirmational obligations. First, we perceive an obligation to sacrifice all that we are to God on the altar of Christ. Second, we are compelled to turn with confidence to the *Spiritus reconciliationis* to heal any broken relations to our heritage, so that this may be included in that sacrifice. Third, we intend to offer these healed and elevated goods to Holy Mother Church and through her to all mankind, from a debt of honour.

We wish to join a Morisco voice to the chorus of voices in the Church, to join her polyhedral structure. We hope to inspire a doctrine of rediscovery of the deep treasures hidden in the revelation of Christ, who through you has called us by our name. No pontiff has done this before Your Holiness. We believe that what you have done for us is prophesied by the ancients in Sacred Scripture, as we mentioned in our longer letter. Most of all, we intend to confidently fulfil by *missio ad Gentes* the exhortation our Mother has made by your tongue: "Everyone, Everyone, Everyone." By our God, we can leap over the walls.

Yours in Christ, with all gratitude and confidence,

Ad vos scribimus

Dear Holy Father,

We write with gratitude on behalf of the whole international community of Morisco Catholics. This name that we have taken is inspired by our predecessors in Spain, who despite their Catholic faithfulness were unjustly refused their dignity as a people and the joys of inculturation¹. We are a team of both converts from the Muslim diaspora and from the Muslim world, and from our non-Morisco friends. This Morisco community arose not through clerical work, but through many young people who, moved unpredictably by the work of the Holy Spirit, as you said: “like a midsummer snowfall in Rome”², and as was declared in advance by the Prophets³, found ourselves gathered together through communications technology. Marvel and amazement built upon marvel and amazement; even before our brothers and sisters were incorporated fully with us by Holy Baptism, we had been assembled by priests with your apostolic sending, without whose gratuitous paternal charity, deep confidence in Divine Providence, profound humility, and tangibly sincere affection we could not have begun to be joined all together to Mother Church, the household of Christ, and with love and solicitude embraced as her own.⁴ For commissioning these brave and whole-hearted men alone, we cannot thank you enough.

After the refusal of some bishops to recognise as members of their flocks our brothers and sisters across the world, who are truly souls on “the periphery”⁵, we were all brought a deep sadness and even temptations to hopelessness. However, your letters to us brought not only great consolation but an inspiration, and more; the realisation of a great opportunity for apostolic action. You granted us the confidence to come together for six days in Canterbury to produce the following outline of our goals and motivations, and several requests to Your Holiness which are included in a petition attached to the present letter. Urged on by the martyrial example of St. Nicholas Tavelić, we present them as follows, mindful that “faithful to her own tradition and at the same time conscious of her universal mission, [the Church] can enter into communion with the various civilizations, to their enrichment and the enrichment of the Church herself.”⁶

Our principal goals are three, which can be concisely stated:

¹ For examples, c.f. Diego Hurtado de Mendoza, *Guerra de Granada*, Madrid, 1970, p. 118.

² Solemnity of the Dedication of the Basilica of Saint Mary Major – Second Vespers, 5th August 2024

³ Genesis 17:20, 18:18; Isaiah 42:11, 60:7; Ezekiel 34:13; which began to be fulfilled in the mission of the Apostle to the Gentiles c.f. Galatians 1:17.

⁴ C.f. CCC 1249; Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen Gentium* n. 14; Decree *Ad Gentes* n. 14, AAS 57 p. 963; CIC, cann. 206, 788 §3.

⁵ Letter to Brother Gerard Francisco Timoner, O.P., Master General of the Order of Preachers for the VIII Centenary of the Death of Saint Dominic of Caleruega, 24th May 2021.

⁶ Pastoral Constitution: *Gaudium et Spes* n. 58, AAS 58 p. 1079; quoted in *Instructio: Conversio pastoralis* n. 4 AAS 112 p. 737

First, to make explicit kerygmatic proclamation of the Faith in a mode honouring our forefathers, rendering the Faith intelligible to our Muslim brothers and sisters, and if possible donating the gift of our heritage to the Church Universal. We hope that this will bear fruit in an encounter of friendship with Muslim communities and nations. With you, we remember the words of St. Francis of Assisi: “As you proclaim peace with your lips, make sure that a greater peace is in your hearts.”⁷ We are desirous of a true adherence to our Mother’s exhortations to “dialogue and collaboration” with Muslims, “carried out with prudence and love and in witness to the Christian faith and life”, to “recognize, preserve and promote the good things, spiritual and moral, as well as the socio-cultural values found among these men”, and “to forget the past and to work sincerely for mutual understanding and to preserve as well as to promote together for the benefit of all mankind social justice and moral welfare, as well as peace and freedom”.⁸

Second, inspiring the young within the Morisco community to a dedicated lifetime of study of and devotion to the Apostolic Deposit taught from and guarded by the Magisterium⁹, especially Sacred Scripture, since “all evangelization is based on that Word, listened to, meditated upon, lived, celebrated and witnessed to”, and “the Sacred Scriptures are the very source of evangelization.”¹⁰ This includes utilising the many special latent strengths present in our community, such as the disposition to possess and make use of a religious language; to this end we will make social, liturgical, devotional and intellectual use of the Arabic language in addition to the many vernacular languages.

Third, establishing inculturated means of passing on, celebrating, living, and praying our Faith. We are working with experts to produce an ‘*Usus Moriscus*’ with a character both authentically Islamicate and authentically Latin and ecclesiastical, and to build chapels where this form of the unique expression of the *lex orandi* of the Roman Rite will be celebrated.

