

Among Ourselves

Worldwide Conflicts And Interfaith Solidarity For Peace

The Bishops-Ulama Conference of Mindanao in the Philippines began seven years ago (July 16, 1996) with the growing consciousness among the leaders of the Muslim Ulama and Catholic and Christian Bishops to be the sign of unity among themselves and to be in solidarity with the people of Mindanao, in their war torn land. This prophetic move as not to end there, it became an Asian reality with the involvement of the Office of the President for Special Concerns (OPASC), the Office of the Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process (OPAP) and the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences in the preparatory processes for the First Asian Gathering of Muslim Ulama and Christian Bishops in Asia with a total number of 121 delegates from 14 different countries.

It was an occasion for all of us to understand the nature of the growing worldwide conflicts that have become more evident in the Post September 11 era. We realised that there was an urgent need to be in solidarity with our suffering people, the victims of both certain dehumanising dimensions of globalisation and the continuous conflict due to mounting insurgency and terrorism of sorts. Our time of prayer together was a manifestation of our earnestness in seeking together the ways of the Almighty God as the only path to peace and true human solidarity. It was indeed appropriate that we chose as the theme of our Final Message at the end of the Conference – A Time for Peace, A Time to Build. Our joint endeavour speaks boldly of the solidarity that can flow from our friendship and fellowship. It was the sincere hope of the Gathering that all the delegates will take with them the insights gained and the wealth of experiences that were nurtured during our five very fruitful and meaningful days in Manila.

Right after the First Asian Gathering of Muslim Ulama and Christian Bishops in Asia, the Office for Human Development of the Federation of the Asian Bishops' Conferences (FABC – OHD) organized a two-day symposium in celebration of the 40th Anniversary of *Pacem in Terris*. During these two days, the participants reflected on the relevance of *Pacem in Terris* in our troubled world today.

We therefore take this opportunity share with you in this issue of the INFO some of the key papers and the Joint Statement of the First Asian Gathering of Muslim Ulama and Christian Bishops in Asia.

Br. Anthony Rogers, FSC
Editor

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A Time For Peace, A Time To Build

A Joint Statement of the First Gathering of Muslim Ulama and Christian Bishops in Asia

“The effect of righteousness is peace.” – Isaiah 32:17

“Enter into Peace completely (sincerely).” – Al Quran

Preamble

We, religious leaders participating in the First Asian Gathering of Muslim Ulama and Christian Bishops,¹ meeting in Manila from 18 to 21 August 2003, in a spirit of inter-religious dialogue and profound solidarity and prayer, while invoking the help of Almighty God, acknowledge and affirm that:

Situation

We, in Asia, are in the midst of deep internal conflicts among the peoples of our countries, conflicts often ascribed to religion and that are prolonged, intense and violent armed struggles all too often affecting belligerents and innocents alike. The disharmonies and internecine conflicts manifested in this violence are rooted in misunderstanding of other religions, peoples’ history, culture, identity, and ethnicity and in our social, political, or economic systems, the lack of harmony between “majorities” and “minorities,” and between governments and people. This is also manifested in the prejudicial presentation of certain religions by the media.

Our Responsibility

We have sometimes conveniently and mistakenly associated this lack of harmony with our personal religious affiliations, with our religious beliefs, and our most profound religious convictions. We must acknowledge in humility our failure to recognize and rectify our own prejudices which directly and indirectly contribute to the prolongation and amplification of social discord.

We also recognize that our religions have been used and often abused by those whose motives are selfish and even immoral. For many centuries, religions and ideologies have been used to justify acts of discord. We must rectify this by a consistent expression of our Muslim and Christian religious values.

As peacemakers, our responsibility is to promote and develop a culture of peace, resolve and transform conflict so as to create conditions for positive social change.

Affirm Religions of Peace

We therefore take this gathering of Muslim Ulama and Christian Bishops, being all children of Abraham, as an historic moment of grace to reaffirm our common conviction that our faiths, Islam and Christianity, are religions of peace which worship the One Merciful and Almighty God.

The unity of belief in Almighty and the common values of worship exemplified by the Prophets of God urge us to recognize the creative handiwork of Almighty God imprinted in us in our basic human dignity. We recognize that in our common dignity we also share and experience a common suffering. From the suffering of our peoples comes our call to Peace.

