

PONTIFICIUM CONSILIUM  
PRO  
DIALOGO INTER RELIGIONES

# *Pro Dialogo*

*January - December 2020*

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# *Pro Dialogo*

*January - December 2020*



Pro Dialogo no. 166 puts together the ordinary activities of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue (PCID) in 2020. The Covid-19 pandemic has understandably altered the way the Dicastery functions with much of its work accomplished ‘virtually’.

### ***Speeches by the President***

The main subject of the President’s interventions during this period was ‘Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together, the document signed by His Holiness Pope Francis and the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar Ahmad Al-Tayyib in Abu Dhabi on 4 February 2019. The speeches focused on some of the key themes raised in the document: education, religious freedom, commitment of consecrated persons, universal fraternity etc.

With the publication of the Encyclical *Fratelli Tutti*, the Supreme Pontiff has expanded the scope of common commitment and solidarity which have proved to be of immense value in addressing the serious crisis caused by the coronavirus pandemic. Drawing inspiration from the Encyclical, Cardinal Ayuso highlighted, at the G20 Riyadh Summit, the political dimension of interreligious dialogue for constructing an inclusive civil society which rejects the ‘throwaway culture’-that which isolates people and leaves them unattended and uncared for.

At the *Virtual Deepavali Meet* organized by the Italian Union of Hindus on 13 November, he reminded that as the worldwide campaign to produce the anxiously awaited coronavirus vaccine is on, religions must “motivate people to use the ‘social vaccine of solidarity’ in the vaccine-less pandemic times. [...] while science and medicine are invaluable sources to addressing the current problem of the pandemic... religion and spirituality are indispensable allies in bringing about the much-needed soothing comfort to the suffering caused by the deadly virus as well as solidarity towards the hungry, the homeless, the poor and those who have been afflicted by anxiety and depression”.

### ***Articles***

In September 2020, our Dicastery and the World Council of Churches (WCC) jointly published a document titled “*Serving a Wounded World in Inter-religious Solidarity: A Christian Call to Reflection and Action during Covid-19 and beyond*”. The first article published in this number of *Pro Dialogo* is by Rev. Fr.

Edward Chau Fun, President of the Commission for Interreligious Dialogue of Hong Kong who offers a reflection on interreligious solidarity in the light of this document.

Followed by this is a scholarly presentation by Rev. Prof. Francis Clooney, SJ on Interreligious Dialogue and Comparative Theology as permanent ways of living and understanding of Catholic faith, based on his long and rich experience of teaching at Harvard University. The author refers to the well-known definition of theology which is, 'faith seeking understanding' in an intellectual and spiritual pursuit within a faith community with respect for reason, claims of truth, religious practices and personal experiences, on condition of being available to study and to appropriate at least one other tradition, besides one's own.

The last two articles respectively by Rev. Fr. Clarence Devadass of the Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia who is the Secretary General of the Office of Theological Concerns of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (FABC) and Rev. Fr. James Fredericks, Professor Emeritus of Loyola Marymount University, Los Angeles offer a re-reading of interreligious responses in Asia to *Laudato Si'* and to the social teachings of *Fratelli Tutti* which must guide our commitment to dialogue.

### ***Messages***

This section contains the following messages:

Message to Jains on the occasion of the feast of Mahavir Janma Kalyanak Diwas

*Christians and Jains: To promote a culture of conviviality together*

Message to Buddhists on the occasion of the feast of Vesakh

*Buddhists and Christians: Constructing a culture of compassion and fraternity*

Message to Muslims for the Month of Ramadan and Eid Al-Fitr

*Christians and Muslims: Protecting together the places of worship*

Message to Hindus on the occasion of the feast of Deepavali

*Christians and Hindus: Rekindling positivity and hope during the Covid-19 pandemic and beyond*

Message to Sikhs on the occasion of the feast of Guru Nanak Prakash Diwas

*Christians and Sikhs: Nurturing a culture of hope in pandemic times*

### ***Publications***

To commemorate the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Messages from the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue to Buddhists and Hindus, the Dicastery published the following books, in English, containing the messages of 25 years:

1. Celebrating 25 Years of Hindu-Christian Fellowship  
Deepavali Messages 1995-2020
2. Building a Culture of Compassion  
Essays Celebrating 25 Years of the Vesakh Message to Buddhists  
Edited by Indunil J. Kodithuwakku K.

Both these books can be procured from this Pontifical Council by making a contribution to cover print and dispatch cost. For information, email to: [dialogo@interrel.va](mailto:dialogo@interrel.va)

Le numéro 166 de *Pro Dialogo* regroupe les activités significatives du Conseil Pontifical pour l'année 2020. Il faut tenir compte de la pandémie de Covid-19 qui a transformé les modalités de travail du dicastère dont les activités se sont en grande partie déroulées en vidéo conférence.

### ***Discours du Président***

Le *Document sur la fraternité humaine pour la paix mondiale et la coexistence commune*, signé à Abou Dhabi, le 4 février 2019, par le pape François et Ahmed Al-Tayyeb, le Grand Imam d'Al-Azhar, a constitué l'objet principal des interventions du Président. Le texte a fait l'objet d'un examen attentif de quelques-unes de ses dimensions-clé : l'éducation, la liberté religieuse, l'engagement des personnes consacrées, la fraternité mondiale.

Avec la publication de l'encyclique *Fratelli tutti*, le Souverain Pontife a amplifié l'espace d'engagement et de solidarité pour la fraternité humaine. Cela s'est révélé d'un grand recours pour faire face aux graves scénarii de crise ouverts par la pandémie de COVID-19. À partir de cette encyclique, lors du G20 de Riyad, le cardinal Ayuso Guixot est ainsi intervenu sur la dimension politique du dialogue interreligieux en vue de la construction d'une société civile inclusive, capable de refuser la « culture du déchet » qui isole les personnes et les laisse en abandon et sans ressources.

Comme il l'a ensuite rappelé lors d'une intervention tenue le 13 novembre 2020 à l'occasion de la rencontre virtuelle pour le Deepavali promue par l'Union Hindouiste, les religions doivent « motiver les personnes à utiliser le 'vaccin de la solidarité' alors qu'en ces temps de pandémie – le vaccin ne sera de fait disponible qu'à partir du mois de janvier 2021 –, le vaccin n'est pas disponible ! [...] S'il est vrai que la science et la médecine sont des ressources précieuses pour affronter le problème actuel de la pandémie, la religion et la spiritualité sont aussi des alliées indispensables quand il s'agit d'apporter le réconfort nécessaire à soulager les souffrances causées par ce virus mortel, ou quand il s'agit d'exprimer notre solidarité à ceux qui ont faim, qui sont sans logis, pauvres, et à ceux qui souffrent l'angoisse et le désespoir ».



## Articles

Au mois de septembre 2020, notre dicastère et le *Conseil œcuménique des Églises* (COE/WCC) ont publié conjointement un document intitulé *Servir un monde blessé dans la solidarité interreligieuse : un appel chrétien à la réflexion et à l'action pendant la COVID-19 et au-delà*<sup>1</sup>. C'est donc tout naturellement que le premier article de ce numéro de *Pro Dialogo* propose la réflexion du Rév. P. Edward Chau King Fun, Président de la Commission pour le Dialogue Interreligieux de Hong Kong, sur la solidarité du dialogue interreligieux à la lumière de ce nouveau document

Il est suivi d'une étude du professeur Francis Xavier Clooney, SJ, sur *Le dialogue interreligieux et la théologie comparée en tant que manières permanentes de vivre et de penser la foi catholique*. Cette contribution s'inscrit dans la longue expérience d'enseignement de l'auteur à l'Université de Harvard. Il prend appui sur la thèse bien connue selon laquelle la théologie est la « foi qui cherche à comprendre » à l'intérieur d'une recherche intellectuelle et spirituelle menée au sein d'une communauté, dans le respect de la raison, des « revendications » de la vérité, des pratiques religieuses et de l'expérience personnelle, à condition d'être disposé à étudier et à s'approprier, au moins, d'une autre tradition que la sienne propre.

Les deux derniers articles sont respectivement proposés par le Rév. P. Clarence Devadass, du diocèse de Kuala Lumpur (Malaisie) et Secrétaire Général du Bureau théologique de la Fédération des Conférences épiscopales asiatiques (FABC), et par le Rév. P. James Fredericks, professeur émérite à l'Université Loyola Marymount à Los Angeles (USA). Pour guider notre engagement en faveur du dialogue, tous deux offrent à la fois une relecture des perspectives de dialogue interreligieux ouvertes par l'encyclique *Laudato Si'* en Asie et une relecture de l'enseignement social de *Fratelli tutti*.

## Messages

Cette section abrite les messages suivants :

- Message de vœux adressé aux jains pour Mahavir Janma Kalyanak Diwas :  
*Chrétiens et jains : promouvoir ensemble la culture de la convivialité.*
- Message de vœux adressé aux bouddhistes pour la fête de Vesakh :  
*Bouddhistes et chrétiens : construire une culture de compassion et de fraternité.*

<sup>1</sup> <<https://www.pcinterreligious.org/christian-call-reflection-action-during-covid-19-and-beyond>>

- Message de vœux adressé aux musulmans pour le mois de Ramadan et 'Id Al-Fitr :  
*Chrétiens et musulmans : protégeons ensemble les lieux de culte.*
- Message de vœux adressé aux hindous pour le Deepavali :  
*Chrétiens et hindous : rallumons l'optimisme et l'espérance pendant et après la pandémie de Covid-19.*
- Message de vœux adressé aux sikh pour le Prakash Divas de Siri Guru Nanak Dev :  
*Chrétiens et sikh : cultivons l'espérance en ce temps de pandémie.*

### ***Publications***

L'année 2020 a également célébré le XXV<sup>e</sup> anniversaire des messages de vœux que le Conseil Pontifical pour le Dialogue Interreligieux adresse chaque année aux bouddhistes et aux hindouistes. À cette occasion, le dicastère a souhaité en proposer la réédition, uniquement en langue anglaise, à travers deux recueils :

1. *Deepavali Messages 1995-2020. Celebrating 25 Years of Hindu-Christian Fellowship.*
2. *Building a Culture of Compassion. Essays Celebrating 25 Years of the Vesak Message to Buddhists*, édité par Indunil J. Kodithiwakku K.

Ces volumes peuvent être demandés au Conseil Pontifical en versant une contribution pour les frais de presse et d'envoi. Pour toute information, s'adresser à : [dialogo@interrel.va](mailto:dialogo@interrel.va)

Il numero 166 di *Pro-Dialogo* raccoglie le attività ordinarie dell'anno 2020. La pandemia di Covid-19 ha trasformato la modalità di lavoro del Dicastero, che si è svolto in gran parte in video-conferenza.

### ***Discorsi del Presidente***

Oggetto degli interventi del Presidente è stato principalmente il *Documento sulla Fratellanza Umana per la Pace Mondiale e la Convivenza Comune*, firmato a Abu Dhabi da Papa Francesco e da Ahmed Al-Tayyeb, Grand Imam di Al-Azhar il 4 febbraio 2019. Questo testo è stato preso in esame in alcune delle sue dimensioni-chiave: educazione, libertà religiosa, impegno dei consacrati, fraternità mondiale.

Con la pubblicazione dell'Enciclica *Fratelli tutti*, il Pontefice ha ampliato lo spazio d'impegno e d'indagine, che si è rivelato di grande utilità per affrontare i gravi scenari di crisi aperti dalla pandemia. Partendo da questo testo, al G20 di Riad il Cardinale Ayuso ha sottolineato la dimensione politica del dialogo interreligioso per la costruzione di una società civile inclusiva, che rifiuti la "cultura dello scarto" che isola le persone e le lascia prive di risorse.

Come ha ricordato all'Unione Induista nel discorso del 13 novembre 2020, - perché avesse inizio la campagna di vaccinazione mondiale si sarebbe dovuto attendere ancora fino a gennaio 2021 - le religioni devono «motivare le persone a usare il "vaccino sociale della solidarietà" in tempi pandemici in cui il vaccino non c'è! [...] Se è vero che scienza e medicina sono fonti preziose per affrontare il problema attuale della pandemia, si deve sottolineare che pure religione e spiritualità sono alleate indispensabili per portare quel conforto così necessario ad alleviare le sofferenze causate da questo virus mortale ed esprimere solidarietà a coloro che hanno fame, ai senza dimora, ai poveri, a quelli che sono afflitti dall'ansia e dalla depressione».

### ***Articoli***

Nel mese di settembre 2020 il nostro Dicastero e il *World Council of Churches* (WCC), hanno pubblicato congiuntamente un documento dal significativo titolo: *La solidarietà interreligiosa al servizio di un mondo sofferente. Un appello alla rifles-*

sione e all'azione dei cristiani durante la pandemia di COVID-19 e oltre<sup>2</sup>. Il primo articolo pubblicato in questo numero di *Pro Dialogo*, offre una riflessione sulla solidarietà del dialogo interreligioso alla luce di questo documento, presentato dal Rev.do Edward Chau King Fun, Presidente della Commissione per il Dialogo Interreligioso di Hong Kong.

Segue uno studio del Prof. Francis Xavier Clooney, SJ, su *Dialogo interreligioso e Teologia comparativa come modalità permanenti di vivere e pensare la fede cattolica*, maturato attraverso una lunga esperienza di docenza all'Università di Harvard. L'autore si rifà alla nota tesi secondo la quale la teologia è la "fede che cerca comprensione" in una ricerca intellettuale e spirituale condotta in seno a una comunità nel rispetto per la ragione, per le rivendicazioni della verità, delle pratiche religiose e dell'esperienza personale, a condizione di essere disponibili a studiare e appropriarsi di almeno un'altra tradizione oltre la propria.

Gli ultimi due articoli, redatti rispettivamente dal R. P. Clarence Devadass, della Diocesi di Kuala Lumpur, Malesia, Segretario Generale dell'Ufficio Teologico della Conferenza Episcopale dell'Asia, e dal Rev. James Fredericks, Professore emerito della Loyola Marymount University di Los Angeles, offrono una rilettura delle prospettive del dialogo interreligioso aperte dalla *Laudato Si'* in Asia, e dall'insegnamento sociale di *Fratelli tutti*, che deve guidare il nostro impegno per il dialogo.

### ***Messaggi***

Questa sezione ospita i seguenti messaggi:

- Il messaggio augurale inviato ai giainisti per la festa di Mahavir Janma Kalyanak Diwas:  
*Cristiani e giainisti: promuoviamo insieme la cultura della convivialità.*
- Il messaggio augurale inviato ai buddisti per la festa di Vesakh:  
*Cristiani e buddisti: costruiamo una cultura di compassione e fraternità.*
- Il messaggio augurale inviato ai musulmani per il mese di Ramadan e 'Id Al-Fitr:  
*Cristiani e musulmani: proteggiamo insieme i luoghi di culto.*
- Il messaggio augurale inviato agli induisti per la festa di Deepavali:  
*Cristiani e induisti: riaccendiamo l'ottimismo e la speranza durante e dopo la pandemia da Covid-19.*
- Il messaggio augurale inviato ai sikh per la festa di Guru Nanak Prakash Diwas:  
*Cristiani e sikh: coltiviamo la speranza nel tempo della pandemia.*

<sup>2</sup> <<https://www.pcinterreligious.org/christian-call-reflection-action-during-covid-19-and-beyond>>

## ***Pubblicazioni***

Nel 2020 si è celebrato il XXV anniversario dei messaggi augurali inviati dal Pontificio Consiglio per il Dialogo Interreligioso ai buddisti e agli induisti, che, per tale ricorrenza, il nostro Dicastero ha raccolto e pubblicato nei seguenti volumi editi in lingua inglese:

*Deepavali Messages 1995-2020. Celebrating 25 Years of Hindu-Christian Fellowship.*

*Building a Culture of Compassion. Essays Celebrating 25 Years of the Vesak Message to Buddhists*, curato da Indunil J. Kodithiwakku K.

Entrambi i volumi si possono richiedere presso questo Pontificio Consiglio versando un contributo per le spese di stampa e di spedizione. Per informazioni, rivolgersi a: [dialogo@interrel.va](mailto:dialogo@interrel.va)

## ADDRESSES BY CARDINAL PRESIDENT

### *Ha saputo farsi amare da tutti. Ricordo del Card. Jean-Louis Tauran*

S. EM. CARD. MIGUEL ÁNGEL AYUSO GUIXOT\*

È per me un privilegio rivolgermi a voi in occasione della Festa Patronale di questa Pontificia Università Urbaniana dedicata al tema “Profezia della Cultura del reciproco rispetto”. Ringrazio il Rettore Magnifico Prof. Leonardo Sileo e il Gran Cancelliere S.Em.za Rev.ma Cardinale Fernando Filoni per l’invito che mi hanno rivolto.

È per me un privilegio rivolgermi a voi in occasione di questo Convegno organizzato per ricordare la figura e l’opera del compianto Cardinale Jean-Louis Tauran.

Ringrazio tutti i presenti, in particolare S.E. il Dott. Muhammad Al- Issa, Segretario Generale della Lega Musulmana Mondiale, che ha conosciuto e stimato il Cardinale Tauran. Devo però esprimere un particolare ringraziamento all’Università del Sacro Cuore, nella persona del suo Magnifico Rettore ed al Professor Wael Farouq, che conosco e apprezzo da tanti anni, per aver promosso e organizzato questa bella iniziativa che, vi confesso, mi ha commosso profondamente.

È passato un anno e mezzo dalla scomparsa del Cardinale Tauran eppure, come mi dicono spesso anche i collaboratori del Pontificio Consiglio per il Dialogo Interreligioso, è una mancanza che ancora avvertiamo con rammarico. Sua Eminenza il Cardinale Tauran ha saputo farsi amare da tutti. Specialmente negli ultimi anni, in cui il peso della malattia è stato maggiore, il Dicastero per il Dialogo Interreligioso è stato davvero la sua famiglia “romana”. Credetemi che si sono creati con lui dei veri legami familiari che sono andati ben oltre il normale disbrigo del lavoro dell’ufficio.

A tutti è nota la sagacia e la preparazione con le quali il Cardinale Tauran ha servito per tanti anni la Sede Apostolica. Era conosciuto per la sua ‘fine diplomazia’. Non vorrei dilungarmi troppo sulla sua biografia ma, per capire la sua personalità e la sua opera a favore del dialogo fra persone di religioni diverse, è necessario darne qualche tratto.

Il Cardinale Jean-Louis Tauran, era nato a Bordeaux, in Francia, il 5 aprile 1943. Dopo aver seguito gli studi presso la Pontificia Accademia Ecclesiastica, entrò nel servizio diplomatico della Santa Sede nel marzo del 1975, prima alla

\* Presidente del Pontificio Consiglio per il Dialogo Interreligioso, Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore, Milano, 16 gennaio 2020.

Nunziatura Apostolica nella Repubblica Domenicana, poi presso la Nunziatura Apostolica in Libano, dove ha vissuto durante i terribili anni della guerra civile. Nel 1983, fu chiamato a lavorare presso l'allora Consiglio degli Affari Pubblici della Chiesa, in seguito Sezione per i Rapporti con gli Stati della Segreteria di Stato, della quale divenne Segretario nel 1990. Nel 2003 San Giovanni Paolo II lo creò Cardinale nominandolo Archivista e Bibliotecario di Santa Romana Chiesa. In seguito, dal 2007 fino alla sua morte, è stato Presidente del Pontificio Consiglio per il Dialogo Interreligioso. E' noto al pubblico per aver annunciato a tutto il mondo, in quanto Cardinale Proto-Diacono, l'elezione di Papa Francesco il 13 marzo 2013. Infine Papa Francesco, il 20 dicembre 2014, lo ha nominato Camerlengo di Santa Romana Chiesa.

Questi brevi cenni biografici ci aiutano a comprendere l'immensità dell'impegno e delle responsabilità che hanno contraddistinto il servizio ecclesiale del Cardinale Tauran. E' stato davvero un collaboratore prezioso e stimato da tutti i Pontefici che ha servito. Papa Francesco, nel telegramma di cordoglio indirizzato alla famiglia del cardinale, ha scritto che "è stato un uomo che ha profondamente segnato la vita della Chiesa universale" ed ha aggiunto "conservo un ricordo commosso di quest'uomo dalla fede profonda che ha servito coraggiosamente fino alla fine la Chiesa di Cristo nonostante il peso della malattia". L'affetto e la stima del Santo Padre per il compianto Cardinale si sono resi visibili nella partecipazione all'intera Messa esequiale. Papa Francesco ha infatti partecipato fin dall'inizio restando accanto al feretro per tutta la durata del rito e non è un fatto usuale.

Nel riflettere su che cosa desideravo testimoniare a voi della mia memoria del Cardinale Tauran mi è subito venuto in mente l'ultimo viaggio che abbiamo compiuto insieme e durante il quale abbiamo incontrato anche S.E. il Dott. Muhammad Al-Issa. Infatti nell'aprile 2018 mi sono recato, assieme a Sua Eminenza, in Arabia Saudita. Ho davanti agli occhi l'immagine del Cardinale Tauran: fragile nel corpo ma forte nella fede, nella testimonianza e nel desiderio di dialogare. Davvero mi sono tornate alla mente le parole di San Paolo nella Seconda lettera ai Corinzi: «Ed egli mi ha detto: "Ti basta la mia grazia; la mia potenza infatti si manifesta pienamente nella debolezza". Mi vanterò quindi ben volentieri delle mie debolezze perché dimori in me la potenza di Cristo. Perciò mi compiaccio nelle mie infermità, negli oltraggi, nelle necessità, nelle persecuzioni, nelle angosce sofferte per Cristo: quando sono debole, è allora che sono forte» (II Cor. 12, 9-10). Difatti la sua presenza in Arabia Saudita è stata grandemente apprezzata. Un viaggio un po' speciale, nella culla dell'islam, che il Cardinale Tauran ha desiderato fortemente di compiere. Ricordo solo, per dovere di cronaca, che si è trattato di un viaggio preceduto da uno analogo, compiuto nel lontano 1974 dal Cardinale Sergio Pignedoli, Presidente del Segretariato per i non cristiani, che, come inviato personale di Paolo VI, fu ricevuto a Riad da re Faisal.

Il Cardinale Tauran elogiò gli sforzi compiuti in Arabia Saudita, per mantenere relazioni positive e costruttive con i credenti di altre religioni che il Pontificio Consiglio per il Dialogo Interreligioso incoraggiava e sosteneva. Sua Eminenza era infatti da sempre convinto che le buone relazioni fra cristiani e musulmani potessero dare un insostituibile contributo alla pace nel mondo, sostenendo che la vera minaccia non fosse lo scontro di civiltà, al quale non credeva, ma piuttosto lo scontro di ignoranze e di radicalismi.

Nel suo discorso Sua Eminenza toccò argomenti di grande importanza ed attualità. Si soffermò sul tema della cittadinanza dicendo che si è pienamente cittadini a prescindere dalla religione di appartenenza e che non si possono usare due pesi e due misure perché ciò danneggerebbe l'immagine di persone, comunità, paesi e religioni. Era convinto che: "incontrarsi, parlare, conoscere, costruire qualcosa insieme sono altrettanti inviti a incontrare l'altro, e anche un invito a scoprire noi stessi. Uniamo quindi i nostri sforzi affinché Dio che ci ha creati non sia motivo di divisione, ma di unità".

Mi sono soffermato sul discorso pronunciato da Sua Eminenza in Arabia Saudita perché è stato un po' come lasciare un testamento da parte sua. Io, che ne ho raccolto il testimone, vi posso confermare che il fine diplomatico era davvero un fine tessitore di ponti di dialogo. Credeva cioè, come ha tante volte ripetuto, che "le religioni non sono il problema ma fanno parte della soluzione pertanto siamo 'condannati' al dialogo interreligioso".

Mi è tornato alla mente il viaggio del Cardinale in Arabia Saudita anche in occasione, a pochi mesi dalla sua morte, del Viaggio Apostolico di Papa Francesco negli Emirati Arabi Uniti, nel febbraio del 2019.

È a tutti noto che ad Abu Dhabi il Santo Padre e il Grand Imam di Al-Azhar Ahmed Al-Tayyeb hanno firmato, il 4 febbraio, il Documento sulla Fratellanza Umana per la Pace Mondiale e la Convivenza Comune.

Sono certo che Sua Eminenza avrebbe approvato e sarebbe stato contentissimo di un tale documento. Una pietra miliare nel cammino del dialogo interreligioso, che non si può comprendere se non lo si inserisce nel cammino, ormai di lungo corso, delle relazioni interreligiose della Chiesa cattolica. Un cammino che ha portato avanti, con grande disponibilità e intelligenza e nella fedeltà alle esigenze di verità e di carità del Vangelo, anche il Cardinale Tauran.

La Chiesa Cattolica, fin dal Concilio Vaticano II, è stata convinta che "non possiamo invocare Dio come Padre di tutti gli uomini, se ci rifiutiamo di comportarci da fratelli verso alcuni tra gli uomini che sono creati ad immagine di Dio" (*Nostra aetate*, 5).

Tauran "ha esortato i cristiani ad andare incontro agli altri credenti avendo chiara la propria identità e con uno spirito di rispetto, stima e collaborazione. Chi si è posto così sulla strada del dialogo interreligioso ha potuto scoprire l'opera di



Dio nelle altre religioni, quegli elementi di verità e di grazia che vi sono presenti e che sono veri e buoni. Beni preziosi, sia religiosi che umani, espressioni di verità che illuminano tutto il genere umano. In questi tempi, per tanti motivi bui e difficili, sono convinto che lo scopo del dialogo tra le religioni è quello di fare un percorso comune “verso la verità”. Un percorso che deve tener conto dell’identità di chi dialoga: non si può dialogare nell’ambiguità; dell’attenzione all’altro: chi prega e pensa in maniera diversa dalla mia non è un nemico; e della sincerità delle intenzioni reciproche” (50° anniversario di “Nostra aetate”, Università Gregoriana, 26 ottobre 2015).

Ecco, dunque, quali caratteristiche doveva avere il dialogo interreligioso per il Cardinale Tauran: identità, alterità, e sincerità.

Quindi, nel dialogo interreligioso non si deve rinunciare alla propria fede o nasconderla, ma ci si deve far interpellare dalle convinzioni altrui e prendere in considerazione argomenti diversi dai propri. Ogni religione ha la propria identità, ma si deve accettare di considerare che Dio è anche all’opera in tutti, nell’anima di chi lo cerca con sincerità. Infine il dialogo, dunque, non nasce da tattica o interesse, ma è richiesto dal profondo rispetto per tutto ciò che nell’uomo ha operato lo Spirito, che soffia dove vuole.

Il Cardinale Tauran così diceva al Meeting di Rimini nel 2015: “Siamo quindi chiamati a condividere le ricchezze delle nostre culture e praticare le nostre religioni nel rispetto delle nostre specificità. Onde la necessità del dialogo interreligioso, che deve mirare pure a elaborare una cultura che permetta a tutti di vivere nella libertà con dignità e nella sicurezza. I credenti esistono, appartengono a questo mondo, sono solidali con la storia dei nostri giorni, sono cittadini a pieno titolo, non cittadini o credenti, ma cittadini e credenti. Offrono a tutti quel supplemento d’anima, di cui ogni società ha bisogno (Card. Tauran, Meeting di Rimini, agosto 2015).

Non posso qui elencare tutti i viaggi, gli incontri, i convegni e le visite che ha effettuato nei suoi anni di presidenza del Dicastero per il dialogo interreligioso. Tantissime persone lo hanno incontrato e conosciuto, come alcuni tra i presenti, e sono certo che conservano un ricordo vivido della sua persona. Il suo tratto umano affabile, cortese, socievole e ben disposto all’ascolto era ancor più valorizzato dalla sua vena ironica, mai offensiva, e da un forte senso dell’umorismo. Chi l’ha frequentato sa bene che amava divertirsi. La sua ironia, di fronte a situazioni complesse, alle volte è stata più risolutiva di grandi discorsi o dibattiti! Permettetemi di notare che anche questo tratto ironico e umoristico del suo carattere lo hanno reso un piacevole interlocutore per chi lo ha conosciuto, me compreso.

Ho ricordato che nel 2007 fu nominato Presidente del Pontificio Consiglio per il Dialogo Interreligioso. Con umiltà, sobrietà e anche coraggio ha accettato questo nuovo impegno al servizio del Successore di Pietro. Nonostante l’avanzare

degli anni e il progredire della malattia posso testimoniare che, pur consapevole delle molte difficoltà, ha intrapreso con entusiasmo e dedizione questo apostolato. Il Cardinale Tauran, diceva di se stesso: “Qualsiasi siano state le missioni che mi sono state affidate le ho sempre vissute da prete e ho voluto sempre esercitare il ministero per il quale ero stato ordinato (...) sono prete sempre e ovunque” (Cardinal Jean-Louis Tauran, *Je crois en l’homme: “ Les religions font partie de la solution, pas du problème ”*, Paris, Bayard, 2016). E diceva anche che: “Per un cattolico, dialogare con i seguaci delle altre religioni è prima di tutto un’esperienza spirituale, e pertanto è una grazia” (Discorso all’Istituto Seraficum, Assisi 9 ottobre 2017).

Era un uomo che, radicato nella sua fede cristiana, è stato tenace nella speranza e non si è mai lasciato andare al pessimismo.