Our motivation for this is rooted in a threefold awareness of our responsibility as laity, grounded in our baptism and confirmation.¹¹

First, we understand these sacraments to consecrate all of our powers and energies as a sacrifice to God burnt whole, immersed in the fire of the Spirit, elevated and not destroyed¹².

Second, these powers and energies include the legitimate goods we are obligated by the Fourth Commandment to receive with gratitude from our parents, forefathers, and our Islamicate civilisation, since “achieving a full and happy life depends on the proper recognition of those who have brought us into the world.”¹³ Even if, for whatever reason, our relationships with our origins have been damaged, with confidence we turn to the Holy Spirit that they may be healed, since He is the “*Spiritus reconciliationis*”¹⁴ and we “are incapable of preserving unity even within ourselves”; “our enemy, the devil, is the one who divides ... it is convenient for him to divide.”¹⁵

⁷ *The Legend of the Three Companions*, XIV, 5: FF 1469; quoted in ‘Inaugurazione del “Faith Pavilion” Presso l’Expo City’, 3 Dec 2023

⁸ Declaration *Nostra Aetate* nn. 2, 3, AAS 58, pp. 741-2.

⁹ Encyclical letter: *Sapientiae Christianae*, n. 4, ASS 22 p. 385.

¹⁰ Apostolic exhortation: *Evangelii gaudium*, n. 174 AAS 105 p. 1092-3

¹¹ Apostolic exhortation: *Evangelii gaudium* n. 102 AAS 105 p. 1062

¹² C.f. Catechism of the Catholic Church, n. 696

¹³ General Audience, 19th September 2018

¹⁴ Apostolic exhortation: *Reconciliatio et paenitentia*, n. 9 AAS 77 p. 203

¹⁵ General Audience, 20th January 2021

Third, we feel obligated to offer these goods, graced by the Spirit, to our Universal Mother and Her various children, conscious that “the member who fails to make his proper contribution to the development of the Church must be said to be useful neither to the Church nor to himself,”¹⁶ and that “gratitude to God rises from Her contemplation of the many gifts She has received, including the wealth of peoples and cultures and the wonders of creation.”¹⁷ We believe that by the healing light of the Catholic Faith, these good and human things are able to be brought to their true potential, and seen in their long yearned-for¹⁸ full and true meaning as signs of divine things. We believe that this includes those *semina Verbi* in Islam, the values which it witnesses to and offers humanity, which must be considered with an open and positive approach;¹⁹ especially since certain elements of biblical revelation have been recognized by Islam, which the Church has more in common, since it recognizes that its followers together with us adore the one God²⁰.

In contributing to the formational, liturgical, devotional, and charitable life of the Church Universal, we hope to join the chorus of voices²¹ within Her, voices to perspectives that have been long treated as an inimical ‘other’, transfiguring an opposition to a new polarity within Her grand polyhedral structure²². Through this, we hope to implement a doctrine of rediscovery of the deep treasure which is in Christ, in the revealed Deposit whose people you have enabled us to be joined into. Christ, who told us of “the treasures of darkness and the hoards in secret places, that you may know that it is I, the LORD, the God of Israel, who call you by your name”²³. In your own heart, you have shown us the paternal heart of Christ²⁴; you have called us by our name by recognising us as a people, which no Pontiff has done before you. Our earnest desire is to serve the Church by bringing into Her “everyone, everyone, everyone” whoever and wherever they are, as She asked many times by your mouth. We intend to be obedient to this exhortation and all of Her others from the heart, as the standard of teaching to which we were committed²⁵, for Christ granted to the Roman Church the privilege of being obeyed by all as He Himself is obeyed²⁶. We have been shown, and taught, that by our God, we can leap over the walls²⁷.

Yours in Christ, with all gratitude and confidence,

The Saint Nicholas Tavelić Mission Network for Morisco Catholics (Tavelić Network)

¹⁶ Decree *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, n. 2, AAS 58 p. 838

¹⁷ Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Oceania* n.1, AAS 91 p. 361

¹⁸ Instructio: *Ecclesiae Sponsa Imago*, n. 88, AAS 110 p. 1083

¹⁹ C.f. Declaratio: *Dominus iesus*, n. 2, AAS 92 p. 743.

²⁰ ITC Document “Christianity and the World Religions”, nn. 89, 100; c.f. also Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen Gentium* n. 14 AAS 57 p. 19; Apostolic Exhortation *Verbum domini*, n. 118, AAS 102 pp. 782-3; Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Medio Oriente*, n. 19 AAS 104 p. 759

²¹ C.f. Address to the Patriarch of the Romanian Orthodox Church, n. 7, 8th May 1999

²² Video message to participants in an International Theological Congress held at the Pontifical Catholic University of Argentina, 1-3 Sep 2015; Apostolic exhortation: *Evangelii gaudium*, n. 236 AAS 105 p. 1115

²³ Isa. 45:3, ESVCE

²⁴ Morning Meditation in the Chapel of the Domus Sanctae Marthae, 30th October 2015

²⁵ C.f. Romans 6:17, ESVCE

²⁶ St Thomas Aquinas, *Contra impug. Dei cultum*, c. 3

²⁷ C.f. Ps. 18:29, ESVCE