Condemn Violence

We, as believers of religions of peace called to proclaim, live and work for peace, and condemn all forms of extremism, oppression and terrorism. We believe that these acts are direct assaults on our shared and common dignity.

Pillars of Peace

We manifest our faith in Almighty God and in cooperation with our brothers and sisters by reaffirming our commitment to the pursuit of:

Truth that recognizes the dignity and frailty of every human being;

Justice based on God’s righteousness and respect for human rights and duties without discrimination;

Sincerity in our relationship with Almighty God and among ourselves;

Love that includes compassion and forgiveness of each other’s transgressions and reconciliation;

Freedom which is God’s gift exercised in the spirit of love and responsibility and inherent in our nature as human beings; and,

Prayer that gives us guidance and strength to live by the will of Almighty God and makes us instruments of peace.

The Open Doors of Dialogue

We pledge ourselves to open wider the doors of dialogue and to continually engage each other in an authentic dialogue of life and concrete action among Muslims and Christians in Asia. This dialogue can include dialogues of life, spirituality and concrete action.

¹ One hundred twenty-one (121) delegates who are Bishops and Ulama come from Bangladesh, Hong Kong, Japan, India, Indonesia, Libya, Malaysia, Myanmar, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Taiwan, Thailand, Uzbekistan, and the Philippines.

ASIAN GATHERING OF MUSLIM ULAMA AND CHRISTIAN BISHOPS

**Theme: Seeking Peace And Development Through An Authentic Christian
And Muslim Dialogue Of Life In Asia**

*Westin Philippine Plaza Hotel, PICC Complex
Manila, Philippines
18-20 August 2003*

Keynote Address

“Conflicts Worldwide Especially in Asia Affecting Christian-Muslim Relations”

What Peace and Development Are

In this historic Asian gathering of ulama and bishops, as far as I know the first of its kind, we aim to engage in and promote authentic dialogue among Christians and Muslims, in order to help our respective communities and societies, and humankind in general, to attain peace and development. At the outset it is important to describe what we mean by the closely interrelated, lofty, supremely difficult, yet utterly necessary goals we seek, namely “peace” and “development.” I trust that the brief descriptions I shall give forthwith will be basically acceptable to all of us who take part in this gathering.

Peace is the sufficiency of life blessings, both spiritual and material, for oneself and for all other members of society. It is not merely the absence of violence, though the absence of violence is a precondition for the attainment of peace. Peace is the fruit of justice, of the effective living of correct relations between God and humankind, among human beings, and between humans and other creatures. This description of peace approximates the meaning of the Qur’anic word *salaam* and the Biblical word *shalom*. Peace is a goal that human societies cannot fully attain unaided by God, and can only be fully enjoyed by humans at the end of history, when God will set all things right. Nevertheless, by human effort enabled and aided by God, human persons and communities are able to more or less approximate this goal.

Development is the process that promotes and improves the access of all members of society to their equitable share of the full range of all the life blessings necessary for the fulfilment of human beings. Authentic development entails enjoyments of the life blessings corresponding to what human beings are, namely, embodied spirits with a social nature, and who are made for eternal life in God’s company as God’s friends. Thus understood, development leads to the attainment and consolidation of peace.

Religion and Social Conflict

Peace and development are universal human aspirations. The quest for peace and of the authentic development that is both a product and precondition of peace is at the heart of most religions and philosophies. Nevertheless this peace and this development that humankind longs for have time and again been frustrated by social conflicts, many of these accompanied by or resulting in physical violence and even in war. Some of these conflicts prominently involve religion, either as a major motivating factor, or as a factor deliberately used by contending groups to rally adherents to their cause.

Although it is dismaying, one cannot but admit that religion has been and remains prominently involved in many major social conflicts worldwide. It most if not practically all instances, these conflicts have hindered or set back the development of the societies embroiled in them, and have kept them from enjoying the peace that God wishes for humankind.

Geographical Settings of Conflicts Involving Religion

Nowadays there are so many conflicts that involve religion in a major way. The time available does not allow me to go beyond simply mentioning some of these conflicts, with a minimum of further description. These conflicts include the following:

In Europe there is the conflict among Muslims, Catholic Christians and Orthodox Christians in Bosnia; between Muslims and Orthodox Christians in Kosovo, Macedonia, and Chechnya; and between Protestant Christians and Catholic Christians in Northern Ireland.