La sua profonda spiritualità sacerdotale lo ha sempre accompagnato e contraddistinto. Il suo servizio alla Mensa non è mai stato disgiunto da quello verso i fratelli compresi coloro che appartengono ad altre religioni. Amava il suo sacerdozio e, quando i suoi numerosissimi impegni glielo consentivano, gli piaceva essere un buon “parroco” e volentieri si rendeva disponibile a celebrare matrimoni, battesimi o funerali. Durante la Settimana Santa celebrava il Triduo pasquale presso la Chiesa della quale era titolare ossia Sant’Apollinare alle Terme Deciane. Era un impegno al quale non rinunciava mai. Preparava dei testi brevi ma poi li traduceva e leggeva in lingue diverse di modo che, diceva, essendo la Chiesa di Sant’Apollinare al centro di Roma, i pellegrini e i turisti che la frequentavano potessero partecipare pienamente. Era davvero un uomo sensibile alle esigenze altrui. Ricordo anche che fino all’ultimo ha seguito con premura e assiduità il lavoro prezioso di un Istituto romano che si occupa delle persone diversamente abili.

La sua profonda e fine cultura francese, ma direi anche “bagnata” nelle acque del Tevere, gli ha consentito di avere uno sguardo ampio sul mondo, di avere uno spirito “curioso”, ma sempre rispettoso, verso altre culture e religioni in ultima analisi verso tutto ciò che è umano. Una persona come il Cardinale Tauran, intrisa di cultura ma anche vogliosa di apprendere, aveva individuato un campo di collaborazione fra persone di religioni diverse: quello dell’educazione. Egli infatti pensava che l’educazione sia una chiave per promuovere l’armonia interreligiosa, la libertà religiosa, e il rispetto per le persone di differenti tradizioni religiose. Ciò implica non una semplice conoscenza intellettuale di altre tradizioni solo per superare l’ignoranza ma, ancor di più, un apprezzamento dell’altro che porta ad un ascolto autentico e a una stima genuina. Sua Eminenza riteneva che per aiutare i cristiani all’incontro con credenti di altre religioni, mentre è indispensabile che l’educazione religiosa miri soprattutto a far crescere nella propria identità religiosa, è sempre più necessario e auspicabile che si educhi anche all’ascolto dell’altro, fornendo adeguate ed oggettive presentazioni delle altre tradizioni religiose. Infatti era consapevole di quanto fossero pericolose l’ignoranza e la disinformazione che lasciano il campo

libero a paure e pregiudizi. E sottolineava che, poiché l'educazione avviene principalmente, nelle scuole, nelle università, e sui social media, sono questi gli ambiti nei quali si deve intervenire tutti insieme, unendo le forze, per veicolare messaggi di vita, e non di morte, di speranza, e non di disperazione, di costruzione della pace, e non di esaltazione della violenza e della guerra.

“Tutto ciò” diceva “dimostra l'importanza per noi cristiani di rimanere ancorati con coerenza alla nostra fede, nelle difficoltà di un mondo così plurale, senza cedere allo scoramento: per una migliore comprensione delle sfide caratteristiche di una realtà multiculturale e per testimoniare che è possibile convivere, nella convinzione che l'amore è la sola forza capace di rendere il mondo un luogo migliore per tutti” (L'Osservatore Romano, 28-29 dicembre 2017).

Non ho sufficiente tempo per rendervi partecipi di tutte le attestazioni di cordoglio, stima ed affetto che sono pervenute al Pontificio Consiglio per il Dialogo Interreligioso quando si è saputo della morte del Cardinale Tauran. Oltre a coloro che hanno preso parte alle esequie di Sua Eminenza, tante persone di altre religioni hanno voluto rendere omaggio ad un uomo apprezzato per la sua sincerità, coraggio e apertura. Tra gli altri ha scritto un messaggio anche il Grande Imam di al-Azhar Aḥmed al-Ṭayyib, che ha definito il cardinale Jean-Louis Tauran, “un religioso che ha dato un grande contributo al dialogo interreligioso e alla promozione della cultura della comprensione reciproca”. Ugualmente significativo il ricordo dell'Unione Induista Italiana che facendo riferimento agli incontri di dialogo e di preghiera con Sua Eminenza, dice che: “hanno lasciato dei semi profondi, che siamo pronti a custodire e ad impegnarci sempre più affinché crescano in alberi forti e stabili di cui ognuno possa godere i frutti. Tali frutti saranno anche un omaggio e un ricordo a quanto grande sia stato il Modello di Sua Eminenza”. Potrei continuare a lungo.

Ma lasciatemi concludere con un ricordo davvero particolare e commovente. Quello di Papa Francesco. Sarà un po' come se oggi prendesse anche lui la parola per fare memoria del Cardinale Tauran.

Lo scorso 31 ottobre all'Università Lateranense, in occasione di un Convegno sul Patto Educativo promosso da Papa Francesco, è stata inaugurata anche una mostra dedicata alla memoria del Cardinale Tauran dal titolo “Calligrafia per il Dialogo: promuovere la cultura di pace attraverso la cultura e l'arte”. Ascoltiamo ciò che ha detto il Santo Padre: “Questo momento diventa ancor più significativo perché ci ricorda l'opera di un uomo del dialogo e costruttore di pace, il Cardinale Jean-Louis Tauran. La sua vita è stata tutta proiettata nella prospettiva del dialogo. Anzitutto il dialogo con Dio, che il cristiano, il sacerdote, il vescovo Tauran ha coltivato, a cui ha ispirato le scelte e le azioni e nel quale ha trovato conforto durante la malattia. Il secondo è il dialogo tra i popoli, i governi e le istituzioni internazionali per il quale il diplomatico Tauran si è prodigato favorendo la conclu-

sione di accordi, di mediazioni o proponendo soluzioni, anche tecniche, a conflitti che minacciavano la pace, limitavano i diritti dell'uomo e offuscavano la libertà di coscienza. Il terzo, il dialogo tra le religioni, che ha visto il Cardinale spendersi non per riaffermare i punti già in comune, ma per ricercarne e costruirne di nuovi. Quale Presidente del Pontificio Consiglio per il Dialogo Interreligioso, egli ci ha fatto capire che non basta fermarsi a ciò che ci avvicina, ma è necessario esplorare nuove possibilità perché le diverse tradizioni religiose possano trasmettere, oltre che un messaggio di pace, la pace come messaggio. C'è un episodio nel suo servizio alla Santa Sede e alla Chiesa che fa comprendere le ansie e le aspirazioni, ma anche la semplicità e la profondità di questo uomo di Dio. Nel giugno del 1993 a Vienna, durante la Conferenza delle Nazioni Unite sui diritti dell'uomo, l'allora monsignor Tauran aveva appena terminato il suo intervento, richiamando il necessario dialogo tra le religioni. Nel lasciare la tribuna si trovò, per caso, di fronte un membro della delegazione dell'Arabia Saudita che chiese come fare per approfondire l'importanza del dialogo. La sua risposta fu: "Lo potremo fare quando verrò nel suo Paese". Quel desiderio lo accompagnò negli anni e trovò realizzazione solo alcuni mesi prima del suo ritorno alla casa del Padre con la visita svolta a Riyadh nell'aprile del 2018. La volontà di dialogare sostenne, anche nella malattia, questa figura di sacerdote, leale e disponibile, amico, che anche per me è stata importante e di grande aiuto per comprendere molte situazioni nel mio servizio di Vescovo di Roma e successore di Pietro" (Discorso del Santo Padre Francesco, Pontificia Università Lateranense, 31 ottobre 2019). Mi è sembrato opportuno rendervi partecipi di queste belle e significative parole che, nella loro interezza, ben si adattano a quanto stiamo dicendo oggi.

Il Signore mi ha dato la gioia di collaborare con il Cardinale Tauran. Vi assicuro che pur avendo lavorato assieme solo per sei anni, sono stati anni così intensi e fecondi da aver assunto il sapore di un'intera vita trascorsa insieme.

## ***Educare a un'umanità più fraterna: il contributo delle religioni***

Sua Em.za Cardinale Miguel Ángel Ayuso Guixot\*

*Magnifico Rettore, Preside, Eccellenze, cari amici,*

È per me un privilegio rivolgermi a voi in occasione di questo evento che ha per tema: “*Educare a un'umanità più fraterna: il contributo delle religioni*”, organizzato in preparazione del ‘Patto educativo globale’ promosso da Papa Francesco per il prossimo 14 maggio. Ringrazio il Rettore Magnifico P. Nuno da Silva Gonçalves, S.J. ed il Preside del Pontificio Istituto di Studi Arabi e di Islamistica Padre Diego Sarrió Cucarella, M.Afr., per aver organizzato questo incontro e per l’invito che mi hanno rivolto a porgere un saluto iniziale.

Oggi i rappresentanti di varie tradizioni religiose che sono qui presenti sono invitati a riflettere su quali siano le risorse che ciascuna religione possiede per educare alla fratellanza universale. Non si tratta certo di diventare tutti uguali, ma di arricchire, a partire delle nostre differenze, la possibilità di creare un mondo migliore.

Educazione, diritti umani e pace sono tre termini che appartengono al ricco bagaglio spirituale e culturale delle varie religioni e che fanno parte del linguaggio del dialogo interreligioso.

La prospettiva di educarsi ed educare a una cultura dell’incontro, della fraternità e della pace comporta, come conseguenza inevitabile, la volontà di rivedere, in questa luce, anche i percorsi formativi e accademici nelle scuole, negli istituti di formazione, nelle università.

Papa Francesco, nel Messaggio per il lancio del Patto Educativo ha scritto che: “Il terreno va anzitutto bonificato dalle discriminazioni con l’immissione di fraternità, come ho sostenuto nel Documento che ho sottoscritto con il Grande Imam di Al-Azhar ad Abu Dhabi, il 4 febbraio scorso (...) è più facile trovare la convergenza globale per un’educazione che sappia farsi portatrice di un’alleanza tra tutte le componenti della persona (...) Un’alleanza generatrice di pace, giustizia e accoglienza tra tutti i popoli della famiglia umana nonché di dialogo tra le religioni” (*Messaggio del Santo Padre Francesco per il lancio del Patto Educativo, 12 settembre 2019*).

Quest’alleanza ‘generatrice di pace’ credo che debba porre le sue basi nella fraternità, nel rispetto e nell’amicizia verso tutti.

Ritengo indispensabile che l’educazione religiosa miri soprattutto a far cre-

\* Presidente del Pontificio Consiglio per il Dialogo Interreligioso, Pontificia Università Gregoriana, 24 febbraio 2020.

scere nella propria identità religiosa, però è sempre più necessario e auspicabile che si educi anche all'ascolto dell'altro, fornendo adeguate ed oggettive presentazioni delle altre tradizioni religiose. Infatti sappiamo bene quanto siano pericolose l'ignoranza e la disinformazione che lasciano il campo libero a paure e pregiudizi.

Seppure diversi, perché profondamente radicati nelle nostre rispettive tradizioni religiose, dobbiamo dimostrare che lavorare insieme per costruire ponti di amicizia, fratellanza e collaborazione, è giusto e possibile.

Si tratta di compiere passi concreti insieme con l'auspicio che le religioni si sentano chiamate ad essere, particolarmente in questo nostro tempo, messaggere di pace e artefici di comunione; per proclamare, diversamente da chi alimenta scontri, divisioni e chiusure, che oggi è tempo di fraternità.

## *Religious Freedom and the Document on Human Fraternity*

H. EM. CARD. MIGUEL ÁNGEL AYUSO GUIXOT\*

### *Introduction*

I am delighted to be with you in this occasion and I am grateful to His Excellency Ivan Jurkovič, Permanent Observer of the Holy See Permanent Mission to the United Nations and other International Organizations in Geneva, for organizing this High-Level Event on the Religious Freedom and the Document on ‘Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together’ signed by His Holiness Pope Francis and His Eminence the Grand-Imam of Al-Azhar, Dr. Ahmed Al-Tayyeb, in Abu Dhabi just one year ago (4.2.2019). I also thank you all for your valuable presence on this occasion.

When we look at the Document on ‘Human Fraternity’ we can recognize it as a milestone on the path of interreligious dialogue. It marks how far we have come together, but it is also a point of departure. Thus, the Document on Human Fraternity is not so much a map, but a day-to-day commitment of working together for the common good and contributing, as believers, along with people of good will, to heal our wounded world.

Fraternity implies inclusiveness not only to my group, community, culture, religion but of all as brother or sister. To live in fraternity becomes the dynamic, as the Document suggests, by which we rise above differences and instead build bridges of coexistence for a new world.

Pope Francis in his speech at the Global Conference of Human Fraternity said: “There is no alternative: either we will build the future together or there will be no future. Religions in particular cannot renounce the urgent task of building bridges between peoples and cultures. The time has come when religions should more actively exert themselves, with courage and audacity, and without pretense, to help the human family deepen the capacity for reconciliation, the vision of hope and the concrete paths of peace.” (*Address of Pope Francis, Global Conference of Human Fraternity, Founder’s Memorial Abu Dhabi, 4.2.2019*).

Beside the well-known obstacles, confrontations, prejudices and conflicts in today’s world, the Abu Dhabi Declaration beckons us to move beyond any difficulty by remaining always rooted in our own identity, avoiding any kind of syn-

\* President, Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, Session of the Human Rights Council, Geneva, 28 February 2020.

cretism, and supported by the sincerity of our intentions, and at the same time to listen and understand the “other”.

### **From Tolerance to Fraternal Coexistence**

The text of the Abu Dhabi Declaration emphasizes the need to move from mere tolerance to fraternal coexistence and attests that “freedom is a right of every person: each individual enjoys the freedom of belief, thought, expression and action. The pluralism and the diversity of religions, colour, sex, race and language are willed by God in His wisdom”. In this the document clearly condemns forcing any person to conversion to a particular religion or culture, or to a style of civilization that is contrary to their background, religion or own culture.

It seems that we must consider religious freedom not as a political or ideological issue: rather the main concern should be protecting human rights and the fundamental and inalienable freedoms given by the Creator to each person, thus promoting peaceful coexistence and inclusive societies, in which one’s beliefs and religious practices can be expressed openly and without punitive response.

In the Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* Pope Francis wrote: “The Synod Fathers spoke of the importance of respect for religious freedom, viewed as a fundamental human right. This includes “the freedom to choose the religion which one judges to be true and to manifest one’s beliefs in public”. A healthy pluralism, one which genuinely respects differences and values them as such, does not entail privatizing religions in an attempt to reduce them to the quiet obscurity of the individual’s conscience or to relegate them to the enclosed precincts of churches, synagogues or mosques. This would represent, in effect, a new form of discrimination and authoritarianism” (255).

Pope Francis and the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar have notably addressed the topic of religious freedom citing how attacks originate and what needs to be done to defend against those attacks. In such it goes beyond the two particular religious traditions, but can be applied in general to all religions and to the international community.

### **Human Fraternity against any violence or extremism**

The document clearly denounces any attack on religious freedom that emerge from “hateful attitudes, hostility and extremism” that originate in a “deviation from religious teachings,” and lead to “political manipulation of religions and ... interpretations made by religious groups who, in the course of history, have taken advantage of the power of religious sentiment in the hearts of men and women in order to make them act in a way that has nothing to do with the truth of religion.



This is done,” they said, ‘for the purpose of achieving objectives that are political, economic, worldly and short-sighted.’ They therefore made a passionate appeal to “all concerned to stop using religions to incite hatred, violence, extremism and blind fanaticism, and to refrain from using the name of God to justify acts of murder, exile, terrorism and oppression.” God did not, they affirmed, “create men and women to be killed or to fight one another, nor to be tortured or humiliated in their lives and circumstances,” and underlined that God “does not want His name to be used to terrorize people.”

In reading the Abu Dhabi Document in view of a pluralistic world and a globalized society, there cannot be reconciliation between East and West, between North and South unless we begin from a common point: the condemnation and rejection of any kind of violence or war as a solution to differences. As the Holy Father has said many times, we are in midst of a Third World War, being fought piecemeal around the globe. Thus, contemporary societies where persons live together among different cultures and religions must place above all concrete efforts for integration and harmony without which war will persevere. Religions and cultures are challenged draw forth from their deepest values their expression of peace utilizing these gifts throughout the world.

### **Religious Freedom and Secular Societies**

The document cites another danger comes to religious freedom from secular societies. Such threats come from “a desensitized human conscience, a distancing from religious values and a prevailing individualism accompanied by materialistic philosophies that deify the human person and introduce worldly and material values in place of supreme and transcendental principles.” This anthropological materialism, can potentially undermine human dignity, by ignoring the human person’s spiritual nature, and eventually leading to a practical atheism that fails to acknowledge, value, advocate and defend for the person’s spiritual rights, including the right to conscience and to order one’s life to what one believes God has revealed.

“This requires respect for religious freedom and the resolve to reject the discriminatory use of the term ‘minorities’, which engenders feelings of isolation and inferiority, and paves the way for hostility and discord, discriminating between citizens on the basis of their religious affiliation. To this end, it is particularly important to train future generations in interreligious dialogue, the main road to greater knowledge, understanding and reciprocal support between the members of different religions” (*Address of His Holiness Pope Francis to the Members of the Diplomatic Corps*, 9<sup>th</sup> January 2020).

## **Protection of places of worship**

A key point regards the protection of places of worship as a direct consequence of the defense of freedom of thought, conscience and religion. Addressing both governments as well as believers, the document clarifies that “The protection of places of worship – synagogues, churches and mosques – is a duty guaranteed by religions, human values, laws and international agreements. Every attempt to attack places of worship or threaten them by violent assaults, bombings or destruction, is a deviation from the teachings of religions as well as a clear violation of international law.”

As we all know, the places of worship occupy an important place in various religions. In this regard, it is worthwhile to recall what Pope Francis said when he made a visit to the Heydar Aliyev Mosque, in Baku (Azerbaijan) on Sunday, 2 October 2016: “Meeting one another in fraternal friendship in this place of prayer is a powerful sign, one that shows the harmony which religions can build together, based on personal relations and on the good will of those responsible.

The efforts done by the international community at different levels for the protection of the places of worship worldwide are essential. But it is also hopefully that mutual esteem, respect and cooperation between believers of different religions will help strengthen the bonds of sincere friendship, and enable religious communities to safeguard the places of worship to assure for coming generations the fundamental freedom to profess one’s own beliefs.

## **Full citizenship for all**

The need to bolster the concept of the rule of law and equality before the law based on the principle of citizenship, regardless of one’s religion, race or ethnicity is affirmed in order to protect freedom of thought, conscience and religion.

“The concept of citizenship,” the Document states, “is based on the equality of rights and duties, under which all enjoy justice. It is therefore crucial to establish in our societies,” they continued, “the concept of full citizenship and reject the discriminatory use of the term minorities that engenders feelings of isolation and inferiority. Its misuse paves the way for hostility and discord; it undoes any successes and takes away the religious and civil rights of some citizens who are thus discriminated against.”

The law must equally and unequivocally guarantee every citizen’s human rights, among which is the right to freedom of religion. Even in places where one religion is accorded special constitutional status, the right of all citizens and religious communities to freedom of religion, equality before the law, and appropriate means for recourse when their rights are violated, must be recognized and defend-

ed in order to establish and maintain harmonious and fruitful coexistence among individuals, communities and nations.

The Grand Imam of Al-Azhar stressed that there should be no difference nor a distinction between Christians and Muslims as to rights and citizenship in any country. He invited Christians living as a minority in any country to “stop feeling that you are a minority, you are our fellow citizens!” (*Address of Grand Imam of Al-Azhar, Global Conference of Human Fraternity*, Founder’s Memorial Abu Dhabi, 4.2.2019).

True religious freedom requires that political authorities engage with religious leaders, with faith-based organizations and those of civil society, which are committed to promoting religious freedom and freedom of conscience.

In Rabat Pope Francis said: “We believe that God created human beings equal in rights, duties and dignity, and he calls them to live as brothers and sisters and to spread the values of goodness, love and peace. That is why freedom of conscience and religious freedom – which is not limited to freedom of worship alone, but allows all to live in accordance with their religious convictions – are inseparably linked to human dignity” (*Address of Pope Francis*, Rabat, 30 March 2019).

### **Religious Freedom, an existential reality**

Religious freedom is simultaneously a fundamental principle that flows from human nature and an existential reality in the life of every person. Unfortunately, it remains under threat both as a principle and in lived experience in the lives of too many people. Too often in many realities around the globe, religious freedom is more often words rather than the practice.

In a video message recorded with António Guterres, the United Nations Secretary General, at the Vatican Apostolic Palace December 20, the Pope said: “We cannot, we must not turn away when the believers of various faiths are persecuted, in different parts of the world. The use of religion to incite hatred cries out for God’s justice”.

### **Conclusion**

Pope Francis believes that the motivation for interreligious dialogue is the mutual commitment to peace and justice. In fact, interreligious dialogue is a necessary condition for peace in the world, and so it becomes a duty for Christians as well as other religious communities (cfr. Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, n. 250). Pope Francis’s promotions of friendship as a model for interreligious dialogue bespeaks what he calls the “culture of encounter,” asking for a readiness to listen and to collaborate for the good of humanity and to defend the right to religious freedom.

Believers are called to offer their collaboration to the societies in which they are citizens, calling on their common values and their deepest convictions concerning the sacred and inviolable character of life and of the human person. The coherent and credible believer is a witness and bearer of values, which can greatly contribute to building a more just society.

I hope that the Document on Human Fraternity will be welcomed by the international community for the good of the whole human family making that milestone the ability to pass from simple tolerance to true collaboration and peaceful coexistence.

Let us promote the historic Document on Human Fraternity calling everyone to reflect and study this new opportunity to foster peace, coexistence and freedom.

## ***Il Documento sulla Fratellanza Umana e le sue implicazioni per la vita religiosa***

S. EM. CARD. MIGUEL ÁNGEL AYUSO GUIXOT\*

Innanzitutto desidero ringraziare per l'invito che mi hanno rivolto Sr. Patricia Murray e P. Emil Turu, che a nome della Commissione per il Dialogo Interreligioso dell'Unione Internazionale delle Superiori Generali e dell'Unione Superiori Generali, hanno organizzato l'odierno evento al quale, con diverse modalità, stiamo partecipando. Vi confesso che è per me un vero piacere condividere con voi alcune riflessioni. Mi sento difatti a casa poiché appartenendo ad un Istituto missionario, quello dei Missionari Comboniani del Sacro Cuore di Gesù, ho ben presente sia per la mia vita personale che per la vita consacrata, che significato ed importanza abbiano la costruzione della fraternità e la promozione del dialogo con persone di altre religioni.

Il tema che mi è stato affidato il *Documento sulla Fratellanza Umana e le sue implicazioni per la vita religiosa* è senz'altro un argomento di grande attualità e rilevanza. Ritengo infatti che il *Documento sulla Fratellanza Umana per la Pace Mondiale e la Convivenza Comune*, siglato il 4 febbraio 2019 a Abu Dhabi da Papa Francesco e dal Grand Imam di Al-Azhar Al-Tayyeb sia una pietra miliare nel cammino del dialogo interreligioso.

Vorrei rapidamente accennare ad alcuni contenuti del Documento per poi passare ad affrontare il suo significato per la vita consacrata.

### **1) Documento sulla Fratellanza Umana per la Pace Mondiale e la Convivenza Comune**

#### *a. Le radici nel Concilio*

Come ha detto il Santo Padre per noi cattolici “il documento non è andato di un millimetro oltre il Concilio Vaticano II. Niente. Il documento è stato fatto nello spirito del Vaticano II” (*Conferenza Stampa di Papa Francesco durante il viaggio di ritorno a Roma, 5 febbraio 2019*). Dal punto di vista cattolico non si può infatti comprendere il documento se non lo si inserisce nel cammino ormai di lungo corso delle relazioni interreligiose della Chiesa cattolica, che ha trovato espressione ufficiale nel Concilio Vaticano Secondo.

\* Presidente del Pontificio Consiglio per il Dialogo Interreligioso, Commissione per il Dialogo, Unione Italiana Superiori Generali (UISG/USG), Roma 16 marzo 2020.

b. *È rivolto a tutti*

Si tratta di un invito concreto alla fratellanza universale che riguarda ogni uomo e ogni donna. Non è quindi un Documento confessionale né un testo islamo-cristiano, benchè ovviamente traspaia in filigrana la spiritualità dei due firmatari, ma bensì è un Documento aperto a tutti, usufruibile e condivisibile da tutti, credenti e non credenti.

c. *Dio è il Creatore di tutto e di tutti*

Dio è il Creatore di tutto e di tutti, pertanto noi siamo membri di un'unica famiglia e come tali dobbiamo riconoscerci. Questo è il criterio fondamentale che la fede ci offre per gestire la convivenza umana, per interpretare le diversità che sussistono tra noi, e per disinnescare i conflitti.

d. *Alcuni punti salienti*

Ecco alcuni punti presenti nella Dichiarazione e sui quali c'è molto da lavorare assieme ai nostri fratelli di altre religioni:

A nessuno è mai permesso di usare il nome di Dio per giustificare la guerra, il terrorismo o qualsiasi altra forma di violenza.

La vita deve essere sempre salvaguardata, così come devono essere riconosciuti il diritto dei bambini a crescere in un ambiente familiare, il diritto al cibo e all'educazione, alla tutela in un ambiente digitale sempre più insidioso per loro.

La Dichiarazione definisce come "necessità essenziale" il riconoscimento del diritto delle donne all'istruzione, al lavoro e all'esercizio dei loro diritti politici.

Il documento condanna le adesioni forzate a una particolare religione o cultura, o a uno stile di civiltà che gli altri non accettano.

Diritto alla libertà religiosa e alla piena cittadinanza. Il testo della Dichiarazione di Abu Dhabi sottolinea la necessità di passare dalla mera tolleranza alla convivenza fraterna.

Importanza della formazione e dell'educazione delle generazioni più giovani.

Rispetto, salvaguardia e cura per il Creato.

L'intento del Documento è quello di adottare:

la cultura del dialogo come via;

la collaborazione comune come condotta;

la conoscenza reciproca come metodo e criterio.

Di fronte a un'umanità ferita da tante divisioni e fanatismi ideologici, il Papa e il Grande Imam hanno dimostrato che la promozione della cultura dell'incontro e della conoscenza dell'altro non sono un'utopia, ma la condizione necessaria per vivere in pace e lasciare alle generazioni future un mondo migliore di quello in cui viviamo.

Il nostro mondo, sempre più secolarizzato, ha quanto mai bisogno del dialogo interreligioso, che testimoni il “trascendente”, difenda la libertà di religione, dichiari che ogni forma di violenza è per sua natura aliena all’autentica ragione d’essere della religione in quanto tale, incoraggi la costruzione comune di un mondo di pace e di fraternità. Di fatto, la verità del carattere sacro e della dignità della persona umana, assieme al rispetto della libertà religiosa che porta al dialogo autentico sono le basi per la costruzione di un mondo pacificato.

## **2. Il Documento sulla fratellanza umana e la vita consacrata**

Pensando alla vita consacrata mi viene spontaneo pensare a San Francesco d’Assisi. Mi piace qui ricordare, come era anche evidenziato dal motto del Viaggio Apostolico ad Abu Dhabi ‘Fa di me uno strumento della tua pace’, che l’incontro di Abu Dhabi si è svolto 800 anni dopo quello tra il Santo di Assisi e il sultano Malik al- Kāmil. San Francesco aveva intuito che il dialogo è lo spazio della missione per confrontarsi con chi non conosce il Vangelo e non ha sentito parlare di Gesù Cristo.

La lezione di San Francesco è che, lungi dal cedere al sincretismo o al relativismo, o rinunciare alla propria storia e tradizione, l’identità cristiana è però ‘flessibile’, cioè capace di confrontarsi con le mutate condizioni sociali e politiche del mondo, nonché di vincere preconcetti e forme d’intolleranza. È un’identità che vive della volontà d’incontrare l’altro, che sente il desiderio del dialogo.

Mi sembra che la ‘flessibilità’ e la ‘volontà di incontrare l’altro’ siano due atteggiamenti che contraddistinguono l’apporto specifico che l’esperienza della vita consacrata può offrire nel campo della fratellanza umana e del dialogo interreligioso.

Solo per fare un esempio ricordo la feconda esperienza del Dialogo Interreligioso Monastico (DIM) e la felice collaborazione con il Pontificio Consiglio per il Dialogo Interreligioso. È fondamentale l’apporto che l’esperienza monastica può dare al dialogo interreligioso. Il Dialogo Interreligioso Monastico, come organizzazione, ha avuto inizio nel 1978, in risposta ad un appello del cardinale Sergio Pignedoli, il secondo presidente del Pontificio Consiglio per il Dialogo Interreligioso. Nella sua lettera all’Abate Primate della Confederazione Benedettina, egli aveva chiesto che monaci e monache fossero più strettamente coinvolti nel dialogo interreligioso, poiché, come sosteneva, “il monachesimo è un ponte tra le religioni”. La proficua collaborazione fra il DIM e il Pontificio Consiglio per il Dialogo Interreligioso ha prodotto negli anni diversi frutti soprattutto nel campo del dialogo cristiano-buddista. Ultimo in ordine di tempo, ma non per importanza, in collaborazione con il monastero buddista di Fo Guang Shan e l’Associazione delle Superiori Maggiori delle Religiose, si è svolto a Taiwan,

nell'ottobre 2018, il primo dialogo internazionale per le Monache Buddhiste e Cristiane, sul tema "*Contemplative Action and Active Contemplation: Buddhist and Christian Nuns in Dialogue*".

