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AFRICA/EGYPT - Pope Francis' letter to the Imam of al-Azhar

Cairo (Agenzia Fides) - Pope Francis sent a message to Ahmed al-Tayyeb, the great Imam of the Islamic University al-Azhar, the main cultural institution of Sunni Islam. The news was given in a statement by the same University with headquarters in Cairo, reporting that the Pope's message expresses esteem and respect "for Islam and Muslims" and the hope that one tries to make an effort in the "understanding among Christians and Muslims in the world, to build peace and justice".
The personal letter from the Pope was delivered on Tuesday, September 17 to the Great Imam of Al-Azhar by the Apostolic Nuncio in Egypt, Msg. Jean-Paul Gobel, together with the message to the Islamic world also signed by Pope Bergoglio for the end of Ramadan, recently issued by the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue.
In recent times, dialogue between the Holy See and al-Azhar was interrupted by the will of the institution of Islam, that had interpreted Pope Benedict XVI's statements on the need to protect Christians in Egypt and the Middle East as an undue Western interference, expressed after the attack against the Coptic Cathedral in Alexandria on New Year's Eve 2011. "Pope Francis' letter to Imam al-Tayyeb" says to Fides Agency father Hani Bakhoum, secretary of the Patriarchate of Alexandria of the Catholic Copts "is a way of expressing the deep sense of respect and affection that the Catholic Church, the Holy See and the Pope have towards all Muslims and especially of al-Azhar, which is the most representative institution of moderate Sunni Islam. Surely this letter will help over time to put aside any misunderstanding and also to resume the bilateral dialogue with the Holy See".
(GV) (Agenzia Fides 19/09/2013)

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