In Africa one hears of the conflict in the Sudan and in Nigeria between Muslims, on one hand, and Christians and believers in indigenous religions, on the other hand. From time to time Christians have experienced violence inflicted upon them in Algeria at the hands of extremist Muslims, and also in Upper Egypt, where Coptic Christians are present in sizeable numbers among a Muslim majority.

In Asia, birthplace of the great world religions, we have many bitter conflicts with religions motivations or dimensions. Among these are: the conflict between Jews and Muslims and Christians in Palestine; between Muslims and Christians in the Caucasus, particularly in Nagorno-Karabakh; between Hindus and Muslims in India, especially in Kashmir; between Sunni Muslims and Shiite Muslims in Pakistan, Afghanistan and Iraq; between Buddhists and Hindus in Sri Lanka; between Muslims and Christians in some parts of Indonesia, such as Sulawesi and Maluku; and between Christians and Muslims in the southern regions of the Philippines. We also receive reports from time to time of violence suffered by Muslims and Christians in India at the hands of extremist Hindus, and by Christians in Pakistan at the hands of extremist Muslims, especially since the U.S.-led war against the Taliban regime in Afghanistan.

Types of Motives for Social Conflicts Involving Religion

The conflicts mentioned in this long list, a list that is by no means exhaustive, have broken out because of a variety of grievances and resentments. Quite often these grievances and resentments have been so keenly felt that they have motivated resort to violence or counter violence. It is not feasible at this time to describe these grievances and resentments in some detail. All that can be done now is to mention some of the types of grievances and resentments that are behind these social conflicts and these instances of social violence involving religion. Those who are familiar with a given situation of conflict can easily point out which of these types of grievances or resentments are prominent in that particular situation.

Thus a group actively seeking to free themselves from subjugation and pursuing socio-political equality and self-determination, and even independence, is usually met with forceful resistance from the hegemonic groups, who fear the loss of socio-political dominance and the disintegration of the state that they control, should the movement for socio-political equality, self-determination, and secession achieve its objective.

A group might try to forcibly impose their religion, or their system of law or way of life upon an entire country. This is bound to meet resistance from those who profess other religions or follow other systems of law and other ways of life.

A group may feel that its territory and its natural resources are being unjustly controlled and exploited by others, and they vigorously pursue their aspirations to control and use for their own welfare and territory and natural resources of their homeland. Their pursuit of these aspirations meets resistance by outsiders who wish to continue controlling and exploiting this territory and these natural resources.

A people wage a struggle to recover a homeland that

has been occupied by another people. Their struggle becomes more desperate when they see the occupying power taking over more and more of their land and establishing permanent colonies therein. In the face of the struggle of the displaced people, the occupying power exerts force in order to consolidate, perpetuate, or extend their occupation. At times, the present inhabitants of the land resort to force in order to defend retention of what they believe to have justifiably acquired by purchase, by their arduous work, or by war of self-defense. They perceive their struggle to retain what they have acquired as urgent to the extent that the new acquisitions improve their tenuous security from attacks by surrounding hostile neighbours.

Religious minorities often find themselves in a very difficult situation. They suffer violence at the hands of extremists of the majority religion, who mistakenly perceive them as agents and tools of imperialist unbelievers.

Some politicians greedy for power at all cost do not scruple to exaggerate or exacerbate interreligious grievances, resentments, and tensions, in order to win followers or votes. Such nefarious manipulation of religious convictions and sentiments often has tragic consequences, including massive spasms of interreligious violence, with hundreds or even thousands of deaths, usually among the poorest of the poor, not to speak of severe physical and psychological injuries and massive loss of the pitifully little property and livelihood which most of these people had.

It is important to keep in mind that in a given social conflict, not only one, but rather, several of these types of grievances or resentments are in operation and are reinforcing each other, rendering the conflict and the violence more difficult to resolve or restrain.

Obstacles to Interreligious Dialogue and Cooperation

Because religion involves the total framework of meaning and value that gives fundamental significance and direction to the lives of believing persons and communities, it elicits very strong if not total commitment on the part of believing persons and communities. It is for this reason that conflicts that have a strong religious dimension tend to be particularly ferocious and relentless. So much is at stake for religious persons or communities, such as the meaning of their own lives, their eternal destiny, and perhaps even the eternal salvation or damnation of others.