Penso ugualmente all'insostituibile opera nel campo del dialogo interreligioso svolta dagli Istituti che hanno una spiritualità missionaria. Anch'io, come ho già detto, appartengo ai Missionari Comboniani del Sacro Cuore di Gesù, pertanto so bene quante energie siano profuse perché la nostra vita sia permeata dall'amore fraterno per tutti e da cordiale amicizia e sincerità con le persone di altre religioni. La collaborazione con uomini e donne di diversa tradizione religiosa sempre più si deve basare sulla comune sollecitudine per la vita umana, che va dalla compassione per la sofferenza fisica e spirituale, all'impegno per la giustizia, la pace e la salvaguardia del creato. Tutto ciò è bene espresso nel *Documento sulla fratellanza umana*.

È innegabile che oggi il dialogo si fa dappertutto. Diversi sono gli ambiti e le occasioni per avvicinarci di più gli uni agli altri. Oltre allo sforzo instancabile di parlarci gli uni gli altri, dobbiamo imparare anche a condividere le gioie e le sofferenze della vita. Ogni istituto religioso ha il proprio carisma da spendere nel cammino del dialogo. Sono convinto che ciascuno istituto, se si lascia ispirare dalla spiritualità del dialogo, potrà dare un proprio contributo al cammino verso la fraternità e la coesistenza delle religioni e delle culture.

In questo senso è significativa la creazione della Commissione per il Dialogo Interreligioso della quale fanno parte membri che rappresentano sia l'Unione dei Superiori Generali che quella delle Superiori Generali e che intende sviluppare consapevolezza e conoscenza tra le Congregazioni religiose residenti a Roma dell'importanza del ministero sul dialogo interreligioso.

La vita consacrata ha davanti a sé la strada della fraternità da percorrere in un mondo diviso dagli odi, dalle guerre, dalle ingiustizie e dall'oppressione. È pertanto necessario vivere e testimoniare la comunione nella diversità, la possibilità di un dialogo multiculturale e mostrare la possibilità del dialogo e della pace fra i popoli, le razze e le culture. Nella esperienza della fraternità noi facciamo l'esperienza del Dio Trinitario, comunione nella diversità.

Siamo tutti corresponsabili della missione della Chiesa nel mondo e siamo tutti chiamati ad essere protagonisti del dialogo interreligioso. Ovviamente le persone consacrate che si pongono a servizio del dialogo interreligioso esigono una adeguata preparazione nella formazione, come pure nello studio e nella ricerca, dal momento che in questo settore occorre profonda conoscenza del cristianesimo e delle altre religioni, accompagnata da fede solida e da maturità spirituale ed umana.

È infatti indispensabile una profonda e seria formazione nella propria fede (in questo caso il cristianesimo) ed una buona informazione sulle altre religioni che ci



renda solidi e maturi spiritualmente e umanamente. Oggi non possiamo ignorare l'altro, ma ben radicati nella nostra identità, dobbiamo aprirci con la sincerità delle intenzioni, a questa 'cultura del dialogo' voluta da Papa Francesco.

Vorrei qui riproporre, dato l'ambito, la sensibilità e le competenze, l'invito di Papa Francesco: "Per chi crede nel Vangelo, il dialogo non ha semplicemente un valore antropologico, ma anche teologico (...) C'è bisogno di elaborare una teologia dell'accoglienza e del dialogo, che reinterpreti e riproponga l'insegnamento biblico. Può essere elaborata solo se ci si sforza in ogni modo di fare il primo passo e non si escludono i semi di verità di cui anche gli altri sono depositari. In questo modo, il confronto tra i contenuti delle diverse fedi potrà riguardare non solo le verità credute, ma temi specifici, che diventano punti qualificanti di tutta la dottrina" (*Discorso del Santo Padre Francesco, "Mediterraneo Frontiera di Pace"*, Bari, 23.2.2020).

Papa Francesco aveva già auspicato, durante il suo intervento alla Facoltà Teologica dell'Italia Meridionale (Napoli, 21.6.2019), che si avviassero studi riflessioni e ricerche tese ad elaborare una teologia del discernimento, della misericordia e dell'accoglienza, che si ponesse in dialogo con la società, le culture e le religioni per la costruzione della convivenza pacifica. Ecco un nuovo importante compito che si apre innanzi a noi!

Il consacrato, il missionario che si interessa dell'avvento del Regno di Dio diventa un protagonista e un promotore di dialogo, lavorando mano nella mano con i credenti di altre religioni in spirito di fraternità, condividendo con loro il comune impegno di costruire un mondo migliore, come credenti di un solo Dio. Questo dialogo, come delineato dai documenti della Chiesa, sarà un dialogo di vita, di azione, di scambio teologico e di esperienza religiosa.

Infine vorrei sottolineare un aspetto, quello della preghiera, comune agli uomini e alle donne delle diverse religioni, ma che mi sembra possa assumere un particolare significato per la vita consacrata e diventare per questa un compito specifico per sostenere il dialogo interreligioso e la via della fraternità. Dovremmo imparare a guardare gli altri con lo sguardo di Dio. Il primato della preghiera è la visibile manifestazione del fatto che essa è la dimensione interiore e fondante di ogni esperienza religiosa ed è l'ambito da cui emerge forte anche oggi il richiamo alla responsabilità storica che hanno le religioni verso il nostro mondo.

In un contesto internazionale destinato a rapidi, e talvolta drammatici mutamenti, l'invito che giunge da Abu Dhabi è ad incrementare, a partire dalla preghiera, il dialogo tra le religioni e delle religioni con tutti gli uomini; è una inequivocabile sottolineatura dell'esigenza di un più alto livello qualitativo richiesto al dialogo stesso e di una più radicale assunzione di responsabilità nel cercare le vie della pace. Con inevitabili ricadute sul piano della vita privata e pubblica.

### 3. Conclusione

Il magistero di Papa Francesco si nutre del convincimento conciliare che le religioni abbiano in sé grandi risorse per costruire, con tutti gli uomini di buona volontà, un'umanità riconciliata e che sia sempre necessario un movimento spirituale per la pace capace di raccogliere, senza confonderli, i diversi mondi religiosi. È dunque in questo contesto che si inserisce il *Documento sulla fratellanza umana* ed anche la recente istituzione, nell'agosto 2019 sempre ad Abu Dhabi, di un Comitato superiore per l'attuazione del *Documento sulla Fratellanza Umana* del quale sono Presidente e che ha il compito di sviluppare un quadro per assicurare la realizzazione degli obiettivi contenuti nel *Documento*.

Nel mondo precario di oggi, il dialogo tra le religioni non è un segno di debolezza. Esso trova la sua ragion d'essere nel dialogo di Dio con l'umanità. Preghiera, dialogo, rispetto e solidarietà sono le uniche armi vincenti contro terrorismo, fondamentalismo e ogni genere di guerra e di violenza. E sono armi che fanno parte degli arsenali spirituali di tutte le religioni. Nel rispetto della diversità, il dialogo deve porre ogni cura perché ogni essere umano veda garantiti e rispettati i propri diritti alla vita, all'integrità fisica, alle libertà fondamentali, cioè libertà di coscienza, di pensiero, di espressione e religione.

Si legge nel linguaggio, nel titolo stesso del documento sottoscritto ad Abu Dhabi, un terreno comune legato ad una verità antica, che può suonare nuova per il contesto mondiale che ci circonda: la fratellanza umana.

Il fatto che Papa Francesco e l'imam Al-Tayyeb chiedano che si studi e si trasmetta il loro messaggio alle nuove generazioni, annuncia una nuova stagione. Direi che si è aperto un cammino comune, frutto di una nuova luce e di una nuova creatività al cuore stesso di ciascuna delle due religioni, e non solo. E se a Dio piace che uomini e donne di religione e di buona volontà possano camminare in fraternità, non ha meno valore che la fraternità divenga il cammino anche delle fedi religiose.

Mi auguro che lo sforzo di Abu Dhabi possa davvero unire al di là dei confini e delle appartenenze e soprattutto degli usi strumentali delle fedi. Per la pace e il vivere insieme.

## *The Role of Religious Leaders in Addressing the Challenges of COVID-19'*

H. EM. CARD. MIGUEL ÁNGEL AYUSO GUIXOT\*

### ***Introduction***

I am delighted to be with you in this occasion and I am grateful to His Excellency Omar Hilale, Permanent Representative of the Kingdom of Morocco to the United Nations, for organising this High-Level Video-Conference on "*The Role of Religious Leaders in Addressing the Challenges of COVID-19*". I would like to thank also the Secretary General of the United Nations, Mr. António Guterres who, last 11 of April, has invited Jews, Christians and Muslims to work together in the common fighting against the Covid-19. I also thank Mr. Tijjani Muhammad Bande, President of the General Assembly, and you all for your valuable presence on this occasion.

We find ourselves today called to reflect on what the role of religious leaders is in the context of this pandemic. This role is particularly important as it serves to preserve human fraternity. We religious leaders can offer needed messages of hope, solidarity and spiritual comfort to the many suffering around the globe.

I would like to start from an image that is, in my opinion, highly evocative and symbolic of this troubled period in which the world finds itself. The image is of Pope Francis who on the occasion of the blessing "*Urbi et Orbi*" the evening of 27 March, in a deserted St Peter's Square buffeted by wind and rain, summed up with these words the sense of disorientation and confusion that has afflicted all of us, Christians and other believers alike, since the start of the pandemic:

"For weeks now it has been evening. Thick darkness has gathered over our squares, our streets and our cities; it has taken over our lives, filling everything with a deafening silence and a distressing void... Like the disciples in the Gospel we were caught off guard by an unexpected, turbulent storm. We have realized that we are all in the same boat, fragile and disoriented, but at the same time important and needed, all of us called to row together, each of us in need of comforting the other".

It is really true! We have all found ourselves in the same boat called to row together and also to support each other.

\* President, Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, Video-Conference organized by The Permanent Mission of the Kingdom of Morocco to the United Nations, New York, 12.5.2020.

I would like to focus my reflection on three points that, in my opinion, we as religious leaders can offer to our religious communities as well as to the societies in which we live: Unity, Solidarity and Fraternity.

## **Unity**

We must always remember that the basis of our collaboration and our dialogue is the common root of our humanity; we are all part of the human family. The human condition we share already creates a common meeting ground. The anxiety and pain we are experiencing at this time can be either the cause of division or the unexpected means of uniting different peoples. I believe that we have become more united and have understood that our life, the life of our communities, cannot be separated from that of others. We are dependent on each other. Our sense of feeling united is not from the strength of economic power or that of arms, but rather because we have discovered ourselves as weak and fragile and, therefore, in need of each other.

## **Solidarity**

This awareness of our unity requires us as religious leaders together with our communities, to be in solidarity with hard-hit humanity. This cannot, in fact, be a time of indifference, or selfishness, or division; with the whole of humanity suffering, we must find ourselves united in facing the pandemic. (cfr. Pope Francis, Messge *Urbi et Orbi* for Easter, 12.04.2020).

Therefore, the way forward is to find the courage to open up space for new forms of solidarity. I will not take time here to mention the many inter-religious initiatives that have multiplied in this period, but truly, there is no shortage of good examples, thank goodness!

I am happy at this point to call to mind what was said by His Majesty King Mohammed VI on March 30, 2019 during Pope Francis' Apostolic Visit to Morocco: "Spirituality is not an end in itself. Our faith translates into concrete actions. It teaches us to love our neighbor. It teaches us to help him or her."

When reaching out to our neighbour, it is important that no one be left behind. While I believe, certainly, that the emergence of this epidemic requires great efforts, obviously in terms of health, economics etc. but that it also requires even more effort to lay a new foundation for defeating all injustice and inequality. The world needn't go back to what it was pre-pandemic, but rather seize the opportunity to create a new and better global society.

## Fraternity

Because we belong to the one human family we recognize each other as brother and sister. This awareness is the first step to tearing down walls raised because of fear and ignorance. This pandemic provides the impetus for us to seek together to build bridges of friendship and fraternity, which are fundamental for the good of all humanity. This spirit of fraternity in which we are united will sustain us and help us overcome these difficult moments.

By fraternity, it is intended human relationships that draw from the depth of the meaning of family – sister/brother – not only fellowship or friendship, but also the inextricable bond that is the human family. Fraternity cannot mean exclusive to my group, community, culture, religion but inclusive of all. Fraternity can be the dynamic, as the Document on *‘Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together’*, signed by His Holiness Pope Francis and His Eminence the Grand-Imam of Al-Azhar, Dr. Ahmed Al-Tayyeb, in Abu Dhabi (4.2.2019), by which we rise above differences and instead build bridges of coexistence for a new world.

## Conclusion

Returning to the image of the Holy Father that I referenced at the beginning of this talk, I feel impelled to bring up what Pope Francis has called our mission at this uncertain time. He has called us to spread a ‘contagion of hope’: “ This is a different ‘contagion’, a message transmitted from heart to heart – for every human heart awaits this Good News. It is the contagion of hope (...) Indifference, self-centeredness, division and forgetfulness are not words we want to hear at this time. We want to ban these words forever! “ (Message of the Holy Father, Easter 2020).

Thanks to our spiritual values we religious leaders can help to bring about a rebirth in this painfully impacted humanity. We acknowledge that this global pandemic requires a global response based on unity, solidarity and multilateral cooperation, in order to defeat COVID-19 through the access to medicines, vaccines and medical equipment for all, as members of the human family.

At the end of my reflection, I would like to invite everyone to join spiritually in the day of prayer and fasting, announced for the day after tomorrow, May 14, by the High Committee for Human Fraternity, which I have the honor of presiding and which was created at the end of August 2019 for the implementation of the Document on *‘Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together’*. The Higher Committee urges both religious leaders along with all other people in the world, “to respond to this humanitarian invitation and to speak to God with one voice, to preserve humanity, to help it overcome the pandemic, to restore security, stability, health and prosperity, and make our world, saved from this pandemic, more human and more fraternal”

The first to welcome and adhere to this proposal was Pope Francis “And since prayer is a universal value, I accepted the proposal of the Higher Committee for Human Fraternity so that believers of all religions will unite next May 14 spiritually on a day of prayer and fasting and works of charity, to implore God to help humanity overcome the coronavirus pandemic [...]”. (*Regina Coeli*, 3 May 2020).

We want to respond to the pandemic of the virus with the universality of prayer. Let’s stay united.

To face current challenges and those of the immediate future, we religious leaders are called to promote unity, solidarity and brotherhood. I hope that out of this difficult moment we can all emerge better than we were before and help our societies to be ready to change everything that is necessary, not only following the laws of economy and profit.

## *Address at the G20 Interfaith Forum*

H. EM. CARD. MIGUEL ÁNGEL AYUSO GUIXOT\*

The world is passing through a very dark moment that demands adequate responses and solutions to the problems of our existential life. There is a real necessity for the human family to come together with a unified spirit and in a real friendship to propose answers to our common problems. We as religious leaders in particular need to be a “contagion of hope”. Let us then witness to our religious communities as well as to our societies in which we live: unity, solidarity and fraternity, for bettering our Common Home, as Pope Francis is continuously reminding us all. This is our public responsibility be it political, socio-economical or religious.

What Pope Francis in the new Encyclical “*Fratelli tutti*”, has proposed to us all is essential if we really want to find an adequate “therapy” towards ending this world crisis and to preventing another one in the future. With this in mind, I place before this important G20 Interfaith Forum for our consideration, Pope Francis’ call to reaffirm that we are members of the one human family. Today we have an opportunity to draw from the richness of what the Pope is offering not only to Catholics, but to the entire humanity.

I invite you to join Pope Francis in this adventure of promoting fraternity and social friendship. In this way, we can work together to overcome the challenges humanity is facing, hoping that we, as religious leaders, can promote, support and encourage communities and people around the world in the responsibility to seek only the common good and the dignity of every human person. Pope Francis says that: “*The effort to seek God with a sincere heart, provided it is never sullied by ideological or self-serving aims, helps us recognize one another as travelling companions, truly brothers and sisters*” (FT 274).

In seeing respect and friendship as two fundamental attitudes needed for dialogue, Pope Francis has created a forum, where persons of different religious traditions, believers and nonbelievers, as well as persons of good will, may see all our efforts in the light of promoting the common good, offering not only concrete solutions as the G20 Interfaith Forum states, but a needed hope in the future.

Let’s not forget that believers of different religious traditions can offer their own valuable contributions to universal fraternity in the societies in which they live. “*Fratelli Tutti*” states: “*It is wrong when the only voices to be heard in public debate are those of the powerful and ‘experts.’ Room needs to be made for reflections born*

\* President, Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, Keynote Address, G20 Interfaith Forum, Riyadh, 13.10.2020.

*of religious traditions that are the repository of centuries of experience and wisdom”* (FT 275).

It is a temptation to limit fraternity only to those who share the same ideas or cultural context. According to the Encyclical, we are called to participate in that healthy subsidiarity which starts from the individual and expands to encompass the family, the social and state dimensions, all the way to the international community. As Pope Francis reminds us, this is why *“it is necessary to develop not only a spirituality of fraternity but at the same time a more efficient world organization, to help resolve pressing problems if fraternity is to be an effective instrument in international relations”* (FT, 165).

In a world in which relations among persons are characterized by indifference and greed for the growth of only select groups, there is a need for a new and universal solidarity and a new dialogue based on fraternity. As Pope Francis notes in *“Fratelli Tutti”*, *“the multitude of the abandoned remain at the mercy of the possible good will of some”* (FT, 165). Interreligious dialogue has an essential function in building a civil society that includes everyone and rejects the ‘throwaway culture’ which leaves persons isolated and without resources.

I am hopeful that through this G20 Interfaith Forum a better world, supported by the awareness engendered by *“Fratelli Tutti”*, will emerge out of our common efforts and concerned hopes. May we remain connected in this joint responsibility! Let us all be true messengers of unity, solidarity and fraternity.



## *How 'Laudato si' Moves Interreligious Dialogue Forward*

H. EM. CARD. MIGUEL ÁNGEL AYUSO GUIXOT\*

It gives me great joy to join you all in this virtual Conference on *How 'Laudato si' Moves Interreligious Dialogue Forward*, organized by the Georgetown University to mark the fifth anniversary of 'Laudato si', the much celebrated Encyclical Letter of Pope Francis.

My sincere appreciation to the organizers for this initiative which is among the many events and projects across the globe to celebrate the immense good that the document has done to the world over the last five years and to encourage multiplying of efforts for converting them into 'a peoples' movement' for the protection and care of the earth, our Common Home. The COVID-19 pandemic, I am sure all of you would agree, has only hastened the urgency of attending to this dire need. The year from 24 May 2020 to 24 May 2021, as you would know, has been declared as "Special Laudato Si' Anniversary Year" by the Vatican. I am happy that this event is taking place during this Special Anniversary Year and particularly so within a few days after the release of 'Fratelli Tutti', the latest encyclical letter of Pope Francis and the International Meeting of Prayer for Peace where leaders of different religious traditions, led by Pope Francis, in the 'spirit of Assisi' expressed the ardent desire that "there may no longer be 'others', but rather, a great 'we', rich in diversity" (Appeal for Peace, Piazza del Campidoglio, 20 Oct. 2020). The source of inspiration for both 'Laudato Si' and 'Fratelli Tutti', as the Holy Father acknowledges, is one and the same person and that is St. Francis of Assisi, who "felt himself a brother to the sun, the sea and the wind, yet he knew that he was even closer to those of his own flesh" (Fratelli Tutti (FT), no. 2). It is only inevitable therefore that there is a connecting thread between the two encyclicals. Some commentators have pointed out, that 'Laudato Si' taught us that everything is connected whereas 'Fratelli Tutti' teaches us that everyone is connected as brothers and sisters and as such "we need to think of ourselves more and more as a single family dwelling in a common home" (FT, 17). There is thus an inseparable link between the two encyclicals; both are complimentary to each other. Our reflections on 'Laudato Si' henceforth cannot but be in close reference to 'Fratelli Tutti'. May all our efforts-individual and collective, during this year and in the years to come, therefore, be geared to creating universal consciousness duly supported by concrete actions on the ground for the protection and well-being of our planet and of one another.

\* President, Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, Video-Conference on *How 'Laudato si' Moves Interreligious Dialogue Forward*, Georgetown University, Washington D.C., 29.10. 2020.

All of us, irrespective of whichever religion we profess, have a moral and religious responsibility to shape an ethic of care for the earth, which is our shared home. A common commitment to creation by people of different religious traditions can offer real hope for the future of life on earth.

### **The role of Religions, Religious Leaders and Religious Communities in Protecting Environment**

It is needless to say that religions play a paramount role in nurturing respect for Creation and in safeguarding the legitimate diversity and the value systems as resources for harmony with one another and harmony with nature. They possess much wisdom to help us bring about the needed changes in our life, surroundings and in the society to overcome the deterioration of the conditions of our planet.

The leaders of religious communities likewise play a vital role in shaping attitudes, opinions and behaviours among their followers for the judicious management and equitable use of the natural resources and for the sustainable development of all. In addition, they have a moral duty as well, as the “*Document on Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together*”, signed by Pope Francis and the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar Ahmad Al Tayyeb in Abu Dhabi on 4<sup>th</sup> February 2019 says, to spread “the values of peace, justice, goodness, beauty, human fraternity and coexistence”.

And, no doubt, religious communities do and can make a significant contribution to addressing the issues of climate change, biodiversity and ecosystem loss, pollution, deforestation, desertification and unsustainable land and water use and other urgent issues.

Many of you would agree, I am sure, that the ecological crisis and the safeguard of the environment in respect to people, planet, prosperity, peace and partnership are central to all faiths and that they are all inseparably linked to one another.

### **‘Laudato si’ and interreligious relations**

In *Laudato Si’*, Pope Francis underlines the urgency and importance of dialogue with all religions for the care of our common home (cf. LS 7, 14, 63, 64, 111, 216, 222), arguing that the ecological crisis is basically a spiritual problem and therefore interreligious dialogue is fundamental to solving it.

Environmental matters are becoming and should increasingly become an interreligious concern so as to bring about an ecologically responsible social order based on shared values, for, as the document on Human Fraternity notes: “...we human beings are united as brothers and sisters on a wonderful pilgrim-

*age, woven together by the love God has for each of his creatures and which also unites us in fond affection with brother sun, sister moon, brother river and mother earth.”*(no. 92).

The interconnection and interdependence among us and with nature invite each of us to go beyond differences of class, creed, race or culture and to collaborate, as one human family, in protecting the integrity of our home, now and for future generations. We, believers need to take the first collective step in this direction, for, “*Given the complexity of the ecological crisis and its multiple causes, we need to realize that the solutions will not emerge from just one way of interpreting and transforming reality. Respect must also be shown for the various cultural riches of different peoples, their art and poetry, their interior life and spirituality. If we are truly concerned to develop an ecology capable of remedying the damage we have done, no branch of the sciences and no form of wisdom can be left out, and that includes religion and the language particular to it.*” (LS, no. 63)

Many religious people today seem to think that the environmental crisis at the base is human-caused and thus choose to leave it at that, unconcerned. It is time for them to re-think about how they consider the crisis. According to Pope Francis, the ecological crisis is ultimately linked to a crisis of values, a spiritual void that pervades the society of our times. There is the need therefore to offer alternative models based on values and spiritual paths to arrest the crisis. While this should be the case, there must also be an on-going dialogue among the different fields of knowledge, including science, “in the service of a more integral and integrating vision” (LS, 141) and for the common good (cfr. LS, 201). In this connection it is pertinent to remember what Pope Benedict XVI said regarding the misconception about the relation between religion and science. He said and I quote, “there is no “opposition between faith and science”, instead, “there is friendship between science and faith” and that scientists, “through their vocation to the study of nature...can take an authentic and fascinating path of holiness” (*General Audience*, 24 March, 2010).

One of the most essential and effective models has been ecumenical and interreligious dialogue. I would like to focus on the latter. The good news is that concern for environment has now become a major interreligious preoccupation. Besides, the adherents of various religions also have begun to formulate their own religious perspectives on ecological issues. For example, *The Time to Act is Now: A Buddhist Declaration on Climate Change* (May 14, 2015); *Buddhist Climate Change Statement to World Leaders* (October 29, 2015); *Islamic Declaration on Climate Change* (August 18 2015) and *Hindu Declaration on Climate Change*, (November 23 2015).

For its part, the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue has highlighted the importance and contribution of interreligious dialogue in combatting the

ecological crisis. It has done so through its messages on the occasion of the most important feasts of other major religions and organizing of Conferences.

*Speaking of Laudato si'*, it must be underscored that it has made a great impact on society from an interreligious point of view:

It has created greater awareness among people of different religious traditions about climate change and expanded, deepened and accelerated the on-going dialogue on climate-change and climate justice. It has brought about positive changes in the lives of people in respect for and protection of nature.

It has caused increased understanding of how everything in the world- human beings and the nature- is interconnected (nos. 117, 138).

Through its call for integral development and integral ecology, it has brought 'inclusivism' into greater focus.

It has generated hundreds, if not thousands, of interreligious initiatives and projects all over the world to enhance awareness among the people about the urgent need of doing something together and in concrete to save the Mother Earth.

It has also made people to revert back to the teachings of their respective religious traditions to understand better how the relationships between God, human beings and nature are inter-wined.

The interreligious conversations on the encyclical and the activities prompted by the document also gave the opportunity of knowing the perspectives of other religions on the subject.

Inspired by the messages of the encyclical, organizations belonging to other religious traditions brought out their own versions of declarations on 'care for nature'.

Interreligious dialogue, as has been demonstrated by 'Laudato Si', can play a monumental role in bringing about the much needed solidarity towards finding lasting solutions to environmental issues and fostering of sustainable development. There remains however a lot more to be done to ensure an ecologically responsible social order based on shared values. The Covid-19 pandemic beckons us to do the same without any further delay, accelerating and augmenting interreligious solidarity and cooperation.

### **'Laudato Si', Covid-19 Pandemic and Pope Francis**

*Laudato Si'* was in a way, a prophetic document that predicted of a looming crisis (social, climatic etc.) on the horizon of the earth if corrective measures were not taken urgently. None perhaps expected that the prophecy will come to pass any time soon and the result is that we were caught off guard when the catastrophe struck.

We have been witnesses, directly or indirectly, to the devastating impact of the pandemic on humanity. While thousands and thousands of lives have been lost

and livelihoods of millions destroyed, the pandemic brought to fore the scandalous inequality, discrimination and indifference on the basis of creed and race existing in the society.

The worst affected due to the pandemic and the subsequent lock-downs have naturally been the poor, the migrants and the most vulnerable of the society.

The overwhelming sense of helplessness and vulnerability we felt and continue to feel still has made us realize that we all are equal before the Corona virus (it doesn't see religion, race, class etc.).

The pandemic has also made us recognize, as the Holy Father says, that "When we mistreat nature, we also mistreat human beings". (*First Message for World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation*, 1 Sept. 2016).

The health-crisis and the lock-downs have positive changes in our thinking and living. They have presumably made us become less individualistic, less consumerist and less self-centered!

Most importantly, the Pandemic has brought about human and inter-religious solidarity as never seen before in the recent known human history. This is, in many ways, a promising sign of hope amidst the doom and gloom caused by the virus.

Pope Francis, through his various gestures and pronouncements has demonstrated his spiritual closeness to all those who are suffering due to Covid-19 as well as to all the frontline warriors of the pandemic. They are great motivators for all, most especially for the suffering humanity. The extraordinary Moment of Prayer on 27 March, 2020 and his endorsement of the *Global Day of Fasting, Prayers and Good deeds* for the good of all humanity on 14 May 2020, an initiative of the Higher Committee of Human Fraternity are among the most notable moments when he united himself with the suffering and appealed to everyone to pray for and to reach out to the suffering. Following in his example, we believers and in particular religious leaders are called upon to spread what he delights in calling the "Contagion of hope" (*Urbi et Orbi Message*, 12 April, 2020) among the masses. He calls us rather to become "sowers of hope" (Address to the Editorial Board of the Weekly 'Tertio' (Belgium), 18 Sept. 2020) for a better tomorrow.

### **Post-Covid-19 period from an interreligious collaboration point of view**

'Laudato Si' decried our broken relationships with God, with neighbors and with the earth (cfr. LS, 66). It called for repairing and restoring of those relationships to live in harmony with one another and with nature. The present crisis must be understood as an opportunity and a grace to restore those relationships and to adapt a new way of living based on fraternal love, equality, justice, harmony and peace.

The re-realization of our shared humanity, shared destiny and shared responsibility for one another and for the world (cfr. LS. 229) must spur us on to further build on the robust interreligious solidarity existent at the moment for the welfare of human family not just during the pandemic period but beyond. May this lead us in this Special Year of the Anniversary, to generously cooperate with one another "... as instruments of God for the care of creation, each according to his or her own culture, experience, involvement and talents (LS, 14)!

## **Conclusion**

Our fragility as human beings and our interdependence on one another, as has been eloquently exposed by the Pandemic, is a more than enough reason for us to be united and committed not just to ward off the coronavirus but also to work together for the betterment of humanity. May we promote unity, solidarity and brotherhood among all so that we are able to unitedly and courageously face the current challenges as well as those of the immediate future. It is my hope that we will emerge from the present crisis better and stronger and help our societies to become more humane where people care for one another and care for creation.

