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Pope Francis and dialogue with Muslims

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NCR Today

Pope Francis is making a difference in the world of interfaith relations on several fronts. The latest comes from Egypt. According to a report from Catholic News Service, officials at Al-Azhar University in Egypt are ready to restart a Muslim-Catholic dialogue.

For those who may not know, Al-Azhar is considered the most prestigious institution of learning in the Muslim world -- the Harvard of Sunni Islamic studies. Officials there had been in dialogue with the Vatican until 2011, when remarks by Pope Benedict XVI at Regensburg, Germany, caused them to be suspended.

A key person in this restart of dialogue is Fr. Rafic Greiche, spokesman for Egypt's Catholic church. He recently informed Al-Azhar that a Vatican envoy would visit Dec. 3 to see if conversations could be resumed.

The report did not say so, but the openness of Pope Francis to restoring good interfaith relations worldwide is surely a major contributing factor in this development.

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