During the past century some major efforts were undertaken to mediate between the groups embroiled in these social conflicts and to prevent or minimize war and other forms of violence that often accompany or result from these conflicts. At the international level, the League of Nations and the United Nations Organization embody

some of the most notably of these efforts. Yet during the past century and the first years of the present century, conflicts in which religion is a prominent factor have persisted and have taken spectacular and very damaging forms. This was the case with the September 11, 2001 attacks by a group of extremist Muslims on politico-military and financial centers in the United States of America; the Hindu-Muslim violence in India; the violence between Jews, on one hand, and Muslims and Christians, on the other hand, in Palestine; the festering decades-old war in the Sudan between Muslim-led state forces, on one hand, and guerrillas belonging to the Christian churches and indigenous religious, on the other hand; and the attacks on the Iraqi state and on the Taliban regime in Afghanistan by coalitions led by the United States, a superpower perceived by many Muslims as being controlled by Jewish and Christian interests.

Hopeful Resolve to Promote Interreligious Dialogue and Cooperation

The worldwide situation for advocates of peace and development, as well as of interreligious dialogue and cooperation, is indeed adverse. Nevertheless, given this adverse situation, it is important, in obedience to God's life-giving purposes, that we do not succumb to discouragement and inaction at the intractability, complexity, and often, the deadlines of these conflicts. Rather we should continue to do all we can to prevent these conflicts or seek equitable and lasting solutions to them, employing in a major way the abundant spiritual resources of our respective religious traditions.

Precisely, this Asian gathering of ulama and bishops is one effort in furtherance of this task of building peace and promoting development, in obedience to God, in whose will is our peace.

Reckoning with the Ambivalence of Religion in Relation to Peace and Development

In this regard, it is important to keep in mind that the worldviews that religious generally propagate do transcend this present passing form of life. In their religious systems of beliefs and values, material success and socio political power in this present Christianity, and Islam, the highest good is friendship with and obedience to God, which leads others and ourselves to the unending fullness of life for which our deepest being yearns. All other goods, even this present mortal form of life, are relative to this supreme good of friendship with God.

With such world-transcending characteristics, these religions can motivate persons and communities to patience and forbearance, to effective good will for all creatures, as well as to cooperation with believers of other religions in the pursuit of common spiritual and material goals, even

if their doctrines differ considerably. After all, believers are convinced that if they live lives of honest labor and humble service, albeit in poverty, eventually they will be vindicated in the life of the world to come. After all, believers are sustained by the conviction that at the end of history, in God's love, justice, mercy, and providence all manner of things shall be well. One can therefore see here the potential of these religions to motivate toward authentic dialogue, reconciliation, and cooperation for the common good. It is this benign aspect and potential of religion that makes reasonable and worthwhile this gathering of ulama and bishops.

It is noteworthy that in relation to peace and development, religion wields an ambivalent influence. The same religion, as for example, either Christianity or Islam, is based on its single well-defined doctrinal fundamentals or pillars. Yet within both the Christian Church and the Islamic Ummah there are very different sociological expressions of Christians or of Islamic faith. These expressions of Christian or of Islamic faith may differ in terms of what elements to emphasize in the corpus of doctrine and practice, and how to relate with those who dissent or differ or deviate from the standards of religious belief and practice of the given community of believers. As sociologists of religion put it, one "faith" may have many "forms of faith." I submit and I assume that in this gathering, our prayer and our effort is toward the formation of persons and communities whose "form of faith" capacitates believers for authentic dialogue and facilitates peace and development for all.

Focus on the Relation between Islam and Christianity

This gathering of ulama and bishops focuses on conflicts in which certain concrete forms of Christianity and of Islam are prominently involved. It is quite pertinent and relevant to use such a focus, for a number of reasons.

To begin with, because Christianity and Islam are the most widespread religions worldwide, their spiritual health and their cooperation for the good of humankind and other creatures could be expected to have an extraordinarily widespread and deeply benign influence. If only for this reason, Muslim-Christian dialogue is something very worthwhile engaging in, and is rightly considered a major focus for ethical reflection and practice. It is important for Christians and Muslims to perseveringly engage in dialogue, so that the conflicts between them may be sufficiently understood and effectively prevented, and the resources used to pursue conflict could be applied undiminished to promote the common good of humankind within the context of God's holy purposes for the entire creation.