## *Le religioni al servizio della fraternità nel mondo*

H. EM. CARD. MIGUEL ÁNGEL AYUSO GUIXOT\*

Anche se costretto alla lontananza, a causa dell'attuale situazione pandemica, sono lieto di partecipare all'odierno seminario-online promosso dalla Sezione per il Dialogo Interreligioso del Consiglio delle Conferenze Episcopali dell'Europa, che ringrazio vivamente.

Vorrei focalizzare il mio contributo sul dialogo interreligioso in generale.

Indirizzandosi al Cardinale Segretario di Stato, il Santo Padre ha scritto: "Un'Europa divisa, composta di realtà solitarie ed indipendenti, si troverà facilmente incapace di affrontare le sfide del futuro. Un'Europa comunità, solidale e fraterna, saprà invece fare tesoro delle differenze e del contributo di ciascuno per fronteggiare insieme le questioni che l'attendono" (*Lettera del Santo Padre Francesco sull'Europa*, 22 ottobre 2020).

L'Europa ha conosciuto, e conosce, il virus antico delle divisioni e dell'egoismo, che è riuscita a superare con il vaccino sempre efficace della solidarietà accanto al quale Papa Francesco ci invita oggi ad usare quello della "fratellanza umana".

Quando era stato previsto l'incontro a Sarajevo, nell'aprile 2020, ancora non era noto il contenuto dell'Enciclica *Fratelli tutti* (=Ft) alla quale farò ovviamente riferimento perché è un documento fondamentale per la comprensione della fraternità e delle relazioni interreligiose.

Viviamo oggi in un contesto reso ancor più grave dalla pandemia di Covid-19. "Da una crisi si esce o migliori o peggiori. Dobbiamo scegliere noi", ha affermato **Papa Francesco** durante l'udienza generale del 2 settembre. A un mese di distanza da quell'appello, il Santo Padre ci ha offerto con *Fratelli tutti* una bussola per navigare nelle acque agitate nella pandemia. Ma la nuova enciclica non è solo una risposta all'epocale emergenza sanitaria. Come spiega lo stesso Pontefice, le "questioni legate alla fraternità e all'amicizia sociale" sono sempre state tra le sue "preoccupazioni".

Aperta da una breve introduzione e articolata in otto capitoli, l'Enciclica raccoglie – come spiega il Papa stesso – molte delle sue riflessioni sulla fraternità e l'amicizia sociale, collocate però in un contesto più ampio.

Con l'Enciclica il Papa traccia una strada per **dissipare le tante "ombre di un mondo chiuso"**. L'elenco delle tematiche affrontate dal documento è lungo, dalle migrazioni alla riforma delle istituzioni internazionali, e richiederà una

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lettura attenta di ogni paragrafo. Non serve in ogni caso essere addetti ai lavori per farsi carico dei problemi posti dal Pontefice. Si tratta di **cultivare la virtù della carità a ogni livello**, dalla vita personale a quella politica: come spiega infatti il Papa, “è carità stare vicino a una persona che soffre, ed è pure carità tutto ciò che si fa, anche senza avere un contatto diretto con quella persona, per modificare le condizioni sociali che provocano la sua sofferenza. Se qualcuno aiuta un anziano ad attraversare un fiume – e questo è squisita carità –, il politico gli costruisce un ponte, e anche questo è carità” (*Ft* 186).

I leader delle diverse tradizioni religiose e le comunità che essi guidano, camminando insieme sulla strada del dialogo interreligioso, possono davvero offrire il proprio contributo alla fratellanza universale nelle società in cui vivono. Scrive Papa Francesco nell’Enciclica, da lui stesso definita sociale (*Ft* 6): “Non è accettabile che nel dibattito pubblico abbiano voce soltanto i potenti e gli scienziati. Dev’esserci uno spazio per la riflessione che procede da uno sfondo religioso che raccoglie secoli di esperienza e di sapienza” (*Ft* 275). Infatti il credente è testimone e portatore di valori, che possono grandemente contribuire ad edificare società più giuste e sane. La rettitudine, la fedeltà, l’amore per il bene comune, l’attenzione per gli altri, soprattutto per quanti si trovano nel bisogno, la benevolenza e la misericordia sono elementi che possiamo condividere con le varie religioni. Nel mondo di oggi, segnato tragicamente dalla dimenticanza di Dio o dall’abuso che si fa del Suo nome, le persone appartenenti alle diverse religioni sono chiamate, con un impegno solidale, a difendere e promuovere la pace e la giustizia, la dignità umana e la protezione dell’ambiente. Dobbiamo offrire la nostra collaborazione alle società di cui noi credenti siamo cittadini, e mettere a disposizione di tutti i nostri comuni valori e le nostre convinzioni più profonde che riguardano il carattere sacro ed inviolabile della vita e della persona umana. Il dialogo interreligioso ha una funzione essenziale per costruire una convivenza civile, una società che includa e che non sia edificata sulla cultura dello scarto ed è una condizione necessaria per la pace nel mondo. In un mondo disumanizzato, nel quale la cultura dell’indifferenza e dell’avidità contraddistinguono i rapporti tra gli esseri umani, c’è bisogno di una solidarietà nuova e universale e di un nuovo dialogo basato sulla fraternità.

Una società fraterna, dunque, sarà quella che promuove l’educazione al dialogo per sconfiggere “il virus dell’individualismo radicale” (*Ft* 105) e per permettere a tutti di dare il meglio di sé. Due, in particolare, gli ‘strumenti’ per realizzare questo tipo di società: la benevolenza, ossia il volere concretamente il bene dell’altro (*Ft* 112), e la solidarietà che ha cura delle fragilità e si esprime nel servizio alle persone e non alle ideologie, lottando contro povertà e disuguaglianze (*Ft* 115).

Leggendo l’Enciclica, ci si sente chiamati alle nostre responsabilità, individuali e collettive, di fronte a nuove tendenze ed esigenze sulla scena internazionale. Vi sono richieste concrete come quella per una riforma dell’Onu, in cui anche le



nazioni più povere contino alla pari con le altre (*Ft* 173); un condono del debito estero dei Paesi più poveri (*Ft* 126); un potenziamento della destinazione universale della proprietà privata (*Ft* 123); la fine del commercio delle armi, soprattutto nucleari (*Ft* 262). Tutto questo si basa su un impegno della comunità internazionale, ma anche sull'impegno personale e di gruppo per una cultura del dialogo e della pace, che viene costruita con stile artigianale (*Ft* 217). La fraternità può esercitare un ruolo dirompente sulle relazioni internazionali all'interno di un mondo multipolare e, aggiungo io, multireligioso.

Mi piace infine sottolineare che l'Enciclica si conclude con il ricordo di Martin Luther King, Desmond Tutu, il Mahatma Gandhi e soprattutto il Beato Charles de Foucauld, un modello per tutti di cosa significhi identificarsi con gli ultimi per divenire "il fratello universale" (*Ft* 286-287) e con due bellissime preghiere: una "al Creatore" e l'altra "cristiana ecumenica", affinché nel cuore degli uomini alberghi "uno spirito di fratelli".

### **Fratelli tutti e il Documento sulla Fratellanza Umana per la pace mondiale e la convivenza comune**

Il Santo Padre fa esplicitamente riferimento nell'Enciclica al *Documento sulla Fratellanza Umana per la pace mondiale e la convivenza comune*, siglato il 4 febbraio 2019 a Abu Dhabi da lui stesso e dal Grand Imam di Al-Azhar Ahmad Al-Tayyeb. Si tratta, come ho già detto in diverse occasioni, di un documento storico per i credenti delle varie religioni, nonché per tutte le persone di buona volontà. È la famiglia umana ad essere interpellata e coinvolta. Il Documento in sé pur essendo nato, come ha ben spiegato il Santo Padre, da una lunga e attenta riflessione comune in ambito musulmano e cattolico, non ha nulla che non possa essere condiviso da altri. Papa Francesco ha sviluppato nell'Enciclica il ragionamento sulla fratellanza contenuto nel documento firmato ad Abu Dhabi e messo in evidenza anche dall'Enciclica *Laudato si'*. Infatti, tutti e tre i testi mirano insieme allo stesso fine: realizzare la fraternità universale; superare e combattere l'individualismo, per passare dalla "globalizzazione dell'indifferenza" alla "globalizzazione della fraternità".

Papa Francesco e il Grande Imam di Al-Azhar si sono scoperti fratelli nella promozione della giustizia e della pace, garantendo i diritti umani e la libertà religiosa. Attraverso la cultura del dialogo, la collaborazione comune e la conoscenza reciproca, il Documento fa appello a porre fine alle guerre e condanna le piaghe del terrorismo e della violenza, specialmente quella rivestita di motivazioni religiose. "La fede - si legge nella prefazione - porta il credente a vedere nell'altro un fratello da sostenere e da amare".

Due sono gli appelli fondamentali contenuti nella dichiarazione che vorrei sottolineare: alla libertà religiosa e al dialogo. La Dichiarazione attesta che "la li-

bertà è un diritto di ogni persona: ciascuno gode della libertà di credo, di pensiero, di espressione e di azione”. Per questo si condanna il fatto di “costringere la gente ad aderire a una certa religione o a una certa cultura, come pure di imporre uno stile di civiltà che gli altri non accettano”. Il pieno esercizio di tale libertà religiosa è possibile quando vengono riconosciuti eguali diritti di cittadinanza a musulmani e cristiani nei loro paesi, rinunciando all’uso “discriminatorio del termine minoranze, che porta con sé i semi del sentirsi isolati e dell’inferiorità; esso prepara il terreno alle ostilità e alla discordia e sottrae le conquiste e i diritti religiosi e civili di alcuni cittadini discriminandoli”. Così afferma il primo articolo della Dichiarazione. Per quanto riguarda il dialogo, si afferma che attraverso la comprensione e l’accettazione dell’altro, non solo si contribuisce a ridurre molti problemi economici, sociali, politici e ambientali che assediano grande parte del genere umano, ma con il dialogo i credenti possono “incontrarsi nell’enorme spazio dei valori spirituali, umani e sociali comuni, e investire ciò nella diffusione delle più alte virtù morali, sollecitate dalle religioni; significa anche evitare le inutili discussioni”.

Confessa il Papa di essersi sentito stimolato per la sua terza enciclica dal Grande Imam Ahmad Al-Tayyeb e dall’incontro di Abu Dhabi, incontro conclusosi con la firma del “Documento sulla fratellanza umana per la pace mondiale e la convivenza comune” nel quale si afferma che Dio “ha creato tutti gli esseri umani uguali nei diritti, nei doveri e nella dignità, e li ha chiamati a convivere come fratelli tra di loro” (4 febbraio 2019). L’Enciclica si propone di approfondire i grandi temi esposti nel Documento sulla fratellanza e di rispondere alle sollecitazioni giunte al Papa da tante persone e gruppi di tutto il mondo (cfr *Ft* 4).

Colpisce anche la metodologia adottata dal Santo Padre per redigere l’Enciclica: “Pur avendola scritta a partire dalle mie convinzioni cristiane, che mi animano e mi nutrono, ho cercato di farlo in modo che la riflessione si apra al dialogo con tutte le persone di buona volontà” (*Ft* 6). Si tratta, pertanto, di una riflessione compiuta nel dialogo, nell’impegno congiunto e nell’ascolto. È anche questo un esempio di fraternità!

È evidente l’apertura al dialogo ecumenico e interreligioso, che ha caratterizzato fin dall’inizio questo pontificato.

Senza avere la pretesa di essere esaustivo cercherò di evidenziare quali sono i punti del Documento sulla Fratellanza, citato nove volte nell’Enciclica, riproposti nella *Fratelli tutti*.

Nel capitolo quarto, dal titolo “Un cuore aperto al mondo intero”, dedicato alla salvaguardia della pluralità delle culture umane e della relazione tra di esse a partire dal fenomeno migratorio, Papa Francesco rinomina l’incontro con il Grande Imam Ahmad Al-Tayyeb insieme al quale si è fissato lo sguardo sul mondo in maniera aperta, concentrandosi in particolare su Oriente e Occidente: “il rapporto tra Occidente e Oriente è un’indiscutibile reciproca necessità, che non può essere

sostituita e nemmeno trascurata, affinché entrambi possano arricchirsi a vicenda della civiltà dell'altro, attraverso lo scambio e il dialogo delle culture. L'Occidente potrebbe trovare nella civiltà dell'Oriente rimedi per alcune sue malattie spirituali e religiose causate dal dominio del materialismo. E l'Oriente potrebbe trovare nella civiltà dell'Occidente tanti elementi che possono aiutarlo a salvarsi dalla debolezza, dalla divisione, dal conflitto e dal declino scientifico, tecnico e culturale. È importante prestare attenzione alle differenze religiose, culturali e storiche che sono una componente essenziale nella formazione della personalità, della cultura e della civiltà orientale; ed è importante consolidare i diritti umani generali e comuni, per contribuire a garantire una vita dignitosa per tutti gli uomini in Oriente e in Occidente, evitando l'uso della politica della doppia misura" (Ft 136).

Papa Francesco ripropone il documento sulla Fratellanza nel capitolo V dedicato a "La migliore politica", documento nel quale insieme al Grande Imam Ahmad Al-Tayyeb, viene chiesto "agli artefici della politica internazionale e dell'economia mondiale, di impegnarsi seriamente per diffondere la cultura della tolleranza, della convivenza e della pace; di intervenire, quanto prima possibile, per fermare lo spargimento di sangue innocente" (Ft 192). La "migliore politica" deve essere posta a servizio del bene comune per poter costruire una comunità umana unita nella fraternità e nell'amicizia sociale, nel superamento di nazionalismi e populismi.

Come emerge dalla lettura del Documento firmato a Abu Dhabi nel mondo plurale, nella società globalizzata, non si può costruire una riconciliazione tra Oriente e Occidente tra Nord e Sud se non si parte da un punto comune: la condanna, il rigetto di ogni tipo di violenza e della guerra.

Dal Papa anche l'invito a stabilire, nella società, il concetto di "piena cittadinanza", rinunciando all'uso discriminatorio del termine "minoranze" (Ft 129-131), come detto nel Documento.

Ciò che occorre è uno sviluppo solidale di tutti i popoli che sia basato sul principio della gratuità. In tal modo, i Paesi potranno pensare come "una famiglia umana" (Ft 139-141). L'altro diverso da noi è un dono ed un arricchimento per tutti, scrive Francesco, perché le differenze rappresentano una possibilità di crescita (Ft 133-135). Una cultura sana è una cultura accogliente che sa aprirsi all'altro, senza rinunciare a se stessa, offrendogli qualcosa di autentico. Come in un poliedro – immagine cara al Pontefice – il tutto è più delle singole parti, ma ognuna di esse è rispettata nel suo valore (Ft 145-146).

Nell'ottavo e ultimo capitolo, il Pontefice si sofferma su "*Le religioni al servizio della fraternità nel mondo*" e ribadisce che la violenza non trova base alcuna nelle convinzioni religiose, bensì nelle loro deformazioni. Atti "esecrabili" come quelli terroristici, dunque, non sono dovuti alla religione, ma ad interpretazioni errate dei testi religiosi, nonché a politiche di fame, povertà, ingiustizia, oppressione. Il

terrorismo non va sostenuto né con il denaro, né con le armi, né tantomeno con la copertura mediatica perché è un crimine internazionale contro la sicurezza e la pace mondiale e come tale va condannato (*Ft* 282-283). Al contempo, il Papa sottolinea che un cammino di pace tra le religioni è possibile e che è, dunque, necessario garantire la libertà religiosa, diritto umano fondamentale per tutti i credenti.

“Talvolta la violenza fondamentalista viene scatenata in alcuni gruppi di qualsiasi religione dall'imprudenza dei loro leader”. Tuttavia, “il comandamento della pace è inscritto nel profondo delle tradizioni religiose che rappresentiamo. [...] Come leader religiosi siamo chiamati ad essere veri dialoganti, ad agire nella costruzione della pace non come intermediari, ma come autentici mediatori” (*Ft* 284). La condanna della violenza e il diritto alla libertà religiosa sono concetti ribaditi con forza nel Documento sulla Fratellanza.

L'Enciclica si conclude, infine, con la ripresa dell' “appello alla pace, alla giustizia e alla fraternità” fatto insieme al Grande Imam Ahmad Al-Tayyeb nell'incontro fraterno di Abu Dhabi; appello preceduto da una dichiarazione sulla necessità di liberare le religioni dalla violenza che spesso hanno veicolato nella storia: “dichiaro – fermamente – che le religioni non incitano mai alla guerra e non sollecitano sentimenti di odio, ostilità, estremismo, né invitano alla violenza o allo spargimento di sangue. Queste sciagure sono frutto della deviazione dagli insegnamenti religiosi, dell'uso politico delle religioni e anche delle interpretazioni di gruppi di uomini di religione che hanno abusato – in alcune fasi della storia – dell'influenza del sentimento religioso sui cuori degli uomini (...). Infatti Dio, l'Onnipotente, non ha bisogno di essere difeso da nessuno e non vuole che il suo nome venga usato per terrorizzare la gente” (*Ft*, 285). Il Pontefice riprende l'appello affinché, in nome della fratellanza umana, si adotti il dialogo come via, la collaborazione comune come condotta e la conoscenza reciproca come metodo e criterio.

## Conclusione

Come ho già detto tutto il Capitolo ottavo dell'Enciclica è incentrato sul servizio che le diverse religioni devono offrire alla fraternità universale e alla difesa della giustizia nella società. “Il dialogo tra persone di religioni differenti non si fa solamente per diplomazia, cortesia o tolleranza”. Come hanno insegnato i Vescovi dell'India: “l'obiettivo del dialogo è stabilire amicizia, pace, armonia e condividere valori ed esperienze morali e spirituali in uno spirito di verità e amore” (*Ft*, 271).

Il Santo Padre al di là del dove, del quando e del con chi, ci ricorda che siamo chiamati a realizzare ciò che è, oggi e ovunque, strettamente necessario per il nostro mondo, e cioè il dialogo interreligioso.

Ecco allora che l'arte di saper dialogare, in tutte le sue accezioni, diventa un imperativo. Per Papa Francesco è la via per aprirsi ai bisogni del mondo e costruire

l'amicizia sociale: "Il dialogo perseverante e coraggioso non fa notizia come gli scontri e i conflitti, eppure aiuta discretamente il mondo a vivere meglio, molto più di quanto possiamo rendercene conto" (*Ft* 6, 198). Il dialogo rispetta e cerca la verità; il dialogo fa nascere la cultura dell'incontro, vale a dire che l'incontro diventa uno stile di vita, una passione e un desiderio. Chi dialoga è gentile, riconosce la dignità dell'altro e la rispetta. Si legge nella *Fratelli tutti*: "La gentilezza è una liberazione dalla crudeltà che a volte penetra le relazioni umane (...)" (*Ft* 6, 224).

Il Santo Padre è fermamente convinto che grazie ad un'autentica collaborazione fra credenti, si possa lavorare per contribuire al bene di tutti, individuando le tante ingiustizie che ancora affliggono questo mondo e condannando ogni violenza.

"Sogniamo come un'unica umanità, come viandanti fatti della stessa carne umana, come figli di questa stessa terra che ospita tutti noi, ciascuno con la ricchezza della sua fede o delle sue convinzioni, ciascuno con la propria voce, tutti fratelli!" Così si legge nella pagina Twitter ufficiale di Sua Santità il 6 ottobre.

Il "sogno" di papa Francesco, porta a suggerire che i diritti umani siano davvero universali (*Ft* 206-segg), e che ogni uomo possa vivere in un mondo senza frontiere (*Ft* 124). Papa Francesco esorta tutti a una fraternità universale, che superi gli odi, il dominio, le ingiustizie. Tutti siamo chiamati, come ci indica Papa Francesco nella figura del Buon Samaritano, a farci prossimi all'altro (*Ft* 81), superando pregiudizi, interessi personali, barriere storiche, culturali o religiose. Tutti, infatti, siamo corresponsabili nella costruzione di una società che sappia includere, integrare e sollevare chi è caduto o è sofferente (*Ft* 77).

Basterebbero questi miei rapidi accenni per cogliere la **rilevanza assunta dal dialogo interreligioso**, a partire da quello islamo-cristiano, nella genesi della nuova enciclica. Nonostante questa prospettiva particolare, ***Fratelli tutti non è un documento sulle relazioni interreligiose***. Piuttosto, Papa Francesco eleva il rapporto tra credenti di fedi diverse a paradigma di amicizia sociale valido per tutti gli uomini, credenti e non credenti, facendo della fraternità quel principio unificante del quale ha bisogno questa umanità dolente.

In questo tempo inedito a causa della pandemia, l'insegnamento di Papa Francesco continua a tracciare una strada ben precisa e percorribile da tutti gli uomini di buona volontà.

Dobbiamo mettere da parte pregiudizi, indugi e difficoltà. Pur non rinunciando in nulla alla nostra identità o rifacendosi ad un facile irenismo, con forza e con coraggio, si deve affermare la necessità della fraternità umana e dell'amicizia sociale quali condizioni necessarie per l'ottenimento di quella pace alla quale anela il mondo intero. La fantasia che nasce dall'amore per il prossimo bisognoso ci guiderà a compiere le azioni necessarie per costruire una società fraterna.

## *Ricercarsi: Luci di cambiamento tra scienza e coscienza*

S. EM. CARD. MIGUEL ÁNGEL AYUSO GUIXOT\*

Sono molto lieto di raggiungervi on-line per la settima edizione delle celebrazioni interreligiose del *Deepavali* organizzate dall'Unione induista italiana alla vigilia della festa delle luci nel cuore di Roma punto a nome del pontificio consiglio per il dialogo interreligioso auguro a voi tutti nostri fratelli induisti in Italia e nel mondo un felice *Deepavali*. Che la luce divina risplenda su di voi, sulle vostre famiglie e comunità, e vi doni pace coraggio serenità e speranza in questi giorni difficili della pandemia da coronavirus!

La celebrazione del *Deepavali* di quest'anno è speciale per il nostro pontificio consiglio perché ricorre nel venticinquesimo anno da quando si prese l'iniziativa di stabilire con voi una relazione diretta e rivolgervi un messaggio in questa occasione.

In questo contesto voglio esprimere la nostra stima il nostro apprezzamento per l'amicizia e la collaborazione vostra con i cristiani nella promozione dei valori e delle azioni concrete per costruire una società di fraternità e solidarietà, particolarmente in Italia.

La pandemia da covid-19 che continua a mietere vittime su tutti i fronti a livello globale ha generato tuttavia un profondo senso di introspezione nelle persone, indotto dalla diffusa sofferenza, morte, i lunghi periodi di clausura, separazione, isolamento e distanziamento fisico dai propri cari ed agli altri. questa introspezione continua anche mentre gli scienziati di vari campi di tutto il mondo lavorano 24 ore su 24 per produrre il vaccino contro il coronavirus atteso con tanta ansia unto ci sono alcuni che si interrogano sulla necessità di invocare Dio e sull'utilità delle religioni in una situazione di pandemia così catastrofica. Analogamente si mette in discussione la pretesa che la scienza possa offrire soluzioni veloci a tutti i problemi, malgrado i successi e progressi della scienza e della tecnologia. Benché questo genere di questioni non sia affatto nuovo, esso mette in evidenza sia i limiti della scienza, sia la necessità per le religioni di motivare le persone a usare il "vaccino sociale della solidarietà" in tempi pandemici in cui il vaccino non c'è! Ciò è espressione di una coscienza collettiva nutrita di valori e di educazione religiosi. Questa coscienza collettiva ha avuto un'influenza sulla vita umana in questi tempi proprio come la scienza con i suoi progressi. Non è necessario dire che sia la scienza che la coscienza ci hanno offerto nuove maniere di pensare noi stessi e l'universo.

\* Presidente del Pontificio Consiglio per il Dialogo Interreligioso, Unione Induista Italiana, VII Edizione di Deepavali, 13.11.2020, Senato della Repubblica, Via Giustiniani, 11, Roma.

L'esperienza della solidarietà come vaccino sociale mentre continua la ricerca di un vaccino medico mette in discussione la stessa fraintesa idea che la scienza è la religione siano in conflitto reciproco. Vale la pena ricordare ciò che ha detto papa Benedetto XVI: non c'è *contrapposizione* tra fede e scienza, ma c'è invece *sintonia* tra scienza e fede (Udienza generale, 24.3.2010). Lo stesso Pontefice disse in un'altra circostanza che una fede veramente vissuta non entra in conflitto con la scienza ma piuttosto coopera con essa offrendo i criteri di base per la promozione del bene comune (Udienza generale, 21.11.2012). Con le parole di Papa Francesco, "Scienza e fede con i loro distinti approcci alla comprensione della realtà possono entrare in un intenso dialogo, che è fruttuoso per entrambe" (*Laudato sii*, 62) e arrecare vantaggio a tutta l'umanità. Se è vero che scienza e medicina sono fonti preziose per affrontare il problema attuale della pandemia, si deve sottolineare che pure religione e spiritualità sono alleate indispensabili per portare quel conforto così necessario ad alleviare le sofferenze causate da questo virus mortale ed esprimere solidarietà a coloro che hanno fame, ai senza dimora, ai poveri, a quelli che sono afflitti dall'ansia e dalla depressione, ecc.

Aspiriamo tutti all'amicizia tra scienza e coscienza per una convivenza ideale, ma non dobbiamo dimenticare l'imperativo etico morale che esige un'adeguata attenzione sia al progresso scientifico che alla formazione della coscienza. È questo che potrà generare ulteriori luci di cambiamento. Nel *Documento sulla fratellanza umana per la pace universale e la convivenza comune*, firmato congiuntamente da papa Francesco e dal grande imam di Al-Azhar Ahmed al Tayyeb, si fa notare che "Tra le cause più rilevanti della crisi del mondo moderno si devono menzionare una coscienza umana priva di sensibilità, l'allontanamento dai valori religiosi, e l'individualismo prevalente accompagnato da filosofie materialistiche che mettono in discussione la persona umana e sostituiscono valori mondani e materiali ai principi supremi e trascendenti" (Abu Dhabi, 4.2.2019; cfr. Papa Francesco, *Fratelli tutti*, n. 275). La formazione della coscienza, secondo la comprensione cristiana, si basa sul grande comandamento di amare pienamente Dio e amare il nostro prossimo come noi stessi (Mc 12,31-32). Per il genere umano sarebbe davvero necessario muoversi su due fronti, da un lato una coscienza ben formata e dall'altro un progresso scientifico volto al perseguimento del bene della natura umana a vantaggio di tutti gli esseri umani e della casa comune.

Concludo con l'auspicio che tutti gli esseri umani possano sforzarsi di vivere in armonia con gli altri, come fratelli e sorelle e con la natura, che è fondamentale sia per il cristianesimo che per l'induismo, con i dettami della coscienza e i vantaggi della scienza.

## *Fratelli Tutti: Un'enciclica oltre il tempo di crisi*

S. EM. CARD. MIGUEL ÁNGEL AYUSO GUIXOT\*

È per me un privilegio rivolgermi a voi in occasione di questo Seminario di Studio. Ringrazio il Rettore Magnifico Prof. Vincenzo Buonomo e S.E. Mons. Fernando Chica Arellano, Osservatore Permanente della Santa Sede presso la Fao, l'Ifad e il Pam, il Dott. Vincenzo Conso Coordinatore del Forum Roma, per aver organizzato questo Seminario e per l'invito che mi hanno rivolto a condividere delle brevi riflessioni.

Il titolo di questo Primo Panel “Camminiamo nella speranza”, ci offre già una chiave di lettura per riflettere sull'Enciclica *Fratelli tutti*. Infatti con l'Enciclica il Papa traccia una strada per **dissipare le tante “ombre di un mondo chiuso” invitando tutti, credenti e non credenti a percorrerla insieme nella speranza di costruire un mondo migliore e più fraterno per tutti**. Nella pagina Twitter ufficiale di Sua Santità del 6 ottobre si legge: “Sogniamo come un'unica umanità, come viandanti fatti della stessa carne umana, come figli di questa stessa terra che ospita tutti noi, ciascuno con la ricchezza della sua fede o delle sue convinzioni, ciascuno con la propria voce, tutti fratelli!”.

Il “sogno” di Papa Francesco, porta a suggerire che i diritti umani siano davvero universali (206-segg), e che ogni uomo possa vivere in un mondo senza frontiere (n.-124). Il Papa esorta tutti a una fraternità universale, che superi gli odi, il dominio, le ingiustizie. Egli dice dell'Enciclica che “pur avendola scritta a partire dalle mie convinzioni cristiane, che mi animano e mi nutrono, ho cercato di farlo in modo che la riflessione si apra al dialogo con tutte le persone di buona volontà” (n. 6).

Siamo perfettamente consapevoli che viviamo oggi in un contesto reso ancor più grave dalla pandemia di Covid-19. “Da una crisi si esce o migliori o peggiori. Dobbiamo scegliere noi”, ha affermato **Papa Francesco** durante l'udienza generale del 2 settembre. A un mese di distanza da quell'appello, il Santo Padre ci ha offerto con *Fratelli tutti* una bussola per navigare nelle acque agitate nella pandemia. Ma la nuova enciclica non è solo una risposta all'epocale emergenza sanitaria. Aperta da una breve introduzione e articolata in otto capitoli, l'Enciclica, come spiega lo stesso Pontefice, raccoglie le “questioni legate alla fraternità e all'amicizia sociale” che sono sempre state tra le sue “preoccupazioni” collocate però in un contesto più ampio.

