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The Vatican Embassy and the Unity Walk

Maureen Fiedler | Aug. 30, 2013 NCR Today

Ever since 9/11, a wonderful group of folks in Washington, D.C., has sponsored an annual Unity Walk to promote interfaith understanding, dialogue and collaboration. This year's walk is slated for Sunday, Sept. 8, and it will be dedicated to Nelson Mandela. Also present will be Arun Gandhi, grandson of Mahatma Gandhi.

The walk begins at the Washington Hebrew Congregation and winds its way down Massachusetts Avenue, which is home to an incredible variety of houses of worship, including the Islamic Center, a Buddhist temple, the National Episcopal Cathedral and any number of other churches.

One stopping place every year has been the Vatican Embassy, which has always welcomed marchers to its front lawn for a cold drink and home-baked cookies. (I have to attest from personal experience: The cookies have always been first-rate.)

But this year is different. When the Unity Walk takes place Sept. 8, the Vatican Embassy will welcome marchers inside its doors not to munch on cookies, but to create packets of trail mix for distribution to the poor of the area. (I don't know why embassy personnel chose trail mix, but it somehow seems appropriate for a long walk on the "trail.")

It may be that the message of Pope Francis about reaching out to the poor may have prompted this. If so, three cheers! The cookies may have been good, but this is better.

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