Moreover, Islam and Christianity have much in common in their worldview and ethical teachings, because there is much overlap between what they respectively

consider to be sources of revelation. Both Christianity and Islam are Abrahamic religions, and share much with each other and with Judaism. It is true that there are important differences in the way in which Islam and Christianity understand the manner and content of divine revelation. Between them there are also concrete differences in outlook and perspective brought about by historical and cultural factors. However, without trivializing these differences, one can still reasonably say that the significant commonality in the sources and content of what they accept as revelation does improve the prospects for dialogue, mutual understanding and friendship, and for productive cooperation between Muslims and Christians. Indeed we can reasonably hope that through the common pursuit of the authentically humanizing values upheld by both Islam and Christianity, the often-conflictive relationship between Muslims and Christians can be increasingly transformed into one of systematic and effective cooperation for the common good of humankind. (It goes without saying that here I am presuming agreement among Muslims and Christians in believing that discerning obedience to the will of God leads to authentic humanization, meaning the harmonious fulfilment of the God-given potentialities of human beings, in other words, the fullness of life which God desires for each and all of us.)

Focus on Asia

Our gathering focuses on Muslim-Christian dialogue in Asia. This is reasonable because Asia has been the setting of much conflict between Muslims and Christians, some of it physically or psychologically violent. Besides, Asia is a continent of increasing demographic, geopolitical, and economic weight in world affairs. Therefore peace, progress, and prosperity in Asia will do much for peace, progress and prosperity in a world that is becoming increasingly interlinked because of the rapid advances in transportation and communication.

What then do I hope for from this gathering? I hope that through the common pursuit of the authentically humanizing values upheld by both Islam and Christianity, the often-conflictive relationship between Muslims and Christians can be increasingly transformed into one of systematic and effective cooperation for the common good of humankind. This redounds to God's greater glory, since God is glorified when human beings are fully alive. I hope that Muslims and Christians in Asia, as elsewhere, may devote their energies to cooperating for the good of their respective countries and regions and of humankind as a whole.

Resource Persons from Beyond Asia

I am glad that eminent Muslim and Christian scholars and leaders from beyond Asia have joined us in this gathering. We are privileged to have among us Dr. Mohammad al-Sharief, from Libya, Secretary General of

the World Islamic Call Society, and Archbishop Michael Fitzgerald, from England, representing the Holy See, in his capacity as President of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue. Their presence among us is eminently sensible because the rapid advances in transport and communication in our time have made the world a smaller place, and nations and other social groups ever more interdependent or mutually interacting.

Add to this the fact that both Islam and Christianity have a worldwide outlook, a sense of universal community of the faithful, embodied in the Islamic Ummah and the Christian Church. For Muslims and Christians, the concerns of the faithful in one country or one continent are the concerns of the worldwide community of faith, and the problems in one country or region or continent are resolved, mitigated, or aggravated by what the faithful and people in general elsewhere think, say, or do.

Thanks to the Philippine Government

I am also glad that the Government of the Republic of the Philippines, led by Her Excellency President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, deeply realizes the importance of this gathering and the purposes that it pursues, and has given this gathering encouragement and support.

This encouragement and support will help move the Philippines and other nations in Asia to work for their authentic progress and development, unhindered and undistracted by interreligious strife, and aided by the cooperation of all religious communities, especially Christian and Muslim.

Spirit and Activities of This Gathering

The spirit and activities of this gathering also help toward the fulfilment of this objective.

Its spirit is one of prayer and dialogue. The gathering envisions interreligious dialogue in its various aspects:

- first, the dialogue of life, which in a sense is the most fundamental and the most important for long term success, since it promotes openness and appreciation for the humanity and goodness of the dialogue partner
- second, the dialogue of spirituality, in our sharing in prayer and spiritual experiences and insights
- third, the dialogue of theological exchange, in our response to and joint reflection upon the theological inputs from our honoured resource persons and from each other

These three aspects of interreligious dialogue are meant to facilitate a fourth aspect, none other than the dialogue of action for justice and for the common good as a whole, a dialogue that we hope will be intensified and more resolutely carried into action.

The activities of this gathering also help toward the attainment of our goals. Its format is strongly interreligious, involving Muslims and Christians together in each activity.