\* Presidente del Pontificio Consiglio per il Dialogo Interreligioso, Intervento al Panel: *Camminiamo nella speranza. Al servizio della fraternità e dell'incontro*, Pontificia Università Lateranense, Roma, 2.12.2020.



È altrettanto evidente la rilevanza, che del resto ha caratterizzato fin dall'inizio questo pontificato, che dà il Santo Padre al dialogo ecumenico e a quello interreligioso.

Data la brevità del tempo a disposizione focalizzerò il mio intervento proprio sul contributo alla fratellanza universale che, secondo la *Fratelli tutti* soprattutto al capitolo ottavo, i leader delle diverse tradizioni religiose e le comunità che essi guidano, camminando insieme sulla strada del dialogo interreligioso, possono davvero offrire alle società in cui vivono.

Leggiamo nell'Enciclica: "Il dialogo tra persone di religioni differenti non si fa solamente per diplomazia, cortesia o tolleranza". Come hanno insegnato i Vescovi dell'India: "l'obiettivo del dialogo è stabilire amicizia, pace, armonia e condividere valori ed esperienze morali e spirituali in uno spirito di verità e amore" (*Ft*, 272).

Il Santo Padre al di là del dove, del quando e del con chi, ci ricorda che siamo chiamati a realizzare ciò che è, oggi e ovunque, strettamente necessario per il nostro mondo, e cioè il dialogo interreligioso.

Ecco allora che l'arte di saper dialogare, in tutte le sue accezioni, diventa un imperativo. Per Papa Francesco è la via per aprirsi ai bisogni del mondo e costruire l'amicizia sociale: "Il dialogo perseverante e coraggioso non fa notizia come gli scontri e i conflitti, eppure aiuta discretamente il mondo a vivere meglio, molto più di quanto possiamo rendercene conto" (*Ft* 6, 198). Il dialogo rispetta e cerca la verità; il dialogo fa nascere la cultura dell'incontro, vale a dire che l'incontro diventa uno stile di vita, una passione e un desiderio. Chi dialoga è gentile, riconosce la dignità dell'altro e la rispetta. Si legge nella *Fratelli tutti*: "La gentilezza è una liberazione dalla crudeltà che a volte penetra le relazioni umane (...)" (*Ft* 6, 224).

Il Santo Padre è fermamente convinto che grazie ad un'autentica collaborazione fra credenti, si possa lavorare per contribuire al bene di tutti, individuando le tante ingiustizie che ancora affliggono questo mondo e condannando ogni violenza.

Scriva Papa Francesco nell'Enciclica, da lui stesso definita sociale (*Ft*, 6): "Non è accettabile che nel dibattito pubblico abbiano voce soltanto i potenti e gli scienziati. Dev'esserci uno spazio per la riflessione che procede da uno sfondo religioso che raccoglie secoli di esperienza e di sapienza" (*Ft*, 275). Infatti il credente è testimone e portatore di valori, che possono grandemente contribuire ad edificare società più giuste e sane. La rettitudine, la fedeltà, l'amore per il bene comune, l'attenzione per gli altri, soprattutto per quanti si trovano nel bisogno, la benevolenza e la misericordia sono elementi che possiamo condividere con le varie religioni. Dobbiamo offrire la nostra collaborazione alle società di cui noi credenti siamo cittadini, e mettere a disposizione di tutti i nostri comuni valori e le nostre convinzioni più profonde per difendere e promuovere la pace e la giustizia, la dignità umana e la protezione dell'ambiente. Il dialogo interreligioso ha una

funzione essenziale per costruire una convivenza civile, una società che includa e che non sia edificata sulla cultura dello scarto ed è una condizione necessaria per la pace nel mondo. In un mondo disumanizzato, nel quale la cultura dell'indifferenza e dell'avidità contraddistinguono i rapporti tra gli esseri umani, c'è bisogno di una solidarietà nuova e universale e di un nuovo dialogo basato sulla fraternità. Una società fraterna, dunque, sarà quella che promuove l'educazione al dialogo per sconfiggere "il virus dell'individualismo radicale" (Ft 105) e per permettere a tutti di dare il meglio di sé. Due, in particolare, gli 'strumenti' per realizzare questo tipo di società: la benevolenza, ossia il volere concretamente il bene dell'altro (Ft 112), e la solidarietà che ha cura delle fragilità e si esprime nel servizio alle persone e non alle ideologie, lottando contro povertà e disuguaglianze (Ft 115).

Purtroppo, anche di recente in Francia e in Austria, abbiamo assistito al riarsi di un terrorismo fanatico e violento che cerca di accreditarsi come religioso. Sappiamo bene che non è così! Certo non è facile dialogare quando si vive in una "terza guerra mondiale a pezzi" alla quale possono concorrere anche le tante derive settarie e distorte delle varie tradizioni religiose! Eppure è proprio in ragione di un modo distorto, violento e fanatico che è ancor più necessario dialogare.

Sempre nell'ottavo e ultimo capitolo, il Pontefice ribadisce che la violenza non trova base alcuna nelle convinzioni religiose, bensì nelle loro deformazioni. Atti "esecrabili" come quelli terroristici, dunque, non sono dovuti alla religione, ma ad interpretazioni errate dei testi religiosi, nonché a politiche di fame, povertà, ingiustizia, oppressione. Il terrorismo non va sostenuto né con il denaro, né con le armi, né tantomeno con la copertura mediatica perché è un crimine internazionale contro la sicurezza e la pace mondiale e come tale va condannato (Ft 282-283). Al contempo, il Papa sottolinea che un cammino di pace tra le religioni è possibile e che è, dunque, necessario garantire la libertà religiosa, diritto umano fondamentale per tutti i credenti.

Qui, come in altre parti dell'Enciclica, il Santo Padre fa esplicitamente riferimento al *Documento sulla Fratellanza Umana per la pace mondiale e la convivenza comune*, siglato il 4 febbraio 2019 a Abu Dhabi da lui stesso e dal Grand Imam di Al-Azhar Ahmad Al-Tayyeb. Il Documento in sé pur essendo nato, come ha ben spiegato il Santo Padre, da una lunga e attenta riflessione comune in ambito musulmano e cattolico, non ha nulla che non possa essere condiviso da altri. Papa Francesco ha sviluppato nell'Enciclica il ragionamento sulla fratellanza contenuto nel documento firmato ad Abu Dhabi, proponendosi di approfondirne i temi (cfr Ft 4), e messo in evidenza anche dall'Enciclica *Laudato si'*. Infatti, tutti e tre i testi mirano insieme allo stesso fine: realizzare la fraternità universale; superare e combattere l'individualismo, per passare dalla "globalizzazione dell'indifferenza" alla "globalizzazione della fraternità".

In conclusione, si tratta di compiere passi concreti insieme ai credenti di altre

religioni con l'auspicio che quest'ultime si sentano chiamate ad essere, particolarmente in questo nostro tempo, messaggere di pace e artefici di comunione; per proclamare, diversamente da chi alimenta scontri, divisioni e chiusure, che oggi è tempo di fraternità.

## OMELIE

### *Vigilia della Solennità dei Santi Pietro e Paolo*

S. EM. CARD. MIGUEL ÁNGEL AYUSO GUIXOT\*

Lecture: At 12, 1-11; Salmo 33 (34); 2 Tm 4, 6-8.17-18; Mt 16, 13-19

La solennità degli Apostoli Pietro e Paolo è insieme una grata memoria dei grandi testimoni di Gesù Cristo e una solenne confessione in favore della Chiesa una, santa, cattolica e apostolica. La Chiesa da sempre li ha voluti ricordare assieme, quasi a voler comporre in unità la loro testimonianza. San Pietro e San Paolo, con le loro diverse ricchezze, con il loro personale carisma, hanno edificato un'unica Chiesa.

Papa Francesco, nella Solennità dei Santi Pietro e Paolo dell'anno scorso, ha detto: "Gli Apostoli Pietro e Paolo stanno davanti a noi come testimoni. Non si sono mai stancati di annunciare, di vivere in missione, in cammino, dalla terra di Gesù fino a Roma. Qui lo hanno testimoniato sino alla fine, dando la vita come martiri. Se andiamo alle radici della loro testimonianza, li scopriamo *testimoni di vita, testimoni di perdono e testimoni di Gesù*".

Vorrei oggi riflettere su tre parole che il Signore ci ha rivolto nelle letture che abbiamo ascoltato: alzarsi; salvezza; risposta personale.

La prima l'abbiamo ascoltata negli Atti degli Apostoli. L'angelo si rivolge a Pietro che sta vivendo l'esperienza della prigionia del carcere. In sequenza gli dice: alzati, in fretta, seguimi. L'incontro con Gesù comporta proprio: alzarci dalla nostra vita mediocre, dal nostro peccato, dai nostri ritardi; alzarci e fare in fretta. "Alzati, in fretta, seguimi": queste parole che l'angelo rivolge a Pietro custodiamole nel cuore e sentiamole rivolte a noi, adesso. Ricordiamoci che ogni incontro vero con Gesù non può non avere queste conseguenze nella nostra vita: che ci alziamo in fretta per seguirlo.

Una seconda parola l'abbiamo ascoltata da San Paolo. L'apostolo è al termine dei suoi giorni terreni e ormai vede approssimarsi l'incontro definitivo con il suo Signore, e dice: "Io vado verso Colui che potrà salvarmi nei cieli". Paolo ha vissuto la sua vita terrena spendendosi senza riserve, ma sapeva bene che quella vita non era

\* Presidente del Pontificio Consiglio per il Dialogo Interreligioso, domenica 28 giugno 2020, Con-Cattedrale di San Giuseppe, Sofia, Bulgaria.

tutto, viveva con la speranza del paradiso. Noi apparteniamo a coloro che vivono per il paradiso; ce lo dobbiamo ricordare e dobbiamo testimoniarlo.

Una terza parola, l'abbiamo ascoltata nella pagina del Vangelo. Gesù, ad un certo punto, rivolge ai suoi apostoli una domanda diretta: "Voi chi dite che io sia?". La domanda di Gesù arriva oggi fino a noi: "*Tu chi dici che io sia?*". È una domanda alla quale siamo chiamati a rispondere personalmente con la vita. Come gli apostoli Pietro e Paolo tutti i battezzati sono chiamati alla testimonianza e a vivere un rapporto di amore personale con Cristo.

Il ministero di Pietro si perpetua nel Vescovo di Roma. Egli, in quanto successore di Pietro e vescovo di Roma "*è il perpetuo e visibile principio e fondamento dell'unità sia dei vescovi sia della moltitudine dei fedeli*" (Catechismo della Chiesa Cattolica, 880).

Oggi quindi è il giorno per pregare e ringraziare Dio per la persona e il ministero del Papa; per ravvivare e suscitare in noi l'apprezzamento effettivo ed affettivo per lui e per il suo eminente magistero rivolto a tutti; per pensare al ruolo insostituibile e arduo del Papa per tutta la Chiesa e per ogni cristiano.

Accanto ai Santi Pietro e Paolo, trovandomi qui in Bulgaria, vorrei dire quanto ci può essere d'aiuto l'esempio dei fratelli Cirillo e Metodio, che Papa Francesco durante il suo viaggio apostolico in questo Paese ha definito "uomini santi e dai grandi sogni". San Giovanni Paolo II, che li nominò co-patroni di Europa, scrisse che essi si dedicarono: "alla causa della riconciliazione, dell'amichevole convivenza, dello sviluppo umano e del rispetto dell'intrinseca dignità di ogni nazione" (Lettera Enciclica *Slavorum apostoli*, n. 1).

Durante la loro vita terrena, questi due santi sono stati ponti che collegavano l'Oriente e l'Occidente. Hanno unito culture e tradizioni differenti in una ricca eredità per l'intera famiglia umana superando l'odio con il bene e praticando la carità e la giustizia. Questa carità e questa giustizia diventano realtà tangibili quando le persone di buona volontà in ogni parte del mondo e a qualsiasi convinzione religiosa appartengano vi si dedicano.

Chiediamo a Dio che anche attraverso l'intercessione di questi testimoni della fede, sostenga i passi del nostro cammino di discepoli e ci faccia essere, a nostra volta, testimoni della luce della verità perché possiamo dire insieme a San Paolo: "ho combattuto la buona battaglia, ho terminato la corsa, ho conservato la fede".

Alla luce di quanto abbiamo ascoltato rivolgiamo la nostra preghiera alla Beata Vergine Maria venerata qui come Madonna di Nesebar che, come ha ricordato Papa Francesco durante il Regina Coeli recitato qui a Sofia: "significa 'Porta del cielo', tanto cara al mio predecessore San Giovanni XXIII, che ha cominciato a venerarla qui, in Bulgaria, e l'ha portata con sé fino alla morte". Che Dio vi benedica!

## *Pour le 2<sup>ème</sup> anniversaire du décès du Card. Jean-Louis Tauran*

S. EM. CARD. MIGUEL ÁNGEL AYUSO GUIXOT\*

Textes : Za 9, 9-10 ; Ps 144 (145) ; Rm 8, 9.11-13 ; Mt 11, 25-30.

La Parole du prophète Zacharie et celle du Psalmiste nous rappellent de façon concrète l'engagement de feu le cardinal Tauran au service de la paix et du dialogue.

D'abord dans la diplomatie pontificale puis au conseil pontifical pour le dialogue interreligieux, son exemple de vie n'a pas seulement été celui d'un brillant diplomate. Attentif aux mutations, aussi bien dans l'Église que dans la société, notamment celles du dialogue avec les diverses religions, le cardinal Tauran s'est révélé être un évêque soucieux du bien des âmes, vigilant envers les prêtres, les religieuses et les laïcs de son entourage.

Certes, d'un caractère ferme et énergique, nous nous souvenons tous de sa politesse d'un autre âge – et qui malheureusement se perd aujourd'hui – qui lui permit de témoigner, jusqu'au dernier jour, d'un cœur exprimant la générosité de sa vocation.

Aujourd'hui, nous sommes tous invités à nous sentir accueillis par Jésus et à partager sa propre prière de louange et de contemplation au Père. Ensemble, cette prière s'élève pour l'âme du cardinal Jean-Louis Tauran.

\* \* \*

Les textes de la Parole de Dieu lus ce dimanche demandent toute notre attention, pour bien comprendre ce qu'ils nous disent, et ensuite pour en vivre.

Un texte de Zacharie, qui est l'exultation de Jérusalem pour l'entrée de son Roi, humble et pacifique.

Un texte de Paul aux Romains qui nous dit de vivre sous l'emprise de l'Esprit et non de la chair.

Un texte de l'évangile selon Matthieu enfin, lui-même fait de trois morceaux : la Révélation de soi que Dieu fait aux petits ; le mystère de Dieu dans les profondeurs de ce qui se passe entre le Père et le Fils ; enfin le fardeau, léger, que porte le disciple de Celui qui est doux et humble de cœur.

Qu'en tirer pour notre foi, notre espérance, notre vie ?

La foi voit au-delà de l'immédiat, nous enseigne le texte de Zacharie. *Exulte de toutes tes forces, fille de Sion ! Pousse des cris de joie, fille de Jérusalem ! Voici ton roi*

\* Président du Conseil pontifical pour le dialogue interreligieux, Messe du dimanche 5 juillet 2020, Saint-Louis-des-Français, Rome.

*qui vient vers toi : il est juste et victorieux, humble et monté sur un âne, un âne tout jeune.* Nous savons que c'est à partir de cette prophétie que les disciples ont interprété l'entrée de Jésus à Jérusalem avant sa passion, précisément ce dont nous nous souvenons le dimanche des Rameaux. Cela a déjà eu lieu. Oui, mais ce n'est pas encore terminé : *ce roi fera disparaître d'Ephraïm les chars de guerre, et de Jérusalem les chevaux de combat. Il brisera l'arc de guerre et il proclamera la paix aux nations.*

Zacharie nous présente en fin de compte un roi qui abandonne le messianisme politique et triomphaliste pour se présenter comme un modèle d'humilité et de don. Ce texte revêt donc une implication politique importante car elle est celle d'une invitation au désarmement et à la paix universelle : *ce roi fera disparaître les chars de guerre [...] l'arc de guerre sera brisé [...] il annoncera la paix aux nations.*

À cette invitation, capable d'accompagner et d'éclairer chaque étape difficile et lente de notre progression dans l'histoire, répond le Psaume que nous avons ensemble partagé : *Le Seigneur est vrai en tout ce qu'il dit, fidèle en tout ce qu'il fait. Le Seigneur soutient tous ceux qui tombent, il redresse tous les accablés.*

La réalité de l'espérance, elle est déjà, et elle n'est pas encore. Elle se vit dans la foi, qui ne s'arrête pas à l'immédiat ; et la foi voit, au-delà de l'insuccès, à quel point Dieu lui-même, en la personne de son Fils, s'est lié à ce que nous sommes appelés à devenir.

Le suivre et l'imiter, lui, ce Roi sans armures et sans cheval de guerre ; vivre selon son Esprit de paix, certains d'une chose : Dieu - tient - à - nous.

Comme nous le rappelle le texte de Paul aux Romains, nous devons nous alimenter de cette « espérance désarmée ». Pas n'importe quelle espérance. Elle n'est pas *sous l'emprise de la chair, mais sous celle de l'Esprit*, et a pour seul fondement la résurrection de Jésus au cœur de notre foi.

Comme nous le rappelle le texte de Paul aux Romains, nous devons nous alimenter de cette « espérance désarmée », qui n'est pas *sous l'emprise de la chair, mais sous celle de l'Esprit*, et a pour seul fondement notre foi dans la résurrection de Jésus Christ.

Le diagnostic de Paul est clair et exigeant : *si vous vivez sous l'emprise de la chair, vous devez mourir ; mais si, par l'Esprit, vous tuez les désordres de l'homme pécheur, vous vivrez.*

Comme cela est actuel ! Quand Paul écrit : *nous avons une dette, mais ce n'est pas envers la chair*, comment ne pas penser à tous ces soucis mondains, -au désir de posséder toujours plus alors que le temps qui reste raccourcit : bref, à tous ces comportements angoissés d'une culture qui ne connaît qu'un brin d'espoir à court terme et ne connaît pas l'espérance.

En ces temps où nous pourrions nous sentir fatigués ou opprimés (après la pandémie), nous ne devons pas hésiter à nous emparer de ce que nous propose de méditer l'Eucharistie d'aujourd'hui :

Avec l'humilité de cœur et la douceur, regarder au-delà de l'immédiat.

Avec l'ouverture à l'aide de l'Esprit, accepter le défi de porter nos fardeaux et apaiser nos cœurs dans le Cœur de Jésus.

Avec Jésus, accueillir nos limites dans cette relation de confiance filiale et d'amour qui, seule, fait de nous les enfants de Celui que nous appelons Père.



*In 'The Solidarity of Interreligious Dialogue':  
The Spirit and Appeal of the Document on 'Serving a Wounded World'*

REV. EDWARD CHAU KING FUN\*

### 1. Preamble

The quintessence of five thousand years of Chinese culture from the moment Yao (堯) taught Shun (舜) how to be a good emperor opened up the enlightenment of life. The saying: 'The human heart is dangerous / Dao heart is subtle / Earnestly and sincerely / Keep to the middle path' encourages people to conduct their life and situations by following the middle path that befits all ways that are intrinsic or extrinsic. With impartiality and the intrinsic goodness of the heart, benevolence, righteousness, propriety and wisdom, 'truth, goodness, beauty, and holiness' in life will be manifested.

Jesus used the good heartedness of the Samaritans as an allegory (Luke 10:30-36) to awaken the human hearts, since goodness is to use the heart to perceive the heart. It is the virtue of righteousness to unite all human hearts to resist the tragedy of enmity and hatred to get to understand the rationale of 'Dao heart being subtle and the human heart being dangerous'. Goodness helps people to unite. It is the compassion that helps people to depart from suffering to procure happiness. Goodness is the most powerful strength of solidarity in human love that stems from the spirit of 'the Dao of loyalty and forgiveness' in 'giving the same consideration for others as you would for yourself'. In the spirit of 'what you want to establish for yourself is also what you want to establish for others', and, 'what goal you want to attain is also what you want others to reach'. This displays the rationale: 'Earnestly and sincerely / Keep to the middle path' in the spirit of '*Don't do unto others what you don't want done unto you.*'

In a world ravaged by the Covid 19 pandemic, the human hearts that are filled with suspicion and distrust have led to the critical crisis of the unbridled spread of the disease. Our world has become wounded. The Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue (PCID) and The World Council of Churches (WCC) have jointly published the document 'Serving a Wounded World in Interreligious

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Solidarity' on 27<sup>th</sup> August, 2020 to appeal to all Christians and religious faithful in the world to deeply reflect and take positive actions with mutual persistence, hope, compassion and mercy to resolve all prejudices and conflicts for harmonious co-existence in solidarity. Being wounded by the pandemic, the whole world has revealed the vulnerability and pain of human nature. In this critical time, people are asked:

----- To accept one another and stand together in solidarity  
In the dialogue of love, people must open up  
Of one heart and mind think about the direction for the integral family of humanity  
Be concerned about the virtue of goodness in human hearts  
Be concerned about the goodness of religions  
Be concerned about convalescent care  
Be concerned about the human dignity of different ethnicities  
Be concerned about aids for the underprivileged and the impoverished  
Be concerned about the testimonies of suffering in life  
Be concerned about the establishment of cultural inclusiveness and humanism  
Be concerned about the nurture of national spirit  
Be concerned about the co-ordination of the clergy and people in pastoral care  
Be concerned about the training for the health of young people's hearts and souls  
Today, people have to be positive in the face of the critical pandemic. On the basis of mutual love and care, everybody must establish the platform of understanding to serve the wounded world and the wounded human hearts ...

## **2. Interreligious Dialogue and Co-operation: The Foundation of Solidarity**

To manifest the solidarity of religions, dialogue and co-operation are the strength of solidarity. Through solidarity, united services can be given to the wounded world and human hearts.

1. Jesus' benevolence and forgiveness: the driving force for Christians to use their virtuous hearts to serve humanity through the Sacrament of Reconciliation.
2. Gautama Buddha's compassion and mercy: the driving force for Buddhists to use the compassion of their enlightened hearts to help all sentient beings to leave suffering for happiness.
3. Taishang Laojun (太上老君), The Grand Supreme Elderly Lord's three treasures: 'compassion, frugality and humility' ask Taoists to return to simplicity and truth, maintain the pure Dao, and with the respect for Dao and reverence for virtue build harmony and peace in the human world.
4. Confucius' doctrine on benevolence, righteousness, fidelity and forgiveness:

through the doctrine, pupils are taught to use the goodness of the universal loving heart and 'wisdom, benevolence and courage' in the cultivation of 'understanding luminous virtue and being close to the people'; and with one heart and same virtues to establish our home, country and universal peace in the realm of goodness.

5. Prophet *Muhammad's Islam and requited kindness: Allah's merciful salvation delivers people from suffering and gives charity in peace. With empathy and tolerance, cultivate virtue and establish goodness in character.* With compliance and obedience, do penance and build faith, and actively do charity and good deeds.

With the spirit of religion, everyone, with one heart and same virtue must go towards 'the wounded world' and invite all the people of all ethnicities, cultures, religions, geographic regions... with one heart 'serve' the wounded by taking the example of the selfless great love of the Good Samaritan who helped the man wounded by the robbers as told in the Bible. (Luke 10:25-37) This story can be used to encourage all of us to work together to render help to the people wounded by Covid 19.

The harmonious relationship among religions can be the greatest strength to realize solidarity, transcending the limitations of the self. Using the virtue of benevolence as the hope for solidarity, provide society with benevolence, righteousness and peace for a unified life.

### **3. The Attitude of the Church in the Face of Covid 19 Pandemic**

The birth of tragedies comes not from the disastrous pandemic but from people's avaricious egoistic desires. Hence, people subconsciously breed 'the hedonistic lifestyle' without the will to work and learn. In hedonism, they are not willing to give; they even have no sense of responsibility and sense of mission. All the more, they would not try to comprehend the situation but they only know how to fling abuses and bear grudges that create panic and emotional turmoil. Today, people universally, under the influence of the pandemic, often unscrupulously threaten others to submit and obey. They would shout abuse and vandalize if they think their demands are not answered and thus, their wrongs would become right. They would also use evil ways to shirk responsibilities so as to turn good into evil and black into white. Worse, they would even rudely scream and yell as if they were revolutionaries forcing all to accept their irrational demands. The forming of these tragedies does not only reveal the harm done to people's characters but also to the demoralization of moralism. The worst should be the challenge to the legal system and the damage to the checks and balances and sacredness of the law. Thus, the

terror of human disasters emerges and the harm of which is even worse than that of natural disasters.<sup>1</sup>

While the Church is facing the crisis, religious wisdom and love must be upheld to give the faithful the direction to hope and peace:

In the harm to the era

Give the faithful the support of positive energy

In ethnicities and cultures

Encourage the faithful to mutually respect and accept

In poverty and wealth, the strong and the weak

Harmonize with the spirit of loving your neighbours as yourself

In justice and fairness

Motivate the faithful to deal with situations with one heart and with adequacy.

Through these, Christians are taught to comprehend the meaning and guidance of 'the goodness of truth' and 'the good heartedness of benevolence' so as to conduct themselves in their dealing with all sorts of life situations properly by taking the middle path. Hence, people can co-operate with justice and fairness and use their good intention to serve and the spirit to sacrifice as well as to provide aids to material things and help to spirituality.

At this moment of suffering, the Church must help the faithful to:

1. Elevate their self-consciousness and consciousness of their own limitations and vulnerabilities.

They need to harmonize and co-operate with people in society so as to co-ordinate with the government, medical personnel, psychologists, charities and the clergy etc. and mutually remind and encourage one another without negativity, challenge and groundless criticisms and judgments.

2. Elevate their consciousness of hope.

Place the faithful in hope. Use prayers, fasting and charity to consolidate faith and love. Encourage interreligious dialogue and co-operation and strengthen the ethical thinking and ethical values in the human hearts; the faithful must link up with mutual love and mutual help so as to bear the harmony of co-existence in mutual concern and solidarity.

<sup>1</sup> Author, Edward Chau, 'How Religious Faith Helps People to Resolve Emotional Problems' --- 'In Tragedies, seek the Harmony', The Colloquium of Six Religious Leaders in Hong Kong, P.5-7, 7<sup>th</sup> Dec. 2019.

#### **4. In ‘The Solidarity of Interreligious Dialogue’, Discuss the Spirit and Appeal of the Document on ‘Serving a Wounded World’<sup>2</sup>**

To endorse sincere dialogue among religious faithful, and in the discussion on the document ‘Serving a Wounded World’ under the solidarity of interreligious dialogue, two basic principles have been brought out:

→ Dialogue in openness with the benevolence of goodness in the heart mutually serve.

→ Solidarity as a duty on the path of goodness in truth mutually co-operate.

To enrich the contents of service and co-operation, seven core frameworks are brought out from two principles as the mode of service and co-operation.

1. Humility and gentility: follow the model of Jesus’ sacrifice, use the spirit of selfless benevolence, forgiveness and righteousness to resolve conflicts.
2. Respect and honesty: in human respect, there should not be any place for discrimination, exploitation, and suppression etc. Tear down the walls of separation, shorten the distance between people and confirm the uniqueness and preciousness of people’s identities.
3. Sympathy and mutual interests: the foundation of interaction is the sympathetic hearts and mutual interests in the establishment of justice and inclusive communities as healing to the wounds of the world.
4. Dialogue and learning: dialogue can build solidarity. Mutual learning can strengthen relationship. In crisis, the dialogue of love can motivate interaction, help people to learn the sharing of love and improve the livelihood of the poor.
5. Reconciliation and renewal: people in reconciliation confess and renew which leads to cures. The hurts among people are reduced; God’s forgiveness renews people’s hearts.
6. Thankfulness and generosity: all that is in the world is God-given. People must use their joyful and sincere hearts to resist temptations persistently; to get rid of all selfishness and use their hearts of generosity to serve all peoples in the world.
7. Benevolence and righteousness: with Jesus’ selfless loving heart and righteousness, live out life’s beauty and goodness to reveal Jesus’ holy countenance and display the true face of the Christians. With one heart, build a world of co-existence that is beautiful and harmonious.

<sup>2</sup> “Serving a Wounded World in Interreligious Solidarity”—A Christian Call to Reflection and Action During COVID-19 and Beyond, by PCID and WCC 27 August 2020.

With the guidance of the meaning of core contents, in the solidarity of inter-religious dialogue, the discussion on the document, 'Serving the Wounded World' can take another step forward with the 'suggestion' that appeals to all Christians to use their hearts to observe other people's hearts. They then can actively and positively use their serving hearts to serve all the peoples of the wounded world together with peoples of all religions, ethnicities, cultures and geographical regions with one heart and one mind. With the dictum, 'Don't do unto others what you don't want done to you' and 'Do unto others as you would have them do to you', serve all the peoples.