We are put in the gracious yet challenging presence of God by the invocations and other prayers. We will have presentations by persons eminent in the knowledge and practice of theology and spirituality. There will be abundant occasions for sharing, by which the dialogue of life among Muslims and Christians is thematized, jointly reflected upon, and celebrated. There will be workshops, from which, we hope and pray, will emerge inspired synthesis statements and covenants. Even the entertainment to be offered to us aims to help lighten our spirits and to promote deep sharing and the growth of friendships.

In sum, the spirit and activities of this gathering dispose us to engage in authentic dialogue, and in doing so, promote it among the communities that we belong to. In this way we will be helping toward increasing our efficacy in working for peace and development.

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emphatically enjoined upon every Muslim the search for knowledge. The Prophet said, "Seek knowledge from cradle to the grave." In another tradition, he said, "Seek knowledge even if you have to travel as far as China."

Not only that Muslims will learn the general principle of knowledge but will go to the extent of specializing certain field and excel in it. There must be a Muslim engineers, scientists, chemists, physicists, doctors, economists, educators, etc. Each must excel in his respective field of specialization. The Prophet (P.B.U.H.) said, "Allah (S.W.T.) loves anyone of you, who, when doing something, excel in it."

Islam encourages scientific investigation and clear understanding while it avoids myth and mysteries even it discourages mere speculative ideas. It inspires man to establish the relationship between science or nature and the Qur'anic information, revelation and science per se. Allah (S.W.T.) wants the believers to be knowledgeable of his creation. Allah say: "Verily the most learned of His servants fear Him most."

Intellectual development is the character of the great people and nations of the world as the maxim runs Knowledge is Power.

Material development is but a fulfilment of that philosophical and ideological foundation laid down by Islam and translation of that spiritual and intellectual development into deeds. So that if there are an honest dedicated economists, scientists, soldiers, politicians, engineers, etc., who perform their responsibility honestly and sincerely with utmost efforts, material development can take place. Allah says: "Verily, Allah will not change the condition of the people unless they change what is in themselves."

Development in its totality takes a proper course from spiritual, intellectual and finally material development. The amalgamation of these three aspects of development will lead to a relative peace in this world and to absolute peace in the Hereafter.

Conclusion

With all of you, I pray that our hopes and desires for this gathering may be abundantly fulfilled. May God our Lord, God the Most Merciful and Compassionate, bless all of us and our holy endeavor to promote, among the peoples and nations of Asia and of the world, the true and lasting peace and the authentic development willed by God. By the grace of God, inspiring and enabling faithful men and women of good will, may the continent of Asia, the cradle of great religions and of the Abrahamic faiths, be also the fertile ground for interreligious dialogue and cooperation leading to peace and development.

Fr. Romeo J. Intengan, SJ

V. The Right to Self-Defense or *Jihad*

There is no gain saying that peace and development are always susceptible to dangers all the way. They need care and protection even they reach at the pinnacle. In fact the more the peace and development are, the more they need protection.

For that, Allah says: "Fight against those who fight against you but do not transgress the limit. Allah loves not the transgressors."

Islam relies not on arm yet it does not totally avoid it.

VI. Conclusion

Peace and development are the ultimate goal of humanity. They are achievable if the three aspects of development are given proper attention: the spiritual, intellectual and material development as human instinct, intellectual and strength are not capable of fulfilling the desire for peace and development if left alone. Allah (S.W.T.) sent His Messengers and Prophets with them the Divine Books to guide mankind to peace and development in this world and in the Hereafter.

Spiritual development is realized if man thinks, behaves and acts as if Allah (S.W.T.) is overseeing him, thus a moral person. Intellectual development can be gleaned from the special skills acquired by the individuals and by the ability to establish the relationship between revealed and acquired knowledge as they are not alien to each other. Material development is just a manifestation of that spiritual and intellectual development an individual or society acquired.

The amalgamation of spiritual, intellectual and material development will result to peace and development at every level: individual, family, community, national, international, peace with nature or environment and finally peace with Allah (S.W.T.) or peace in this world and in the Hereafter.

May we live in peace in this world and in the Hereafter.
WASSALAM.....

Aleem Elias A. Macarandas

Islam As A Religion Of Peace

Bismillahi Rahmanir Rahiim. Alhamdulillah Rabbil Alamiin. Assalatu wassalamu asrafil Mursaliin.

Archbishop Capalla, Dr. Mahid Mutilan, Archbishop Fitzgerald, Bp. Gomez, bishops and ulama, brothers and sisters, Assalamu alaikum warahmatullahi wabarakatuh! I thank my dear friend and brother Dr. Mahid Mutilan for the nice words about myself. When I joined the World Islamic Call Society, he was already there - a great scholar and leader in the World Islamic Call Society. He is one of the people I learned from when I addressed the tasks of explaining Islam and reaching out to other religions and other cultures and other scholars. I thank him for that.

I would like to start my talk by expressing my happiness for this gathering. As the emcee said, this is the first big gathering of Christian bishops and Muslim ulama in this part of the world, particularly in the Republic of the Philippines. This is a great sign for our deep understanding of the human strife that is our responsibility as human beings. I would like to congratulate all the people who thought of this meeting, who work for it and who arranged it. I would like to thank in particular the Republic of the Philippines, thank the President, the government and the people for their courageous vision and to dealing with matters that affect, not only the life within this country but affect the human life all over the planet.

Seeking peace is not an easy task. It's a task that is taken up by courageous persons and courageous institutions. And they choose the deep understanding of the questions at hand. Many institutions, many countries, many persons run away from problems - hide them- don't mention them sometimes. And they end up with the problem of the fact that these questions, these problems are not solved.

We can't alone solve problems that pertain to human life, not only in its political fold or economic but cultural as well. We have and we need to cooperate with others. All kinds of people are needed for this cooperation. This conference reflects the vision of this country in dealing questions that are affecting the political, economic and particularly the cultural aspects of people.

In other parts of the world, they have their problems, hopes and different means of reaching for solutions. Only when they cooperate can they succeed. When they tried to do it by force or by any other means other than working together, they did not succeed. We are witnessing steps of success in this country in dealing with establishing peace and stability in some parts of this country where a question of culture is presenting itself to the people. It is in particular a question of Muslims and Christians living together.

I come from Libya and I come from the World Islamic Call Society. I'm proud to be here. For more than a quarter of a century, we felt together with our friends in the

Philippines. We felt the importance of establishing peace in Mindanao and other parts of this country.

In the past, especially in the early '70s, people said that to be wise - concern yourself with your own country or with your own region. Don't think of people of other parts of the world. It's not your concern.

We learn now after more than a quarter of the century that anything that happens in any part of the world, is our concern. If we are possibly thinking of living together, establishing peace and stability throughout the world, not a single corner of the world should be forgotten or neglected.

As human beings we should be concerned. But the people in the region are the ones who are responsible for working to achieve that peace and stability. We as human beings should be ready to help, to advice, to appreciate what they are doing.

We from Libya try through the government, through the OIC and through other means to bring people together. So that they too can concern themselves to establish peace. We always told our Muslim brothers that they are citizens of this country of the Philippines. They should work within this country together with their fellow citizens and achieve development, stability and peace and make the Philippines a prosperous country in this part of the world.

This was our vision, our idea. And as we say in Arabic "Alhamdulillah" (thanks to God) that this has been appreciated by all sides and all people from this country, from this region and from international organizations. So in coming to you here today, I feel happy that the Muslim ulama, the Christian bishops are getting together to work more in this forum and strengthen their vision vis a vis the establishing of lasting peace and stability among their co-citizens and co-religious groups.

Many things affected us as human beings - political problems, economic problems, social justice or social injustice. And whether we are Muslims and Christians or any other religion, these things affect us and shape our attitudes in the way we express our grievances, our happiness or unhappiness. And sometimes, we add to that, our ignorance of our religions or traditions. We try sometimes to take matters in our own hands without asking the advice of others. And because of that, sometimes we end up with frustration, sometimes violence and all that is bred by violence and unhappiness.

That is why I am here to today to speak to you about the religion of Islam as a religion of peace. My good friend Archbishop Fitzgerald will be speaking about Christianity as a religion of peace. Actually all religions advocate peace and advocate moral principles.

We are sometimes or in certain situations led astray away from the principles of peace and moral values in these religions. We reflect an attitude which is sometimes personal,

ethnic, geographical, economic, frustrated attitudes. And because we are Muslims or Christians or any other religion, then we are calling ourselves or our friends are calling us we are of this religion or that. And so the image becomes that this is a religion of violence and that is a religion of instability and the third one is a religion of war and so on.

Well, people who are characterizing this -they are not completely wrong because they are witnessing situations and circumstances where people who advocate a certain religion or a certain sect or ideology, are acting in a way which is not acceptable to the human spirit or human dignity. So naturally we characterize them and their religions as of violence, of war, of injustice, of unhappy creatures.