A brief introduction of the seven appeals in the document is as follows:

1. Serve the wounded and the vulnerable as witness to Jesus' suffering
2. Advocate the culture of inclusiveness. Get rid of exclusivism in society. Strengthen the healthiness and constructiveness of dialogue among people, societies, nations, and religions. In the communication and sharing of love, build solidarity and world peace.
3. With prayers, fasting, charity and the national spirit of sacrifice, deepen solidarity among all peoples to resolve the pain of suffering.
4. Foster the empathetic hearts of the clergy to use their pastoral care spirit to serve the particular needs of the wounded.
5. Actively encourage and support young people to join the service to strengthen the serving spirit for 'the wounded world'.
6. In dialogue, religions must mutually learn to embrace inclusiveness so as to strengthen religious solidarity and cooperation.
7. The saying 'Virtue is not alone; it has companions' should be the direction for religious co-operation. With the fulfilment of human nature and self-cultivation to resolve the temptations of life and the matching of virtues, serve the wounded humanity and the world to enable all the peoples to become our neighbours.

From two basic principles, seven core contents and seven appeals, the Church must reflect on the theological roots of the foundation of solidarity. Catholicism uses solidarity in the Holy Trinity as the foundation of faith.

1. The creation of God the Father Almighty is the sharing in love  
The inter-connection in equality and dignity  
The duties of a family  
The defence of human dignity  
The goodness of caring concern and love
2. In Jesus Christ, trust and hope can be seen

- The empathetic heart of mutual concern and sympathy  
 The rehabilitation accomplished in the healing of love  
 The mutual concern borne in each other's suffering
3. From the body of wounded Jesus, we can see
    - The comprehension of the suffering of Jesus and humanity
    - The dignity and challenge in suffering
    - The solidarity maintained by mutual inclusiveness
    - The new mode of survival embraced in suffering
    - The depth of love guaranteed in recovery and rebirth is stronger than suffering
  4. The unity of the Holy Spirit is our strength of solidarity with other religions
    - People are asked to humbly turn to God in their prayers
      - In services link up with all the people
      - Transform to become life's spiritual strength
    - Through the solidarity of the Holy Spirit, the Church's goals in building solidarity are: to help people to emanate benevolence, joy, peace, fortitude, goodness, generosity, fidelity and gentleness so as to, in Jesus, give care to all who suffer.

### **5. 'Hold Fast to Respect and Embrace the One Dao; the Virtue of Love Bears No Harm': The Response to 'Serving a Wounded World'**

On the path of swirling red dust  
 Temptations are scalding and fettering people's hearts  
     The pandemic is thriving and shackling people's souls  
 Leading people to lose the goodness in their innocent hearts  
 For the thirst for material things, the desire for power and benefits  
     People sell their conscience and intuition  
 Senselessly they fall into reckless thoughts and reckless tirades  
     Creating the terror of empty talks and faked news  
 Such a state of affairs...In the days of yore...  
 In the epoch of Prophet Jeremiah  
 What had happened...was the prophet's warning  
 'Jerusalem, wash the evil from your heart and be saved.  
 How long will you harbour wicked thoughts?...  
 Your own conduct and actions have brought this on you.  
 This is your punishment.  
 How bitter it is!  
 How it pierces to the heart!' (Jeremiah 4:14-18)  
 Oh, Christians!  
 No matter how the state of affairs may transform

We must not conform to this world  
 In the era of fallacy  
 When the human hearts are seared with benefits and desires  
 Evil passions, rights and wrongs and temptations are flying around  
 Locking the innate goodness of the humans hearts in dust  
 Desires are like a blazing fire burning inside the body  
 Incinerating the innate goodness of the human hearts  
 If people cannot restrain themselves they would fall into the pit of evilness  
 At this moment.....People must awaken and be self-conscious  
 Restrain the self to restore propriety do penance and pray  
 Ask God for His light to illuminate our hearts, our souls, and our sight  
 To enable us to recognize clearly God's calling  
 Helping us to experience the work of the heavenly Father  
 We should not only worry about the affairs of humanity  
 We should not use our secular mind to explain God's will  
 We must remember Jesus' teaching:  
 'What good will it be for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul?  
 Or what can anyone give in exchange for their soul?' (Matthew 16:26)  
 Thus People must first deny the self  
 Carry their cross on the back  
 Follow Jesus: the way, the truth and the life  
 In oblivion think about God's will  
 So as to transform your charisma and renew your mind  
 Clearly discern ---- What is God's will? What is charity?  
 What is pleasing to God? What is accomplishment? (Roman 12:2)  
 At this point of reflection, we must pay attention to our mind  
 In my heart it is the purity of cultivation without deceit.  
 The saying: 'The natural language used is forever new.  
 All grandeur gone and pure innocence comes  
 The allegory is to ask people to:  
 Have luminous virtue Live in dignity and mutual respect  
 Be benevolent and merciful Have integrity and humility  
 Be gentle and loving Have fortitude and keep to simplicity  
 Be genuine and obey heaven's mandate Hold dialogue in harmony  
 In this way, people can preserve their good heartedness and nurture their nature  
 Without worries, without fear, without regret and without grudge  
 In life learn from below and rise high  
 Nurture wisdom: To realize the direction of life  
 Discover the truth: With the freedom of choice in offering  
 Testify the value: Display truth, goodness, beauty and holiness



Correctness in thought: To discern clearly what is right and wrong, good and evil  
Word and action are one: Be humble, honest, simple and harmonious  
In this way... ..I will learn from Jesus  
Carry my cross  
Leave all worldly worries  
Live out the forgiveness of faith  
Unite with the harmony of mercy and compassion  
Restrain temptations with perseverance  
Embrace the benevolence of humility and gentleness  
Pray with sincerity and honesty  
Expel the evil demons  
Unite in the benevolence of oneness  
To attain the realm of sublime goodness  
People must 'Hold fast to respect and embrace the one Dao'  
'In utter emptiness observe the silence'  
Develop our own heart and soul  
'Being refined and spick and span and dignified and respectful'  
Topping all that is called deference  
Reminding and awakening is the continuation of deference  
Full concentration on what is being done is exquisite and pure  
It is the continuation of deference without breaks  
'Keep the mind clear and bright, lucid and unconfused.  
This is the effectiveness of 'deference' (Hu Jingzhai胡敬齋, Ming Dynasty)

People in 'deference' get to know the truth  
Understand the Dao of  
'Lifting the head to appreciate the high mountain (people with lofty virtue)  
And the big Dao is for all to walk on  
Though the goal cannot be reached, the heart has gone towards it'  
St. Augustine on his way to seek God said:  
'Whoever knows the truth knows the light of truth.  
Whoever knows the light of truth will know eternity that love also knows.  
The eternal truth is actually love, the lovable eternity!  
You are my god. I thirst for you day and night.'  
So.....'deference' transforms love into the lovable eternity

'I love because I love, I love for love. If love returns to its original source, flows back to its original source, and continuously draws the gushing water from the source, what a great thing love is! Among all the activities, emotions, and emotions of the soul, there is only love, which we can use to repay the Creator. Although this repaying is not equivalent, it at least shows the mutual exchange of love. Because

when God loves, he is nothing more than willing to be loved; He loves others only to make them love Him; He knows that those who love Him can achieve complete joy in love.’ (St. Bernard of Clairvaux’s Interpretation of Song of Songs).

Eternal love is like water sprinkled on the human hearts and souls

And I will pour upon you clean water, and you shall be cleansed from all your filthiness, and I will cleanse you from all your idols. And I will give you a new heart, and put a new spirit within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and will give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit in the midst of you: and I will cause you to walk in my commandments, and to keep my judgments, and do them.’ (Ezekiel 36:25-27).

God the Father is in the human hearts  
Calling up the love in the human hearts  
Giving people the fullness of joy  
Enabling them to maintain faith, trust and peace in their hearts  
And amidst all the hustles and bustles the return to tranquillity  
‘If you return and be quiet, you shall be saved: in silence and in hope shall your strength be.’

(Isaiah: Chapter 30:15)

The trust in quietude enables people to look up to God with admiration  
And prevent people to fall into secularism and lose their souls  
As people look up to God with admiration  
People can from Jesus find truth and benevolence and the way that leads to God  
At this moment—People are willing to cultivate their life  
In restraining the self to restoring propriety,  
Discipline the self and maintain correctness  
In returning to the source and calming the spirit  
Get the light of goodness and ask for serendipity  
In following virtue and self-cultivation  
Gather in body and mind  
In the light of the heart  
Choose goodness  
In the illumination  
Think the right thoughts  
Thus Christians wholeheartedly follow  
Contemplate Jesus’ word, actions and deeds  
Do not make random guesses Do not build your own walls Do not criticize  
Do not be selfish and obstinate Do not entertain reckless and evil thoughts

In selflessness use Jesus' heart as one's heart  
All lifelong learn Jesus' goodness and humility  
In life preserve the innate goodness till the ending in goodness

## **6. Conclusion: 'Both the Evil and the Sage Harm Not Each Other. All Can Cultivate Virtue'**

Religious solidarity asks people to sincerely hold dialogue and work together. With the goodness of heart at the core, establish the mutual model of peace, benevolence and righteousness. To reveal the value orientation of life, to Christians, is to realize Jesus' following of the will of the heavenly Father: The commandment 'Love the Lord your God and love your neighbour'.

Hence... ...People must have self-consciousness to realize the rationale that one must not do evil to oneself:

People can then realize that one must not be shackled by sin before one can find release...

Otherwise, one will fall into the valley of temptations...

The evil doers who refuse to quit the evil path for the right one will certainly perish for their own evil deeds.

*St. John Chrysostom taught people five paths of repentance:*

1. Condemnation of your own sins: Admit your sins so as to rouse your conscience.
2. Forgive our enemies' sins against us: Put out of our minds the harm done us by our enemies, in order to master our anger, and to forgive our fellow servants' sins against us. Then our own sins against the Lord will be forgiven.
3. Prayer: Prayer that is fervent and careful comes from the heart.
4. Almsgiving: Charity of love is far-reaching and has the power of healing.
5. Humility: Offer our humility instead and we will be relieved of a heavy burden of sins.

Through the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation, we can gather up our hearts and turn them back to the Lord and embrace the feelings in His heart. We can then empty ourselves, set aside obstinacy, carry our Cross and abandon everything.

Always use the psalms for our prayer---

The psalms are like a mirror reflecting our vulnerabilities and sins and transgressions.

Help people to reconcile and confess with the hearts and souls. In God's name, lift up our hands.

With humility the heart is emanating the sharing of love  
With one heart we yearn for the heavenly Father.

*With one heart and one mind we together pray*

‘Again, truly I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything they ask for, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven. For where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them.’

(Matthew 18:19-20)

I will praise the Lord all my life  
I will establish virtue to stop sin all my life  
God lives in our hearts In God we live in peace and harmony  
The ‘Six Principles of Harmony’ is the motivation of life  
Sharing views in harmony:  
Consensus on positive views  
Cultivating precepts in harmony:  
Together cultivate rites and rituals  
Living together in harmony:  
In joy and happiness get along with each other  
Conversing in harmony with no disputes:  
Make conversation harmoniously without any conflicts  
Sharing same ideas in harmony and joy  
Have the same mindset and same will  
Sharing benefits in harmony:  
Shares gains and benefits equally  
On the ‘Six Principles of Harmony’ reflect  
People must realize.  
Wealth and status can be short-lived.  
Why worry?  
This explains clearly.  
Fortune and disaster are not long lasting.  
Why worry what is going to happen?  
The logic shows that nothing is permanent  
Why worry when poverty has to be borne at the moment?  
Contemplate to open the door to the heart  
Big heartedness in respect breeds fortune  
Being wise in serenity leads to longevity  
Time and space at hand helps seeing through eternity  
Accommodating extreme emptiness joins life and death in oneness

Without dividing fortune and poverty harmonize in virtue  
 Concord in oneness resolves conflicts  
 Serving the world wounded by the pandemic  
 Building family happiness and harmony reveals the heaven on earth  
 And helps Christians to go towards the God of eternity  
 Hence... ... in our life, besides loving one another  
 We need to follow law and order and stand in solidarity with no strife or conflict  
 Since love never harms, mutual counselling gains the human hearts  
 So, love is the complete fulfilment of law and order.  
 At the moment of contemplation, a children's song comes to mind. It is called

### **'One Small Bamboo Stick'**

'One small bamboo easily bends  
 A few in a bundle cannot  
 Heart strong, will steady and brave  
 Solidarity is strength Hei!  
 Let's act together as one  
 Weighing in tons is nothing  
 Work together in one heart  
 Everything will run smoothly Great!  
 Beautiful flowers must go with green leaves  
 The crystal moon has time to wane  
 Workin' alone's futile  
 Solidarity! Task's done!  
 This song calls up my Christian spirit  
 My heart feels the faith in solidarity  
 Motivates the loving heart of life affecting life  
 We do not fear difficulties... ... because  
 Christians have the heart to share  
 We do not fear poverty... ...because  
 Christians have the heart to share  
 And encourage everyone to energise themselves  
 I quietly listen  
 My heart is moved  
 Thinking about my childhood  
 Unhypocritical joy                      Integrity in poverty  
 Peace in poverty                         Conscientiousness without grudge  
 Fervency in prayer                       Response in innocence  
 Wordless service

All establish for me a good foundation  
Feeling the harmless love  
Accomplishing the forgiveness on the cross  
Coming and going at will to respond to heavenly opportunities  
To become a responsible man of creativity and motivation  
Using the 'sharing of love' to serve those wounded by the pandemic  
'Just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve' (Matthew 20:28).

Learn from the loving heart and generosity of the Good Samaritan  
Support the weak and the under-privileged, soothe those who suffer  
Using the merciful heart to help people to leave suffering for joy  
To affirm the dignity of human existence  
Use the loving heart of solidarity to lift up both hands  
And humbly give alms to the poor  
'Heaven is grudging oh all divinities are angry  
Those bestially killed in battle oh lie in the wilderness  
Valiant and heroic oh fearless and undaunted  
Unflinching till the end oh they cannot be browbeaten  
Though they have died oh their divine spirits will remain  
Your souls are unvanquished oh you're the heroes among ghosts'  
(Battle Memorial by Qu Yuen)

'Ruling a large kingdom is like frying a small fish  
When Tao is used to rule all under heaven; all ghosts will lose their power  
It is not that they are not evil but that they do not display their power  
It is not that they do people no harm but the sages do them no harm either  
Since no harm is done by either side, the virtue of peace belongs to both'  
(Dao De Jing 60)

*Interreligious Dialogue and Comparative Theology as  
Enduring Ways of Living and Thinking the Catholic Faith*

FRANCIS X. CLOONEY, SJ\*

Early in my formation as a Jesuit, I spent two years teaching at St. Xavier's School in Kathmandu, Nepal. I was there from 1973-1975. There were in those days no formal dialogues built into the life of this kind of Jesuit school (such as was found all over India too), but for me as a young Jesuit, teaching and working day after day with students who were almost all Hindu and Buddhist was a real instance of dialogue in action as part of ordinary life, and at the same time a life-changing, eye-opening occasion for my own interreligious learning. Teaching the boys of St. Xavier's, and learning from them, provoked in me a deeper, purified understanding of my own Catholicism, pointing to the conviction that interreligious learning can and should be an ordinary part of education and spiritual formation in the Catholic Church and the Society of Jesus, of which I have been a member for 53 years. Indeed, dialogue and interactions among people of different cultures and faiths, and learning across religious borders, are natural and essential to almost all human living. By extension, and at a more technical level, what we call interreligious dialogue and comparative theology are also naturally be parts of our lives.

I have the balance of dialogue and interreligious learning over the decades, but it was most clearly in my 2010 book *Comparative Theology* that I spelled out the interconnections and differences between dialogue and comparative theology.<sup>1</sup> There I proposed the simple notion that theology is "faith seeking understanding," an intellectual and spiritual inquiry carried out within a community, with respect for reason, for the claims of truth, religious practices, and personal experience. "Interreligious dialogue" ordinarily refers to actual conversations, sometimes formal

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<sup>1</sup> This essay, by its nature a synthesis for a wider readership, is indebted to my *Comparative Theology: Deep Learning across Religious Borders* (Wiley Blackwell 2010) and several essays: "Comparative Theology and Inter-Religious Dialogue," in *The Wiley-Blackwell Companion to Inter-Religious Dialogue* (Wiley-Blackwell 2013), Catherine Cornille, editor; "How *Nostra Aetate* Opened the Way to the Study of Hinduism," in *Nostra Aetate: Celebrating 50 Years of the Catholic Church's dialogue with Jews and Muslims*. Edited by Wilhelmus (Pim) Valkenberg and Anthony Cirelli. (Catholic University of America Press, 2016, 58-75); "*Nostra Aetate* and the Small Things of God," *Catholicism Engaging Other Faiths: Vatican II and its Impact*. Edited by Vladimir Latinovic, Gerard Mannion, and Jason Welle. (Palgrave MacMillan, 2018, 305-31.)

and academic, sometimes simply interpersonal conversations among persons of different religious traditions willing to listen to one another and to share their stories of faith and values. “Comparative theology” — interreligious and theological beginning to end — marks acts of faith seeking understanding which are rooted in a particular faith tradition but which, from that foundation, venture into learning from one or more other faith traditions. This learning is sought for the sake of fresh theological insights that are indebted to the newly encountered tradition or traditions as well as my home tradition.<sup>2</sup>

There are good reasons to keep comparative theology and dialogue closely connected but at the same time clearly distinguished. Personal encounters in dialogue remind us that religions flourish in the lives, beliefs, and activities of real people who live out their faith day by day. Dialogue also reminds us that we must be accountable to other communities when we speak about their religion, even as we must give an account of ourselves to our own community. Nevertheless, even a dialogue among learned believers will not suffice if we are content to know only our own tradition, presenting it when asked, but without listening, learning and changing through the dialogue that occurs. The person engaged in comparative theological learning goes deeper in an intentional fashion. She or he must be willing to study at least one other tradition alongside one’s own and taking it to heart. What eventuates may be called an interior dialogue, where two traditions, one’s own and another, begin to enrich and cross-fertilize one another in a creative fashion. In this form of dialogue, the comparative theologian begins to theologize as it were from both sides of the table, reflecting personally on old and new truths in an ongoing interior dialogue. Certainly this has been true for me, as my decades long study of classical theological and spiritual texts of the Sanskrit and Tamil traditions of Hindu India has germinated within me as I live out and reflect on my Catholic faith.

Comparative theology, as in studious and most often interior learning, may not directly or speedily feed into interreligious dialogue. This is because, to put it simply, the more you know, the harder ordinary dialogue may turn out to be, since ordinary forms of dialogue may be upset. After all, the practitioner of comparative theology knows very much about the other tradition in the dialogue, and may know things even insiders to the other tradition may not know. Some will agree to dialogue provided they are the sole experts present on their own religion, as if outsiders cannot learn and speak about religions other than their own, even if ever vulnerable to the suggestions and criticisms of insiders. At some point, comparative theology may itself become a topic in a dialogue that asks about the meaning

<sup>2</sup> *Comparative Theology* pp. 9-10, slightly modified.



of interreligious study, wherein deep learning about both traditions comes into being on both sides of conversation even aside from what is learned in the dialogue.

### **The Catholic Roots of Comparative Theology**

It has always seemed to me that both dialogue and comparative theology, even if not uniquely Catholic disciplines, do have particularly felicitous Catholic roots. The Catholic tradition works with the premise that the world is essentially good, from God, and by grace imbued with God's presence. Nature speaks to us of God the creator, and human cultures too in their essential goodness speak of the divine creator who made humans as we are. The truth and beauty manifest in human experience are never entirely obscured. Logos theology attests that God's word and wisdom are everywhere implicit in the human reality, which is therefore intelligible and accessible to reasoned inquiry such as also prepares the way for knowledge of God. Seeds of the Word are scattered in all the world's traditions, there to be sought out, discovered, and prized.

The expectation then is that the Logos is discernible in places even far from centres of Christian culture, and that Christ is thus at work, ready to be discovered amid the cultures of the world. This can be taken as reinforcing the characteristic rational current of Catholic tradition, a confidence in reason, inspired by faith, that encourages both conversation and argument. Cultures and religions are intelligible, commensurable, and open to intelligent and spiritually meaningful exchange, and thus also to debate, arguments about true and false religion, and hence to learning across religious borders. This openness is in turn accompanied by a confidence that one can sort out the good from the bad, highlighting what is productive while refuting what one judges to be inadequate. God can be found everywhere, and human thoughts and words, though inevitably inadequate, can be articulated in harmony with the discovery of God by experience and reason.<sup>3</sup>

Grounded in sacrament and liturgy, Catholic tradition also fosters dispositions by which to recognize the presence of God in the *particulars* of other traditions, in their sacred places and practices as well as in theory. Certainly, I have often enough over the years found myself in holy temples, where rites of a certain sacred power were being performed; and while I could not worship, neither was I merely a tourist or spectator; I was, to quote the poet, treading softly on sacred ground. Confidence that particular things and actions can be sites of the sacred then opens the way for a deep reverence for reality as a whole. Words are never mere words,

<sup>3</sup> See Francis X. Clooney, SJ, "Finding God in All Things: Some Catholic and Hindu Insights," *Vinayasadhana* 7.1 (January 2016), 30-44.

books never mere books — rather, they are potential indications of the divine. Actions arise from and tend toward the building of community and the practice of worship. By extension, interreligious encounter and learning, even as a form of study, are always more than “merely” ideas and images, words and actions. There is, to put it simply, a catholicity to the Catholic view of the world that, doctrinal and ecclesial restraints notwithstanding, has nevertheless allowed the Catholic tradition to learn interreligiously over and over again.

Such dispositions to the presence of God everywhere and with a sacramental sensitivity open the way, I have found, to a manner of learning, anticipated or as it were accidental, in which doctrinal limits, precisely as respected, do not bring to a halt a fluid exchange across cultural and even religious boundaries. But such exchanges also leave room, on a practical level, for apologetics: reason does not stop imagine free exchanges, and the fluidity of boundaries does not make reasoning inappropriate or argument counterproductive. All of this creates a frame in which comparative theological learning, as reasoned and intuitive, as comparative and theological, is possible and religiously significant. Such learning, occurring from a Catholic starting point and equipped with dispositions necessary for any serious dialogue, proceeds not by theory, but by delving deep into religious traditions’ truths and practices, to see what can be learned when one actually tries to learn. Much of my own research in Hindu theology and poetry and practice, I have found, is nothing but a slow and sure study of potent Hindu texts; only by way of and after the slow work of careful reading can insights of relevance to the Catholic faith be gained.<sup>4</sup>

### **The Enduring Power of *Nostra Aetate***

Comparative theology can be firmly rooted in the dialogical vision expressed so powerfully in *Nostra Aetate* — even if “comparative theology” and “dialogue” are nowhere named as such in the conciliar document. *Nostra Aetate* rather dramatically opened up a new space for interreligious learning, yet in a typically Catholic way that combined depth, focus, and a consequent openness. In practice even if not by explicit mention, the Council put in place the conditions for the flourishing of dialogue and for the growth of comparative theology in the decades after the Council. These new openings occurred providentially just when the Church, and all of the West, were opening up perforce to new global and post-colonial realities, in what

<sup>4</sup> See Francis X. Clooney, *Reading the Hindu and Christian Classics: Why and How Deep Learning Still Matters*. University of Virginia Press, 2020.

Karl Rahner later spoke of as the “coming of the world Church.”<sup>5</sup> For comparative theology, this passage from the document’s second paragraph has been key:

The Catholic Church rejects nothing of the things that are true and holy in these religions. She regards with sincere attentiveness those ways of conduct and of life, those precepts and teachings which, though differing in many aspects from the ones she holds and sets forth, nonetheless by no means rarely reflect rays of that Truth which enlightens all people. (cf. John 1.9) Truly she proclaims, and ever must proclaim Christ “the way, the truth, and the life” (John 14:6), in whom humans may find the fullness of religious life, in whom God has reconciled all things to Himself. (cf. 2 Corinthians 5)

We find here an intensely focused and careful openness, an attentiveness to the true and holy, even if this openness cannot be reckoned a full embrace of Hinduism and Buddhism. But *Nostra Aetate* is distinctive in its refusal to rely on a priori judgments and entirely settled conclusions about what other religious traditions are allowed to mean: *find* what is true and holy, and *welcome* it.

It is important to emphasize how singularly open *Nostra Aetate*’s teaching is in its intention to make interreligious exchange an ongoing way of Catholic life and learning. Key to this opening is to put aside pre-judgments about the other, and references about our mission to purify and correct everyone else. *Nostra Aetate* is telling us to be attentive to other religions and to learn from them. This is possible because God has reconciled all things in Christ (2 Corinthians), draws all things into his light (John 1), and is the undergirding reality of whatever is true, alive, and on the way. And then there is the most apt text that surprising did not find its way into *Nostra Aetate*, “Finally, beloved, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.” (*Philippians* 4.8) With these and other guiding texts before me, and inspired too by the Jesuit tradition of “finding God in all things,” from my first visit to South Asia in the 1970s on, I became increasingly ready to learn interreligiously from Hindu traditions, and to recognize the presence of God in all that I was learning. Others, I was inclined to think, could as they wished work through the fine points of the theology of religions discipline. As a comparative theologian working in the spirit of dialogue, my work rather was that of close reading, and detailed study, to be, as it were, on the lookout for God in everything I was learning.

Thus, regarding Hinduism (along with Buddhism), it charts a map of study:

<sup>5</sup> See Karl Rahner, “Towards a Fundamental Theological Interpretation of Vatican II,” *Theological Studies* 40 (1979), 716-27, and Clooney 2016 and 2018, noted above.

thorough examination of the divine mystery; an inexhaustible abundance of myths; acute efforts of philosophy; forms of the ascetical life; profound meditation a flight to God with love and trust. It also honors Hinduism and other faith traditions, with respect to their individual ways, comprising teachings, rules of life, and sacred rites; what is true and holy in these religions; their ways of conduct and of life, precepts and teachings; the good things, spiritual and moral, as well as the socio-cultural values. These points mark substantial topics for dialogue, but also map out an interreligious learning that is open-ended, never completed by generalizations. Among the many ways of being Church after the Council, this too is a way, a renewed commitment to study and slow learning. For me, studying theology after my years in Kathmandu and then doing my doctoral studies at the University of Chicago in the Department of South Asian Languages and Civilizations, *Nostra Aetate*, buttressed by memory of the distinguished tradition of Jesuit missionary scholars in Asia and the Americas, it has always been helpful to have recourse to *Nostra Aetate* and the practical learning it implies, as I sought to discern and honor all that is good and holy in the texts, practices and holy temples of Hinduism that I have studied all these years.

*Nostra Aetate* gives us no answers in advance, and does not suggest that at a certain point we can stop thinking about the religions around us. What we discover in the process is up to us. On occasion during my more than four decades of studying Hinduism, people have asked me to pass judgment on Hinduism in general, or to state decisively what is better about Christianity. I refuse, however, to accommodate such requests. In both dialogue and comparative theology, the point is to learn from what is before one's eyes, not to reconfigure what one experiences to fit one's expectations; the point is to learn from what one is learning by study and paying attention, rather than by passing conclusive and final judgment on what one has learned slowly and in detail. I point to *Nostra Aetate* as indicative of this attitude, a readiness to learn deeply from other faiths in the particular, that one may see what is true and holy there, and in turn come home with fresh eyes and perspectives on the mysteries of our own faith.

### **The Inseparable Realities of Comparative Theology and Interreligious Dialogue**

The twin dynamics of dialogue and comparative theological learning seem now to be irreversibly enduring parts of the life of the Church today. St. John Paul II made the point eloquently and boldly in an interfaith address in Madras, India, in 1986: "The fruit of dialogue is union between people and union of people with God, who is the source and revealer of all truth and whose Spirit guides men in freedom only when they meet one another in all honesty and love. By dialogue

we let God be present in our midst; for as we open ourselves in dialogue to one another, we also open ourselves to God.” This work of opening ourselves to one another and hence to God’s presence in our midst is surely a regular and unending dimension of our lives today. More recently, Pope Francis and Grand Imam Ahmad Al-Tayyeb wrote in their 2019 document on *Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together*, “In the name of God and of everything stated thus far, [we] declare the adoption of a culture of dialogue as the path; mutual cooperation as the code of conduct; reciprocal understanding as the method and standard.” Dialogue and interreligious learning are no longer to be thought of as exotic options for a few specialists on the margins of Catholic life and theology.

How does awareness of dialogue affect the work of the scholar who engages in comparative theology? Of course, interreligious dialogue is the larger category. As a form of study, comparative theology can fit into the standard list of options for dialogue as an importance instance of what is the third kind of dialogue named in *Dialogue and Proclamation* alongside the dialogues of life, work, study, and spirituality: “The *dialogue of theological exchange*, where specialists seek to deepen their understanding of their respective religious heritages, and to appreciate each other’s spiritual values.” (n. 42) But the realities of dialogue help scholars to keep their work, however specialized, connected to the larger issues of life, spirituality, and work for justice that impinge on us all today.

How does comparative theological study affect interreligious dialogue? As study, comparative theology is an interior interreligious dialogue; the religious other’s presence is mediated by text, study, whether or not one sits and discusses that study with another. Comparative theology is enriched by other forms of dialogue, as it arises after interests are aroused through travel, visits to holy sites, and by way of informal and planned dialogues. This can also be put the other way: dialogue in its third form is the exterior form of comparative theology, the necessary study that takes place either in the conversation or as the “sharing of notes” of the several scholars, or in both such circumstances. Much of this may be a matter of taste and personality, to be sure, but the introverted practice of solitary and meditative study must continue to have a place alongside all the varied dialogues to which we as a Church must also be committed.

Both comparative theology and dialogue challenge ordinary – that is, non-dialogical, non-comparative – ways of thinking about one’s own faith and the faith of others, particularly if that faith theology seek to decide the meaning of other religious traditions without dialogue and solely by the study of one’s own tradition. In a gentle manner, dialogue and comparative theology change everything: once deep learning has begun, it is neither easy nor commendable for a person of faith to retreat back to a simpler worldview that would be innocent of the new learning that has taken place. To speak personally once more: by the grace of God I remain

a priest 43 years after ordination, and a Jesuit 53 years after entering the Society, and for that I am immensely grateful. But also by the grace of God, my Catholic, priestly and Jesuit identity has over the years grown and, I would say, matured with an inseparable and enduring dimension attributable only to my travels in India, my many Hindu friends and colleagues and teachers, and the many years I have studied classic Hindu texts. All of this is part of my theology now, which is no less Catholic for having developed in this rich and complex way. The truths of the Catholic Faith are alive for me in fresh and more vital ways precisely because I have learned from Hinduism over the decades. I cannot imagine, and do not wish to, an identity for myself that would not be enriched and enlivened by my learning from Hinduism.

## **Conclusion**

I close by noting that it is important to recognize that both comparative theology and dialogue are changing in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, as religions grow, travel, adjust to one another, and change, and accordingly the ways we study them too have to be adjusted. In the past, scholars “here” were usually studying religions “there,” with some distance between the world of scholarship about non-Christian religions and the societies in which members of those religions live. But in the 21<sup>st</sup> century the religions we encounter and study are no longer far away from where we live. The presence of an increasingly diverse cultural and religious population in the West means that some at least of our neighbors, colleagues, and students, here and now, belong to those traditions. They are among our friends; they are our collaborators in many endeavors on behalf of the human community; as our peers, they are often rightfully in a position question and unsettle what we have thought and said about them in the past.

Other changes affect both dialogue and comparative theology. Our societies are increasingly pluralistic, and learning – by dialogue, by intentional comparative study – is only part of the larger fluid reality in which people are learning of religions other than their own, making small and large choices about spiritual practice on a regular basis, and in the process rethinking their original faith commitments. In many if not all countries, young people in particular no longer think of themselves as members of one tradition in a neat and straightforward manner. The phenomenon of multiple religious belonging, whatever we think of it, complexifies the very identities involved in dialogue, and complicates how we are to imagine “studying religions other than our own.” Certainly this is true at Harvard Divinity School where I have taught for the past 16 years, as each class of new students manifests new and surprising religious intuitions and preferences that challenge me to explain anew and freshly what is involved in faith and community, inquiry

and encounter with the truth. And I grow older and inevitably (even if slowly) approach the end of my active years as a professor and scholar, I find that my own comparative theological learning is still not a settled matter, as if perfected and merely to be repeated. My learning from Hindu traditions will, I hope, continue to the end of my years, new insights into Hindu traditions helping me even now to apprehend better my identity as a Catholic with a mission in today's world.

## *Laudato Si': A Pathway for Promoting Interreligious Dialogue in Asia*

REV. FR. CLARENCE DEVADASS\*

The publication of *Laudato si* (LS) has brought about in the Catholic Church a greater awareness to the issues surrounding the environment more than ever. There was a time and even now, it is fashionable to be associated with terms like “eco-friendly”, “green living”, “going green”, “sustainability” and much more. These are used in advertising, as slogans, labelled on products of all types. Images and words like ‘reduce, reuse, recycle’ on products that we come across have been so overused that perhaps no one really pays attention to its meaning or significance. The word “ecology” became popular in the 1960s when people started recognising that we live in a planet of finite resources. Over the course of years, the word “crisis” became attached to the problem of ecology and more recently referred to as “climate emergency”.

Chapter One of LS puts forth clearly that we cannot remain idle to the ecological crises that we confronted with namely pollution, waste management, throwaway culture, climate change, the scarcity of water, loss of biodiversity, global inequality and decline in the quality of human life. What we are facing is not something that happened while we were sleeping last night or since LS was published, but over a period of decades that has caused the crisis that we are experiencing today. We are being reminded that it is a reality that we need to address in concrete ways and not in an ideological way. It is no longer just the ‘problem’ of international organisations, but it requires the involvement of every person at every level. In more ways than one, all of us want to preserve this planet of our so as to be able to hand over to the next generation. In fact, this is at the very heart of LS: “What kind of world do we want to leave to those who come after us, to children who are now growing up?” (#160). As we have just celebrated the fifth anniversary of the publication of LS, the challenges laid out there in continue to provide us with a framework for deepening our conversations and reflection on this climate emergency.

### **I. Pillars for A Better Future**

In an article entitled “The Historical Roots of our Ecologic Crisis”<sup>1</sup>, the author states that the source of our environmental problems is religious in nature

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<sup>1</sup> Lynn White Jr, The Historical Roots of our Ecologic Crisis *Science* 10 Mar 1967:Vol. 155, Issue 3767, pp. 1203-1207.



and goes on to say that Christianity with its emphasis on human salvation and dominion over nature, made it possible to exploit nature. He makes reference to Genesis 1:28 where God gave Adam ‘dominion’ over creatures. For a long time, the understanding of the word ‘dominion’ seems to be associated with the word ‘subdue’ rather than ‘stewardship’ as we are more accustomed to use today. If this claim has any truth in it, then theology certainly has a responsibility to put right what may have been misconstrued and taken out of context for whatever the purpose may have been. The following five pillars provide us a framework for deeper conversations.

The *first pillar* is stewardship. This is about being respectful and responsible with the resources and the gifts that God has given us in his creation. The word ‘dominion’ or ‘subdue’ has a more dynamic meaning today as compared to ages past. It is about sharing in God’s appreciation for the world which he called “very good” (Genesis 1:31), and recognizing, “from everyone to whom much has been given, much will be required; and from the one to whom much has been entrusted, even more will be demanded” (Luke 12:48). The belief that God is the creator of the whole universe is found in not just the Bible but also in the Sacred Books of other religious traditions and cultural traditions. The entire world is God’s creation, and its continuing life and preservation are thoroughly dependent upon God. Likewise, man who is part of God’s creation is also dependent upon Him for his life and survival.

The Creation accounts in the Book Genesis affirm the goodness of God by affirming the goodness of everything he has created. God is good in Himself and good in everything he desires and does for his creatures – humankind and the world. God’s goodness is attested in the on-going creation. The creation story also tells us how humankind and the world may individually and collectively participate and share in this divine goodness. The continual goodness was experienced in maintaining a harmonious and creative interdependent relationship within the cosmic community. Psalm 104, more than anything else, speaks about this inter-dependent order and relationship. Therefore, the concept “our ‘dominion’ over the universe should be understood more properly in the sense of responsible stewardship” (LS 116).

The *second pillar* is justice. This is about recognizing that when a small proportion of the earth’s population exhaust its resources and the rest have to face the brunt of the consequences, that isn’t right. And when the God you worship, serve, and follow is described as a God of justice, and when you’re encouraged to “do justice” (Micah 6:8). In this context then, the poor, those who have not are often the hardest hit by the excesses of those who have. The writer of Proverbs said, “Those

who oppress the poor insult their Maker” (14:31), and even if we’re not directly treating them badly, such an injunction should at least make us think twice about how we live. The gospel story of rich man and Lazarus probably depicts well the indifferent attitude shown by many people towards ecological concerns.

Related to the concept of justice is the understanding that the purpose of creation is primarily to proclaim God’s glory. The divine life is actively manifested in and through the created world. Therefore, it would not be right to deal with the world of nature merely in unjust materialistic terms. Nature has its own intrinsic value, teleology, and destiny, and humanity is called to recognize this fact and respond to it with respect and reverence.

Justice must also include the principle of the common good. Speaking of this traditional principle, which is integral to Catholic Social Teaching, LS calls on an integral ecology that includes the concept of the common good. In fact, the Encyclical clearly states that ecological choices must be made for the common good of all with the preferential option for the poorest, a theme that runs throughout the document and “the notion of the common good also extends to future generations” (LS 159). Though justice in relation to the care for the environment has often in the past spoken about sustainability, “we can no longer speak of sustainable development apart from intergenerational society” (LS 159) without, however, forgetting the poor of today “whose life on earth is brief and who cannot keep on waiting” (LS 162). Quoting the Portuguese bishops, LS mentions, “The environment is part of a logic of receptivity. It is on loan to each generation, which must then hand it on to the next” (LS 159).

The *third pillar* is about relationship. Communal relationship is so integral to our Christian faith. This concern is about harmonious and healthy interaction not only with the people around us but with the world around us, realizing that what we do with the latter will *always* impact the former at some level. Jesus said that loving one’s neighbour was akin to loving God (Matthew 22:36-40), so if we love God as we claim to, we will love those with whom we share in the gift of God’s creation. In other words, human life and human dignity must be in the forefront of environmental theology.

At the outset, we need to establish the fact that the Christian eco-theology must begin with affirming a belief in the historical person of Jesus Christ and his redemptive work. Christ is the source of all creation. In Himself, Christ who was both God and Man unites every natural and historical process, all forces, forms, and elements both material and spiritual, and all life both animate and inanimate. Christian eco-theology therefore must be anchored to the central axiom of Christianity --- the Christ of faith and the Christ of history.

The problem of the environment has therefore to be viewed in relation to all

other human and social issues (integral ecology). All these must be seen as those that emerge from the most fundamental of all problems — the problem of human failure to maintain the triple harmony — harmony between the divine, humanity, and the world. There is a 'universal communion' that reminds us that we are called into being by one Father, all of us are linked by unseen bonds and together form a kind of universal family (LS 89). In this sense then, this bond calls for a sacred, affectionate, and humble respect between the various levels of relationships. In short, there is an inseparable bond (relationship) as presented in LS between concerns for spirituality, creation, justice for the poor, commitment to society, quality of life and interior peace.

The *fourth pillar* is continuity. We read in the Old Testament that the community has a deep sense of commitment and faith in the continuity of the human race and the reverence for human life. Life on earth was always lived in the light of the generations yet to be born. The responsibility towards unborn future generations has become an ethical issue. For the first time in history, humanity is faced with the real danger of being completely wiped away from the face of the earth. Besides, this present generation has already used up more natural resources during its lifetime than all the resources ever consumed since man and woman appeared on the scene. Modern society is aptly called the "now" generation. Unborn humanity has been denied its inalienable rights of existence, survival, and perpetuation. If the continuity of the human race is to be assured, there is no getting away from giving up the secular attitude of the modern scientific mind set; instead, we must go on to re-sacralise nature and restore to it its original status.

For this reason, the Old Testament ethics admonish that the land and the cattle, which are in the service of man, are to be treated as those that has their own intrinsic value and unique destiny. The implicit understanding of this exhortation was that the world of nature is sacred, and it belonged ultimately to the creator God. We need to understand that this destiny of the cosmos is inseparably linked with that of human beings. As expressed in St. Paul's letter to the Romans: For what can be known about God is perfectly plain to them, since God has made it plain to them: Ever since the creation of the world, the invisible existence of God and his everlasting power have been clearly seen by the mind's understanding of created things (Romans 8:19-20). In fact, St. Paul looks forward to a time when nature will share in human destiny and liberation. We will not discard this universe and migrate to another eternal habitat. Rather, this cosmos will be so transformed that it will become the most perfect habitat for both God and humanity to share their eternity together. In this light then it can be seen that LS does not only deal with environment but also raises questions about the meaning of existence and its values as the basis of social life: "What is

the purpose of life... what is the goal of our work... what need does the world have of us?" (LS 160).

The *fifth pillar* which is dialogue, is much reflected in LS. The dialogical nature of ecological concerns provides not only challenge to theological reflection but also that which creates a locus for integration. Apart of the dialogue with environmental policies, politics and economy that is mentioned in Chapter 5, religion and science must complement one another to a better understanding of faith and reason (LS 200). Dialogue for the sake of protecting nature, defending the poor, and building networks of respect and fraternity (LS 201). Dialogue requires patience, self-discipline and generosity: "Dialogue among the various sciences is likewise needed, since each can tend to become enclosed in its own language, while specialization leads to a certain isolation and the 'absolutisation' of its own field of knowledge" (LS 201).

From an Asian perspective, dialogue in itself not only provides opportunities but also presents its own challenges. Though many people profess to be believers of a particular religious tradition, theology must seek to engage in such a way that it provides a common platform for the protection of the environment as "an open and respectful dialogue is also needed between the various ecological movements, among which ideological conflicts are not infrequently encountered. The gravity of the ecological crisis demands that we all look to the common good, embarking on a path of dialogue which demands patience, self-discipline and generosity, always keeping in mind that "realities are greater than ideas" (LS 201).

## **II. Convergence and Collaboration for Dialogue**

The publication of LS has not only awakened the Church towards the need to care for our common home but has also brought the Church's position on ecology to the eyes of the world. The escalating problems that the world is confronted with in issues of environment is indeed crucial that not only the Church needs to address but it has also to evoke a response from the whole of humanity for we know that humanity is not separate from the environment in which we live – rather humanity and the natural environment are united inextricably. For this reason, the ethical nature of our crisis must be addressed, both through dialogue, and by working towards recovering our fundamental spiritual dimension. It is interesting to note that the word 'dialogue' appears twenty-five time in this encyclical. Therefore, we are not off the mark to propose LS and interreligious dialogue as a pathway to move forward.

### *a) A Common Human Experience*

LS is addressed to all peoples of the world and not just the Christians or Catholics. The starting point of this encyclical is the fact that we all share a com-

mon experience in this world that we share. Starting purely from religion and science perhaps has no appeal to many people. However, drawing attention to the common realities of human life that which transcends space, time, and belief provides the locus for engaging in dialogue. *Nostra aetate* (NA) begins with and inquiry into the common origin and destiny of all human persons. Similarly, the care for the common home cuts across all barriers and hindrances.

In the recent decades, there has been an explosion of academic interest in the anthropological, philosophical, psychological, and biological basis of religious experience. Just as we rely on these sciences to help us understand our religious and spiritual experiences, the human experience forms the basis of all other experiences.

LS begins with what is happening around us and it provides the majority of readers an opportunity to connect with the issues at hand. Among the many issues that are highlighted in this encyclical, almost every person can relate with at least one of the issues at hand. In this light then, it shows us that the ecological issues confronting humanity at this point in history are not purely religious in nature but human.

This common home of ours is need of healing and assistance. The poor and the marginalised more than others need our help and intervention. It is here that interreligious dialogue can play an integral role for the upliftment of the ‘down-trodden’.

*b) Rediscovering the Place of Man-Woman in the World*

The self-understanding of the human person occupies an important place in most of the religions. What is man’s origin, his purpose and destiny defines the crucial relationship between man and God. However, over the centuries, the self-understanding of man has progressed to an extent that today man has become the centre of the universe and that everything else revolves around him. In this pursuit for power, wealth, and authority, man has lost the sense on God and even to a point of replacing God with other “gods”. The rich and the affluent have come to understand that they are the masters of their own destiny. Egoism and self-centeredness have escalated to a point that one cannot feel the need for the other in society: “Modernity has been marked by an excessive anthropocentrism which today, under another guise, continues to stand in the way of shared understanding and of any effort to strengthen social bonds. The time has come to pay renewed attention to reality and the limits it imposes; this in turn is the condition for a sounder and more fruitful development of individuals and society” (LS 116).

In every religion, the purpose of man’s life on earth is a question which many have pondered about for thousands of years but yet the answer to which has often become elusive. We do not ask this question anymore because we seem to have

given up on the possibility that an answer can ever be found or perhaps they have learned to manage our own destiny. We have also relied on science to give us the answer but with its one-sided way of looking at things it does not look promising that an answer can ever be found in this way. In this context then, interreligious dialogue can play a role of restoring a correct vision of man and working towards restoring the place of God, man and the environment in a dialogical relationship.

It is to be pointed out that the foundation for Catholic Social Teaching is the proper understanding and value of the human person. Saint Pope John Paul II, points out rightly that the foundation of Catholic Social Teaching “is a correct view of the human person and of his unique value, inasmuch as ‘man ... is the only creature on earth which God willed for itself.’ God has imprinted his own image and likeness on man (cf. Gen 1:26), conferring upon him an incomparable dignity” (*Centesimus annus*, 11). The respect for the human person and the inalienable rights that man possesses is a shared heritage... yet another window for engaging in dialogue.

There is also the need for humanity to define its destiny with God being included. In the current world where we are seduced easily by consumerism and materialism, the spiritual values of simplicity, trust and modesty is quite easily set aside. The ‘pressures’ to keep up with the world leads also to greed: “When people become self-centered and self-enclosed, their greed increases. The emptier a person’s heart is, the more he or she needs things to buy, own and consume. It becomes almost impossible to accept the limits imposed by reality” (LS 205). Interreligious dialogue can be a ‘tool’ to help people rediscover the spiritual values and roots.

### *c) An Opportunity to Engage in Dialogue*

“Climate change is a global problem with grave implications: environmental, social, economic, political and for the distribution of goods. It represents one of the principal challenges facing humanity in our day” (LS 25). ‘Dialogue’ is a theme that is much reflected in LS and it is certainly the way of the Church in Asia. The dialogical nature of ecological concerns provides not only challenge to theological reflection but also that which creates a locus for integration: Dialogue for the sake of protecting nature, defending the poor, and building networks of respect and fraternity (LS 201). Dialogue requires patience, self-discipline and generosity: “Dialogue among the various sciences is likewise needed, since each can tend to become enclosed in its own language, while specialization leads to a certain isolation and the ‘absolutisation’ of its own field of knowledge” (LS 201).

Among the different levels of dialogue, the dialogue of life seeks to promote good relations with peoples of all faith and also seeking to encourage one another in the sharing of joys and troubles; we could also find opportunities to enter into

the dialogue of works where society can work together for the purpose of the well-being of all, especially the poor and the marginalised. The dialogue of theological exchanges provides the opportunity to understand in depth the respective religious heritages; many of the religious traditions celebrate the beauty of creation and therefore this could be the platform to celebrate the dialogue of spiritualities where adherents of the different religions brings to the table the riches of their life.

The dialogue with religions can only enrich our own God experience: “The Catholic Church rejects nothing of what is true and holy in these religions. She has a high regard for the manner of life and conduct, the precepts and doctrines which, although differing in many ways from her own teaching, nevertheless often reflect a ray of that truth which enlightens all men (NA 2). Asia is blessed with a variety of cultures and it can only enrich the way we express our beliefs. The dialogue with cultures makes it possible for us to celebrate our diversity which is not seen as a threat but rather a diversity that enriches the whole of humanity.

Finally, the dialogue with the poor provides us the opportunity of encounter God in the needy who are most often neglected and taken advantage off. Dialoguing with the poor can provide the impetus to not only encounter God but to be the prophetic voice that ‘raises the lowly from their misery’. In short, interreligious dialogue mobilizes all those who are on their way towards God or towards the Absolute.

#### *d) Making a Difference for the Common Good*

The principle of the common good has been an integral part to the Catholic Social Teaching. In this encyclical the words ‘common good’ appears thirty times, signifying the common destiny of working towards the preservation of the environment: “Underlying the principle of the common good is respect for the human person as such, endowed with basic and inalienable rights ordered to his or her integral development” (LS 157). The common good is not only for the purpose of providing a better quality of life but it is also crucial to the development of the human person who is inextricably connected with the environment.

Pope John XXIII defined the common good as “the sum total of social conditions which allow people, either as groups or as individuals, to reach their fulfillment more fully and more easily” (*Pacem in terris* 55). This good is common because only together as a community, and not simply as isolated individuals, is it possible to enjoy, achieve, and spread this good. All people are obligated to work towards making the common good a greater and greater reality. The environment is concern for the environment is indeed a common good.

LS provides not only an opportunity to engage in interreligious dialogue but the possibility to network with many other organisations that are committed to this cause of the environment: While making little steps in our own compounds

does make a difference, the opportunity to be a catalyst for change in a more profound way lies open before us: “While the existing world order proves powerless to assume its responsibilities, local individuals and groups can make a real difference” (LS 179). The common good is essential for human flourishing.

*e) Dialoguing for a New Narrative*

In the past, interreligious dialogue may have been just limited to trying to understand each other’s faith and traditions for a harmonious living. Perhaps the ideals of respect and peace may have been to goal for dialogue by discarding elements of fear, mistrust, and threat. It cannot be denied that such goals are far more a pressing need today than before. However, we also need a new narrative for dialogue and that has to be “a new dialogue about how we are shaping the future of our planet. We need a conversation which includes everyone, since the environmental challenge we are undergoing, and its human roots, concern and affect us all” (LS 14). All peoples are in the process of trying to cultivate a ‘new world’. We need a new narrative if world is to sustain: “What kind of world do we want to leave to those who come after us, to children who are now growing up?” (LS 160).

If NA opened the doors to engaging in dialogue by acknowledging the goodness the other religions of the world, LS now connects us as citizens of a common home that is in need of intervention. This connectedness is not just limited because we citizens of the world but because there is a spiritual reality that all of us are in search of. Fear must not prevent us from finding this new narrative.

In many of the encounters between Jesus and the people whom he came in contact with during His ministry, Jesus not only is able to re-write the narrative of the lives but He proposes a new narrative when engaging with them – one which unsettled the teachers of the Law of his time (e.g., the encounter with Zacchaeus, the Samaritan woman, etc.). LS provides us with the new narrative as Pope Francis calls for an ‘integral ecology’. A new way of doing ecology for the involvement of every person at every level.

## **Conclusion**

In concluding LS, Pope Francis reminds us all that “at the end, we will find ourselves face to face with the infinite beauty of God (cf. 1 Corinthians 13:12), and be able to read with admiration and happiness the mystery of the universe, which with us will share in unending plenitude... In the meantime, we come together to take charge of this home which has been entrusted to us” (LS 243, 244). There is no doubt that this encyclical has made an impact to such an extent within the Church and also significantly outside the Catholic Church. Environmentalists



and scientists have endorsed the document. Likewise, non-Catholic religious leaders are eager to discuss the encyclical, which has now become a topic of ecumenical and interreligious dialogue. The window of opportunity stands before us at this time. We need to work together and citizens of the world to make this common home a place to cherish us and for the generations to come.

## *Fratelli Tutti – An Interreligious Perspective*

REV. JAMES L. FREDERICKS, PH.D.\*

*Fratelli Tutti* is many things. In its critique of contemporary economic relations, the limitations it places on private property rights, its attention to the plight of immigrants, its rejection of populist politics and the death penalty as well as the doubt it casts on just war theory, *Fratelli Tutti* is certainly a social encyclical. Pope Francis confirms this interpretation of the Encyclical in FT 6. *Fratelli tutti* is also an encyclical very much aware of the challenge posed to the world by the COVID-19 pandemic (FT 7, 32). In addition to all this, Pope Francis has also given us the most thorough-going reflection on dialogue, ecumenical and interreligious, to be found in any encyclical since Paul VI's *Ecclesiam Suam* (1964).

The fact that Pope Francis has chosen to reflect on interreligious dialogue in a social encyclical is of enormous significance. Francis is saying that our work of dialogue must not be separated from the Church's mission of proclaiming the Gospel by building social solidarity, promoting justice, and accompanying the marginalized. If the promotion of justice and the common good constitutes a starting point for the ministry of interreligious dialogue, then our work with those who follow other religious paths constitutes a concrete *praxis* for the promotion of justice and the common good.

Pope Francis is telling us that dialogue is an essential ministry, required by the Gospel's summons to evangelization and the Spirit's prompting of us to service to the world.

In this essay, I wish to reflect on three issues of fundamental importance. First, I want to list the general features of a "dialogue of fraternity," which, I will argue, is Francis's signal contribution to the Church's understanding of interreligious dialogue. Second, I want to investigate how Francis sees the ministry of dialogue in relation to the Church's social ethics. Third, I will offer some observations on Pope Francis's important recognition of the significance of religious differences in our ministry of dialogue.

### **The Dialogue of Fraternity**

Every pope since the Second Vatican Council has given guidance on the Church's ministry of dialogue. Paul VI, when the document now known as *Nos-stra Aetate* was under siege from multiple sides during the Council, spoke of a

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“dialogue of salvation” in his groundbreaking *Ecclesiam suam* (1964). John Paul II, in his various writings, asked us to think of interreligious dialogue in light of the universal saving action of the Holy Spirit. Benedict XVI warned us about the dangers of relativism and advised us that the quest for truth in dialogue must be alloyed with the demands of charity.<sup>1</sup> *Fratelli Tutti* makes clear that Pope Francis is not an exception to this rule. What can be said of the pope’s vision of this ministry?

In FT 271, Pope Francis makes a startling statement: “Dialogue between the followers of other religions does not take place for the sake of diplomacy, consideration or tolerance.” That Pope Francis has little interest in academic debates about technicalities of doctrine has become increasingly apparent. But in FT 271, we see that the pope does not even believe that promoting tolerance among religious communities is the proper goal of our efforts. Instead, Francis draws our attention to his belief that “The different religions, based on their respect for each human person as a creature called to be a child of God, contribute significantly to building fraternity and defending justice in society.” He then cites the Bishops of India to the effect that, “the goal of dialogue is to establish friendship, peace and harmony, and to share spiritual and moral values and experiences in a spirit of truth and love.” The purpose of interreligious dialogue goes beyond the establishment of religious tolerance, however necessary and laudable that might be. Dialogue must lead to building new forms of social solidarity and the promotion of justice.

Although the pope does not use the phrase anywhere in the Encyclical, he is envisioning what is now being called a “dialogue of fraternity.”<sup>2</sup> *Fratelli Tutti* is an encyclical dedicated to “fraternity and social friendship.” References to fraternity appear ubiquitously in the text and in previous statements of this pope. The roots of fraternity go deep into Catholic Social Teachings and its affirmation of the Aristotelean doctrine of human sociality. More specifically, there are clear affinities linking Pope Francis’s notion of fraternity and the principle of “solidarity” in the social teachings of John Paul II.

In *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* 11-26, 35-40, John Paul II lays the groundwork for cultivating what he calls “the virtue of solidarity.” Solidarity is an ethical response to the bald fact of our increasing global interdependence. Pope Francis, in his “Message for the World Day of Peace (2014),” explicitly links his notion of

<sup>1</sup> For Paul VI, see *Ecclesiam Suam* 70ff. For John Paul II, see *Redemptoris Missio* 29. For Benedict XVI, see *Caritas in Veritatem* 26.

<sup>2</sup> To my knowledge, Pope Francis has never used the phrase, “dialogue of fraternity.” This language, however, has been taken up by the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue. For a report on one of the early dialogues of fraternity, see James L. Fredericks, “Suffering, Liberation, and Fraternity: A Buddhist-Christian Dialogue,” in *The Eastern Buddhist*, vol. 46 no. 1 (2017), pp. 1-10.

fraternity with solidarity as developed by John Paul II in SRS. Since peace is an “*opus solidaritatis*,” he writes, we are bound to acknowledge that “fraternity is its principal foundation” (2014 Message 4). Francis then goes on to cite *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* 38, where John Paul II defines solidarity as “a firm and preserving determination to commit oneself to the common good.” *Fratelli Tutti* connects the work of dialogue with the Church’s social teachings and “fraternity” is the bolt that fastens them securely to one another.

I recommend reading FT 281-282 as a program for a dialogue of fraternity. In FT 281, Francis tells us that “a journey of peace is possible between religions,” and then goes on to develop this hope by recalling an address he gave in Sarajevo to the city’s civil authorities. Given Sarajevo as a context, what does Francis mean by a “journey of peace” between religions? The pope certainly means that religious toleration in religiously plural communities is possible, a significant statement given the social disorder and religious strife this city has suffered in the past. But the peace the pope envisions goes far beyond mere tolerance among religious communities.

Francis clarifies his hope for a “journey of peace” in the subsequent paragraph, FT 282, in a way that sheds light on the meaning of a “dialogue of fraternity.” Here is the entire text:

282. It follows that “we believers need to find occasions to speak with one another and to act together for the common good and the promotion of the poor. This has nothing to do with watering down or concealing our deepest convictions when we encounter others who think differently than ourselves. . . . For the deeper, stronger and richer our own identity is, the more we will be capable of enriching others with our own proper contribution”. We believers are challenged to return to our sources, in order to concentrate on what is essential: worship of God and love for our neighbour, lest some of our teachings, taken out of context, end up feeding forms of contempt, hatred, xenophobia or negation of others. The truth is that violence has no basis in our fundamental religious convictions, but only in their distortion.

I will offer four observations.

First, this “journey of peace” that is possible among religious communities requires not only dialogue but also collaboration. We are “to speak with one another and to act together for the common good and the promotion of the poor.” A dialogue of fraternity, therefore, reaches for religious tolerance, but cannot be satiated by it. Tolerance sometimes indicates merely a passive and begrudging absence of overt conflict. Francis’s ambitions in connecting dialogue with fraternity go far beyond mere tolerance to a demand for active collaboration.

Second, this dialogue, and the collaboration that issues from it, “has nothing to do with watering down or concealing our deepest convictions.” In fact, a “jour-

ney of peace” among religious communities requires us to be firmly grounded in our own religious tradition. This is because, “the deeper, stronger and richer our own identity is, the more we will be capable of enriching others with our own proper contribution.”

Third, the “journey of peace” among religious believers requires us to “return to our sources.” The pope, apparently, sees interreligious dialogue as a hermeneutic enterprise. The insistence on *ressourcement* means that the enrichment that goes on within the dialogue (or “journey”) will be mutual. The return to sources also implies that interreligious dialogue requires us to take the “hermeneutic turn.” The encounter with the dialogue partner will defamiliarize our sources and require us to interpret these sources in new ways. Optimally, we will return to our sources and read them anew with the dialogue partner. In FT 282, Francis is reflecting his roots in Latin American theology and pastoral practice. The pope sees dialogue and collaboration as a *praxis* that leads the Church into a hermeneutic circle that is completed only in the revision of *praxis*. Given the tenor of *Fratelli Tutti* as a whole, I think it safe to say that the revision the pope is calling for starts with our understanding of our dialogue partner and extends to our understanding of our own tradition and does not stop there. The revision must go on to include our collaborative efforts at promoting the common good with our dialogue partners. For Francis, therefore, the hermeneutic character of interreligious dialogue should not be taken as an academic exercise that can be limited to merely the revision of our theological understanding. This point becomes clear when the pope states that the *ressourcement* is necessary “in order to concentrate on what is essential,” which, for a Christian at least, is the “worship of God and love for our neighbour.”

Fourth, the hermeneutic character of interreligious dialogue also means that this ministry acts as a corrective within religious communities and also among religious communities. By requiring us to concentrate on essentials, dialogue partners will be less likely to take their own teachings “out of context,” thereby “feeding forms of contempt, hatred, xenophobia or negation of others.” Here again, the pope’s Latin American roots are evident. Doing theology requires a critical reflection on *praxis* that is *self-critical*.

## Dialogue and Social Ethics

*Fratelli Tutti* marks a new stage in the historical development of the Church’s social ethics. Starting with Leo XIII’s *Rerum Novarum* and its concern for the exploitation of labor by industrial capitalism, the social encyclicals have criticized totalitarianism, championed human rights and the dignity of the human person, defended religious freedom, mounted critiques of both communism and capitalism as economic systems, called attention to the needs of developing nations and

the inequities of unregulated markets, and rejected the arms race. With *Laudato Si* (2015), Francis added an encyclical given over to ethical concern for the environment to the canon of the social teachings. Now, with *Fratelli Tutti*, Francis has included interreligious dialogue on the list of topics addressed by the social teachings.

Given the complexities of both the social teachings and the ministry of dialogue, a number of comments are in order. First, at a minimum, the linking of dialogue and fraternity means that the ministry of dialogue must be pursued in accordance with the basic principles of the social teachings as guidelines. These principles include the innate dignity and sociality of the human person, solidarity, subsidiarity, the promotion of the common good and integral human development.<sup>3</sup>

Second, in bringing the ministry of dialogue squarely under the aegis of the Church's social teachings, Pope Francis is underscoring the unavoidably political consequences of interreligious dialogue. The political character of dialogue has not always been sufficiently recognized, especially in the academic exchanges that often dominate our conversations. The political import of a dialogue of fraternity, in contrast, will be hard to deny. For example, a dialogue of fraternity among Catholics and Muslims in Europe about the needs of immigrants will have repercussions for political life in the European Union beyond the two religious communities. A dialogue of fraternity between Catholics and Buddhists in the United States about homelessness will have its own political repercussions. Some years ago, I had a conversation with a well-educated Chinese woman who is a member of an unauthorized Protestant house-church in Beijing. She predicted that, in the future, people in the Chinese countryside will continue with their religious traditions. Buddhism will find itself a religion for relatively well-off people in the urban centers. Christianity, in contrast, will be a religion for the urban poor. If this prediction is accurate, how will this affect a dialogue of fraternity in China? We must also ask if this question is particularly useful, given the fact that a dialogue of fraternity, as proposed by Pope Francis, is not currently possible in China because of the political implications of this type of dialogue.

As a third point, let me observe that, with *Fratelli Tutti*, Pope Francis has built a bridge connecting two important dicasteries within the Roman Curia: The Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue (PCID) and the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development (DPIHD). At a minimum, *Fratelli Tutti* requires us to think about both interreligious dialogue and social justice in new ways. Those who would promote the integral development of peoples must look

<sup>3</sup> See, the *Compendium of Catholic Social Teachings*, available on the Vatican website.

on interreligious dialogue as an important *praxis* for pursuing this goal. Those who would engage in the Church's ministry of interreligious dialogue must look on the integral development of peoples and the promotion of the common good as an essential starting point for their work. How might these curial services support the local churches in bringing Catholics together with their neighbors who follow other religious paths in dialogues about climate change and its impact on the most vulnerable in society? How might these dialogues of fraternity in the local churches inform a joint document from PCID and DPIHD on integral human development from an interreligious perspective?

### ***Fratelli tutti* and the Honoring of Religious Differences**

Implicit in Pope Francis's commitment to the Church's ministry of dialogue is a conviction regarding the value of religious differences. Honoring religious differences, in fact, would seem to be a virtue required by any dialogue of fraternity. At various places in the Encyclical, Pope Francis makes observations regarding the unity of religions in "our common Father or "the Father of All" (FT 46 ,60, 271, 272, 281). More intriguing, however, are the passages in the Encyclical where the pope seems to take a pass on the opportunity to speculate about a foundation for interreligious dialogue in a transcendental unity of the religions. The best example, in this regard, is FT 277. The paragraph reads as follows.

277. The Church esteems the ways in which God works in other religions, and "rejects nothing of what is true and holy in these religions. She has a high regard for their manner of life and conduct, their precepts and doctrines which... often reflect a ray of that truth which enlightens all men and women". Yet we Christians are very much aware that "if the music of the Gospel ceases to resonate in our very being, we will lose the joy born of compassion, the tender love born of trust, the capacity for reconciliation that has its source in our knowledge that we have been forgiven and sent forth. If the music of the Gospel ceases to sound in our homes, our public squares, our workplaces, our political and financial life, then we will no longer hear the strains that challenge us to defend the dignity of every man and woman". Others drink from other sources. For us the wellspring of human dignity and fraternity is in the Gospel of Jesus Christ. From it, there arises, "for Christian thought and for the action of the Church, the primacy given to relationship, to the encounter with the sacred mystery of the other, to universal communion with the entire human family, as a vocation of all".

Pope Francis begins by recognizing what John Paul II established: Catholics recognize that "God works in other religions." He then quotes the well-known language of NA 2: the Church "rejects nothing of what is true and holy in these

religions. She has a high regard for their manner of life and conduct, their precepts and doctrines which... often reflect a ray of that truth which enlightens all men and women.”-This, of course, is John Paul II’s point of departure in developing his theology of religions and, by extension, for grounding his vision of interreligious dialogue. John Paul taught that the Spirit’s work is not restricted to the interior mysteries of the human heart. The Spirit works in a visible way in human cultures and human religions.

FT 277, in effect, summarizes the development of the Catholic Church’s official teaching on the meaning and status of other religions since the Council, making clear to his readership, which is not intended to be restricted to Catholics or even Christians in general (FT 6), that Christians are animated by “the music of the Gospel,” which brings them a “tender love born of trust,” and a “capacity for reconciliation” rooted in the knowledge that they have been forgiven and “sent forth.” This “music of the Gospel” challenges Christians to “defend the dignity of every man and woman.”<sup>4</sup> Then, after this eloquent affirmation of the Christian’s responsibility to the Gospel, Francis simply observes, “Others drink from other sources.”

Taken at face value, FT 277 is a remarkable statement. In chapter eight of *Fratelli Tutti*, the pope is holding up “religions at the service of fraternity in our world.” There is no appeal to monotheism as the basis for affirming a universal humanity. There is no mention of the universal action of the Holy Spirit, interiorly within the human heart, let alone visibly within the teachings and practices of the many religions of the world. In chapter eight of *Fratelli tutti*, the pope is holding up “religions at the service of fraternity in our world.” Francis is recognizing that Christians find their way to join with other religious believers in bonds of fraternity by responding to the “music of the Gospel.” Buddhists, Muslims, Jews, Hindus and all our other friends have their own religious motives for dialogue and collaboration. They “drink from other sources.” Buddhists, for example, join their Christian friends in the service of fraternity motivated by a practice of wisdom-compassion (*prajña-karuna*), which, to me, seems different, in a theologically interesting way, from the love that is commanded of Christians. Christians interested in promoting the common good will have much to gain from a dialogue of fraternity with Engaged Buddhists. Before we say that Jews, in their service to the common good, are responding to the grace of the Holy Spirit, we should learn from them about their on-going discussion of *tikkun olam* (the healing of the world).<sup>5</sup>

<sup>4</sup> The pope is quoting remarks he gave in an address to an ecumenical prayer service in Riga, Latvia.

<sup>5</sup> Elliot N. Dorff, *The Way into Tikkun Olam* (Repairing the World), (Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights Publishing, 2005).



The deep respect for and even optimism about religious differences we see in FT 277 are anticipated in FT 8. Here, Pope Francis states his enduring hope that “by acknowledging the dignity of each human person, we can contribute to the rebirth of a universal aspiration to fraternity.” Try as we might, “no one can face life in isolation.” We are “fellow travelers” who share the “same flesh” and the “same earth.” Yet each of us brings “the richness of his or her beliefs and convictions, each of us with his or her own voice, brothers and sisters all.” Differences, and in a particular way, religious differences, would seem to be a basis for fraternity, not an obstacle to it. This insight deserves much further development.

*Fratelli Tutti* has grafted the Church’s ministry of interreligious dialogue onto its social teachings. The social teachings can now be read from the vantage point of our work in dialogue. Our work in dialogue, of course, must now be guided fundamentally by our social teachings.

## MESSAGES TO FOLLOWERS OF OTHER RELIGIOUS TRADITIONS

### TO JAINS FOR MAHAVIR JANMA KALYANAK DIWAS - 2020\*

#### *Christians and Jains: To promote a culture of conviviality together*

Dear Jain Friends,

The Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue extends its warmest greetings to all of you as you commemorate the 2618th Birth Anniversary of Tirthankar Mahavir on 6 April this year. May the celebrations centred on this feast reinforce the spirit of togetherness among you and fill your families and communities with peace and joy!

Taking forward our cherished tradition of sharing few thoughts with you on a relevant theme on this occasion, this year we wish to reflect on how we, Christians and Jains, can promote together a culture of conviviality for a harmonious coexistence and prosperity of all in the world.

Conviviality is *living together* with an attitude of sharing life's goods and gifts with one another - joyously and generously. It displays sharing of resources: natural, human, material and spiritual. It is living in agreement but also *living with differences*, while respecting diversities: ethnic, religious, social and cultural. It is about living in harmony with nature and ensuring equality and justice for all. It is also *working together* for the common good. In the words of Pope Francis, conviviality is "a sure barometer for measuring the health of relationships" (*General Audience*, 11 November, 2015) among humans and, between humans and nature.

With the rising indifference and insensitivity humans show towards others rendering harmonious co-living difficult even in families and communities, cultivating conviviality becomes a necessity and a responsibility of the entire human family. Tirthankar Mahavir taught, "Have benevolence towards all beings" (Lesson 7, Sutra 11). Christianity teaches us, "Love your neighbour as yourself (Holy Bible, *Mathew* 22: 39); "If you have two shirts, give one to the poor. If you have food, share it with those who are hungry" (*Luke* 3: 11).

Both our religious traditions call for sparing no effort in building universal and fraternal conviviality everywhere. Along with families, the sanctuaries of life, where respect for the transcendent dignity and diversity of the other, trust, justice, kindness, sharing, cooperation, responsibility, solidarity, compassion for the poor and the needy and care for nature are easily learned and taught, all religious leaders,

\* <https://www.pcinterreligious.org/message-feast-mahavir-janma-kalyanak-diwas>

educational institutions and the mass media need to play a vital role in promoting a culture of conviviality, using all available means.

As believers rooted in our own respective religious traditions and as persons with concerns for the welfare of humanity, may we, Christians and Jains, promote gestures and concrete actions of conviviality in our homes and communities and may we, joining hands with people of other faiths and of good will, nurture a culture of conviviality whereby people may live together in peace and harmony, with love and happiness!

Wish you all a happy feast of Mahavir Janma Kalyanak Diwas!

From the Vatican, 8 March 2020

Miguel Ángel Cardinal Ayuso Guixot, MCCJ  
*President*

Rev. Msgr. Indunil Kodithuwakku Janakaratanne Kankanamalage  
*Secretary*

## **TO BUDDHISTS FOR THE FEAST OF VESAKH/HANAMATSURI 2020\***

### ***Buddhists and Christians: Constructing a Culture of Compassion and Fraternity***

Dear Buddhists Friends,

1. On behalf of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, we extend our heartfelt greetings and good wishes to you and to all Buddhist communities around the world as you celebrate the feast of *Vesakh/Hanamatsuri*. For the last twenty-four years, the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue has sent greetings to you on this happy occasion. Since this year marks the twenty-fifth anniversary of this traditional message, we would like to renew our bond of friendship and collaboration with the various traditions you represent.

2. This year, we would like to reflect with you on the theme “*Buddhists and Christians: Constructing a Culture of Compassion and Fraternity*”. We are mindful of the high value our respective religious traditions give to compassion and fraternity in our spiritual quest and in our witness and service to a wounded humanity and a wounded earth.

\* <https://www.pcinterreligious.org/messages-for-the-feast-of-vesakh>

3. The *Document on Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together* states: “Authentic teachings of religions invite us to remain rooted in the values of peace; to defend the values of mutual understanding, human fraternity and harmonious coexistence”. Meeting the Supreme Buddhist Patriarch in Thailand last November, His Holiness Pope Francis expressed that “we can grow and live together as good “neighbors” and thus be able to promote among the followers of our religions the development of new charitable projects, capable of generating and multiplying practical initiatives on the path of fraternity, especially with regard to the poor and our much-abused common home. In this way, we will contribute to the formation of a culture of compassion, fraternity and encounter, both here and in other parts of the world” (cf. *Visiting the Supreme Buddhist Patriarch, Bangkok, 21 November 2019*).

4. The Feast of *Vesakh/ Hanamatsuri* prompts us to recall that Prince Siddhartha set out in search of wisdom by shaving his head and renouncing his princely status. He traded his garments of Benares silk for the simple robe of a monk. His noble gesture reminds us of Saint Francis of Assisi: he cut his hair and traded his fine clothes for the simple robe of a mendicant because he wanted to follow Jesus, who “emptied himself, taking the form of a slave” (Philippians 2:7) and had “nowhere to lay his head” (Matthew 8:20). Their example and that of their followers inspire us to a life of detachment in view of what is most important. Thus, in consequence, we may more freely devote ourselves to fostering a culture of compassion and fraternity for the alleviation of human and ecological suffering.

5. Everything is related. Interdependence brings us back to the theme of compassion and fraternity. In a spirit of gratitude for your friendship, we humbly ask you to accompany and support your Christian friends in fostering loving kindness and fraternity in the world today. As we, Buddhists and Christians, learn from one another how to become ever more mindful and compassionate, may we continue to look for ways to work together to make our interconnectedness a source of blessing for all sentient beings and for the planet, our common home.

6. We believe that to guarantee the continuity of our universal solidarity, our shared journey requires educational process. To this end, a global event will take place on 15 October 2020 on the theme “Reinventing the Global Compact on Education”. “This meeting will rekindle our dedication for and with young people, renewing our passion for a more open and inclusive education, including patient listening, constructive dialogue and better mutual understanding” (Pope Francis, *Message for the Launch of the Global Compact on Education, 12 September 2019*). We invite you to work together with all to promote this initiative, individually and within your communities, to nurture a new humanism. We are also happy to see that Buddhists and Christians are drawing on deeply held values and working together to uproot the causes of social ills in various parts of the world.

7. Let us pray for all those who are affected by the coronavirus pandemic and for those who are caregivers. Let us encourage our faithful to live this difficult moment with hope, compassion, and charity.

8. Dear Buddhist friends, in this spirit of friendship and collaboration, we wish you once again a peaceful and joyful feast of Vesakh/Hanamatsuri.

From the Vatican, 8 April 2020

Miguel Ángel Cardinal Ayuso Guixot, MCCJ

*President*

Rev. Msgr. Indunil Kodithuwakku Janakaratne Kankanamalage

*Secretary*

## **TO MUSLIMS FOR THE MONTH OF RAMADAN AND 'ID AL-FITR 1441 H. / 2020 A.D.\***

### ***Christians and Muslims: Protecting together the places of worship***

Dear Muslim brothers and sisters,

The month of Ramadan is so central in your religion and therefore dear to you at personal, familial and social levels. It is a time for spiritual healing and growth, of sharing with the poor, of strengthening bonds with relatives and friends.

For us, your Christian friends, it is a propitious time to further strengthen our relationships with you, by greeting you, meeting you on this occasion and, where possible, by sharing in an *iftar* with you. Ramadan and *Jd al-Fitr* thus are special occasions to foster fraternity between Christians and Muslims. It is in this spirit that the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue offers its prayerful best wishes and hearty congratulations to you all.

The thoughts we like to share with you this year following our cherished tradition are about the protection of the places of worship.

As we all know, the places of worship occupy an important place in Christianity and Islam, and in other religions as well. For both Christians and Muslims, churches and mosques are spaces reserved for prayer, personal and communitarian alike. They are constructed and furnished in a way that favours silence, reflection

\* <https://www.pcinterreligious.org/messages-for-the-feast-of-ramadan>

and meditation. They are spaces where one can go deep in himself/herself, so favouring for God-experience in silence. A place of worship of any religion therefore is “a house of prayer” (Isaiah, 56,7).

Places of worship are also spaces for *spiritual hospitality*, where believers of other religions also join for some special ceremonies like weddings, funerals, feasts of the community etc. While they participate in the events in silence and with due respect to the religious observances of the believers of that particular religion, they also savour the hospitality accorded to them. Such practice is a privileged witness to what unites believers, without diminishing or denying what distinguishes them.

In this regard, it is worthwhile to recall what Pope Francis said when he made a visit to the *Heydar Aliyev* Mosque, in Baku (Azerbaijan) on Sunday, 2 October 2016: “Meeting one another in fraternal friendship in this place of prayer is a powerful sign, one that shows the harmony which religions can build together, based on personal relations and on the good will of those responsible”.

In the context of recent attacks on churches, mosques and synagogues by wicked persons who seem to perceive the places of worship as a privileged target for their blind and senseless violence, it is worth noting what the Document on “Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together”, signed by Pope Francis and the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar, Dr. Ahmad Al-Tayyeb, in Abu Dhabi, on 4 February 2019, said: “The protection of places of worship - synagogues, churches and mosques - is a duty guaranteed by religions, human values, laws and international agreements. Every attempt to attack places of worship or threaten them by violent assaults, bombings or destruction, is a deviation from the teachings of religions as well as a clear violation of international law”.

While appreciating the efforts done by the international community at different levels for the protection of the places of worship worldwide, it is our hope that our mutual esteem, respect and cooperation will help strengthen the bonds of sincere friendship, and enable our communities to safeguard the places of worship to assure for coming generations the fundamental freedom to profess one’s own beliefs.

With renewed esteem and fraternal greetings, in the name of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, we convey friendly wishes for a fruitful month of Ramadan and a joyous *Id al-Fitr*.

From the Vatican, 17 April 2020

Miguel Ángel Cardinal Ayuso Guixot, MCCJ

*President*

Rev. Msgr. Indunil Kodithuwakku Janakarathne Kankanamalage

*Secretary*

## TO HINDUS FOR THE FEAST OF DEEPAVALI\*

### *Christians and Hindus: Rekindling Positivity and Hope during the Covid-19 Pandemic and Beyond*

Dear Hindu Friends,

The Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue offers its warmest greetings and best wishes to you on the occasion of Deepavali, which you are observing this year on 14 November. Amid the difficulties of the Covid-19 pandemic, may this very meaningful feast dispel every cloud of fear, anxiety and worry, and fill your hearts and minds with the light of friendship, generosity and solidarity!

With this year's Deepavali Message, the Pontifical Council charged with promoting interreligious dialogue and cooperation continues its cherished tradition of sending you festive greetings and a few timely reflections. This is the twenty fifth of such Messages, which seek to acknowledge, maintain and cherish the good things present in both of our religious traditions and spiritual patrimonies (cf. *Nostra Aetate*, 2). Albeit a small step in the direction of interreligious appreciation and cooperation, these Messages have, over the years, enhanced and promoted Hindu-Christian dialogue and harmony at various levels. We readily continue this noble tradition for the sake of forging, fostering and furthering mutual relationships between Hindus and Christians as a means of working together for our good and for the good of all humanity.

This year, in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic, we wish to share with you some thoughts on the need to encourage a positive spirit and hope for the future, even in the face of apparently insurmountable obstacles, socio-economic, political and spiritual challenges, and widespread anxiety, uncertainty and fear.

Our efforts to do so are surely based upon our conviction that God, who created us and sustains us, will never abandon us. An encouragement to be optimistic may well sound unrealistic to those who have lost their loved ones or livelihoods or both. Even the boldest hope and positivity can dissipate in the tragic situations caused by the present pandemic and its grave effects on daily life, the economy, healthcare, education and religious practices. Yet it is precisely trust in God's providence that inspires us to remain optimistic and to work to rekindle hope in the midst of our societies.

The pandemic has in fact brought a number of positive changes in our way of thinking and living, despite the unprecedented suffering it has caused worldwide

\* <https://www.pcinterreligious.org/messages-for-the-feast-of-deepavali>

and the lockdowns that have disrupted our normal life. Experiences of suffering and a sense of responsibility for one another have brought our communities together in solidarity and concern, in acts of kindness and compassion for the suffering and those in need. Such signs of solidarity have led us to appreciate more deeply the importance of coexistence, the fact that we belong to one another and that we need one another for the well-being of all and that of our common home. As Pope Francis has rightly noted, “solidarity today is the road to take towards a post pandemic world, towards the healing of our interpersonal and social ills”, and “a way of coming out of the crisis better” (*General Audience*, 2 September 2020).

Our respective religious traditions teach us to remain positive and hopeful even amid adversity. In cherishing those religious traditions and teachings, may we strive in the midst of this global crisis to spread what Pope Francis delights in calling “the contagion of hope” (*Urbi et Orbi Message*, 12 April 2020) through gestures of care, affection, kindness, gentleness and compassion which are more contagious than the coronavirus itself.

Based on those religious traditions and teachings, our shared values and our commitment to the betterment of humanity, may we, as Christians and Hindus, join all people of good will in working to build a culture of positivity and hope in the heart of our societies, not only in these difficult days but also in the future that lies before us.

To all of you we wish a Happy Deepavali!

From the Vatican, 26 October 2020

Miguel Ángel Cardinal Ayuso Guixot, MCCJ

*President*

Rev. Msgr. Indunil Kodithuwakku Janakaratne Kankanamalage

*Secretary*



## MESSAGE FOR GURU NANAK PRAKASH DIWAS 2020\*

### *Christians and Sikhs: Nurturing a Culture of Hope in Pandemic times*

Dear Sikh Friends,

The Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue (PCID), most fraternally, extends its prayerful good wishes and festal greetings to you on the occasion of Guru Nanak Prakash Diwas celebrated on 30 November this year. May the celebration of this sacred festival, which commemorates the 'birth of light' in the person of Sri Guru Nanak Dev, usher in, in these difficult times of coronavirus pandemic, a light of renewed hope among you, and peace and joy in your lives, families and communities!

On this tenth anniversary - since the Pontifical Council formally and directly connected with you through its greetings cum message on Prakash Diwas - we thank you for your valued friendship and collaboration, and convey to you in particular, our appreciation for the humanitarian services that are generously being rendered by the Sikh community in different parts of the world to people affected by the current pandemic.

The largescale contagion of Covid-19, besides being a health-related pandemic, has affected almost all aspects of our lives – social, economic, emotional and religious – and given rise to many uncertainties and anxieties, resulting in a visibly widespread sense of helplessness and hopelessness among people. In this worldwide pandemic situation, our cherished tradition of sharing with you a few reflections on this occasion, most opportunely focuses this year on the need for all of us, in particular for the Sikhs and the Christians, to nurture a culture of hope among people.

Hope, in the words of Pope Francis, is “the humble virtue, the virtue that courses beneath the water of life that keeps us from drowning in the many difficulties” (*Morning Meditation in the Chapel of the Domus Sanctae Marthae*, 17 March, 2016) we face in life. Despite despairs and desperations that we experience, it is hope that makes us go forward. It does not let 'clouds of gloom' envelop us and 'passivity' assail and prevail over us. Evoking resilience and responsibility, it enables us to begin afresh with confidence. The 'virtue of hope' easily unites humans, rebuilds confidence and reignites the passion to live. Persons displaying hope send out the message that 'contagion of hope' is possible and necessary for the present and future of humanity. The unprecedented spirit of service and solidarity, by in-

\* <https://www.pcinterreligious.org/message-feast-guru-nanak-prakash-diwas>

dividuals, communities and various groups including interreligious groups that we have witnessed during these pandemic times, is a profound and sure indicator that building ‘a culture of hope’ involves people of all creeds and cultures.

For us believers, hope springs from our religious conviction that God who created us and who sustains us will never abandon us and that “we are part of one another, that we are brothers and sisters of one another” (Pope Francis, *Extraordinary Moment of Prayer in Time of Epidemic*, 27 March, 2020; cfr. Encyclical Letter *Fratelli Tutti*, 3 October, 2020, 32) and therefore, we are responsible for one another and for our ‘common home’. This conviction summons us to be ‘sowers of hope’ in our families, neighbourhoods and communities. It must make us believers restless till we reach out, with generous acts of kindness and compassion, to awaken the much needed hope in our brothers and sisters who are more affected than we are by the disastrous effects of the pandemic, in particular those who seem to have lost hopes due to the loss of their loved ones, livelihoods, jobs and dreams for a secure future. Solidarity witnessed during these days, moreover, needs to be perseveringly and progressively strengthened so that it becomes an essential part of our lifestyle and the cornerstone of the ‘culture of hope’ that we aim to build.

As believers who are steadfast in our respective religious convictions and as persons with shared values and shared concerns for the well-being of all, particularly those who feel despondent and discouraged in these difficult times, may we Christians and Sikhs do all we can, individually and collectively, and together with others, towards promoting a ‘culture of hope’ in society by becoming more and more and encouraging others as well to become “beacons of hope, as promoters and guarantors of fraternity” (Pope Francis, *Visit to the Supreme Buddhist Patriarch, Wat Ratchabophit Sathit Maha Simaram Temple, Bangkok, Thailand, 21 November, 2019*).

Wish you all once again a serene and joyous Prakash Diwas of Sri Guru Nanak Dev Ji!

From the Vatican, 4 December 2020

Miguel Ángel Cardinal Ayuso Guixot, MCCJ  
*President*

Rev. Msgr. Indunil Kodithuwakku Janakaratne Kankanamalage  
*Secretary*

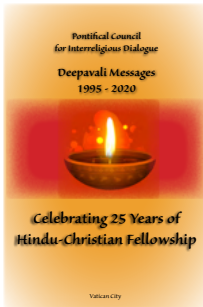
## PUBLICATIONS

### *Publicazioni*

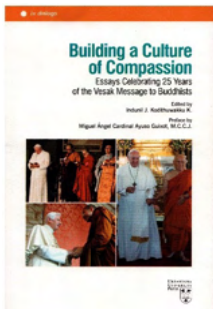
In 2020 the 25th anniversary of the wishes messages sent by the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue to Buddhists and Hindus was celebrated. For this occasion, our Dicastery collected them and published in English in the two following volumes:

2020 a salué le 25<sup>ème</sup> anniversaire des messages de voeux envoyés par le Conseil Pontifical pour le Dialogue Interreligieux aux Bouddhistes et aux Hindous. Pour cette occasion, notre Dicastère les a rassemblés et édités dans les deux volumes suivants publiés en anglais:

Nel 2020 si è celebrato il XXV anniversario dei messaggi augurali inviati dal Pontificio Consiglio per il Dialogo Interreligioso ai buddisti e agli induisti, che, per tale ricorrenza, il nostro Dicastero ha raccolto e pubblicato nei due seguenti volumi editi in lingua inglese:



1. Pontifical Council for Interreligious Council, *Deepavali Messages 1995-2020. Celebrating 25 Years of Hindu-Christian Fellowship*, 2020 Vatican City.



2. I. J. Kodithiwakku K. (ed.), *Building a Culture of Compassion. Essays Celebrating 25 Years of the Vesak Message to Buddhists*, Urbaniana University Press, 2020 Vatican City.

Both volumes can be requested from this Pontifical Council by paying a shipment contribution. For information, send a mail to: [dialogue@interrel.va](mailto:dialogue@interrel.va)

Les deux volumes peuvent être demandés à ce Conseil Pontifical en payant une contribution pour l'expédition. Pour information, envoyer un mail à [dialogue@interrel.va](mailto:dialogue@interrel.va)

Entrambi i volumi si possono richiedere presso questo Pontificio Consiglio versando un contributo per la spedizione. Per informazioni, inviare una mail a [dialogo@interrel.va](mailto:dialogo@interrel.va)

**Books Received**  
**January – December 2020**

**ARABIC**

*Al-Muṣḥaf al-Sharif*. Attributed to ʿUthmān bin ʿAffān, the copy at the Topkapı Palace Museum, prepared for publication by Tayyar Altikulaç; translated into Arabic by Salih Sadawi and into English by Semiramis Çavuşoğlu; preface by Ekmeleddin İhsanoğlu; foreword by Halit Eren, IRCICA, Istanbul 1428/2007 (Critical editions series; no. 2).

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