The word Islam in Arabic and the word salaam again in Arabic Islam is the name of the religion which was brought, revealed to by Allah to Prophet Muhammad. The word salaam means peace - they are Arabic from the same root. So you have Islam and salaam.

In the Islamic tradition there are 99 Glorious names of God. One of them is As-salaam. When Muslims are making du'a or doing prayers they call upon God "Ahina bissalaam waamitnaa bissalaam wa adhkilna jannaka darussalaam" (that we ask You Oh! Lord to make us live peacefully and make us die or our life should be ended by peace or according to peace or peacefully and that in the Hereafter, take us to Paradise - the house of peace.)

That's why especially in Southeast Asia, you find many cities or many towns that are called Darussalam (in Malaysia or in other places.) And Baghdad (the capital of the Islamic Caliphates) for five centuries or so, was called Darussalam. So Darussalaam is a wishful name for any part of this earth that refers to the Paradise in the Hereafter. And that is hoping that people that live in that place - they work for peace and they live peacefully.

According to the Qur'an, all the prophets who came before Prophet Muhammad - they are called upon or prayers are made about them one day when the Qur'an narrates their stories. It says "Salaamun ala Ibrahim"(Peace be upon Ibrahim). So peace be upon that Prophet whether it is abraham or the others.

Peace is a very important attribute that should be linked to any of these well-known prophets that are also of course named in the Old Testament and the New Testament. The greeting in Arabic of all these Muslims and you heard our speakers mentioning it Assalamu alaikom (peace be upon you). In the five daily prayers that every Muslim should be carrying out everyday, there is a special greeting to the Prophet and to the person who is praying and then to all good people, not necessarily Muslims, 'Salaamu alaika ayuhannabiyu warahmatullahi wabarakatuh assalamu alainaa wa ala ibadillahi salihiiin' (Peace be upon you Oh! Prophet and the Compassion of God be upon you, Peace be upon us who are praying and also to the pious worshippers of God.)

So here this is part of every *salaah*. It is supposed to be revealed to the Prophet when he ascended to Heavens that you have to pray or ask for peace to the Prophet for yourself and for all pious human worshippers. So this shows how important and central peace is to the Muslims. At the

closure of every one of these five prayers every day, you say assalamu alaikom. This means that you are saying assalamu alaikom to people whether they are with you or they are not with you. So this means that once you are in prayer, you are completely with God. You are worshipping God alone and you are spiritually dedicated to that worship. And this is of course taking for granted that you will not be harming anyone.

When you finished that and you enter your daily life, then you say assalamu alaikom that now, after I have been together with God, I am going to be with you or the others whether you are in the room or not - then I say Peace be upon you. This means that I will be living with you in peace.

Therefore peace is a very important element in Islam. And around peace good deeds are being carried. In Arabic it says 'al amanuh salih' (good deeds or good works) should be carried by everyone, not only the followers of the Prophet.

From the Qur'an there are many Qur'anic verses that addresses human beings or believers of the well-known religions. The Qur'anic which I mentioned many times when I talk with my Christian, Jewish friends is 'Allazi na amanu walazii na hadu wa nassaraa wa sabihiin man amana billahi wal yaumil akhir wa amila salihiiin fala kaufun alaihim walaa hum yahzanuun. (Whoever believes in God - Muslims, Jews, Christians - whoever believes in God and the Hereafter and did a good deed or good works, they should not be afraid and they should not be in grieve.)

So when God says that, these individuals who belong to these religions will not be fearful or will not be grieving on the Day of Judgement. This means that they are safe. When somebody tells you on that Judgement Day, don't worry you should not grieve because you believe in God, you believe in the Hereafter and you have done good works. This is the greatest thing that can happen to any individual who belonged to these religions.

Man, according to Islam, is made on this earth so that he becomes like a viceroy of God on this earth. That he works to establish the mission of God on this earth among human beings, among the environment. And that can only be done through the good work.

The Prophet speaks about the branches of faith or of belief. He says that it is more than seventy (70) up branches (Al imaanu naifu wa sab unaa.) The first one is to believe in God. And the last one is to remove any obstacle, anything, which hinders the passers-by from the road, from the pavement. So even you take a stone out of the way, your way and the way of other human beings, then it is part of belief, which is required of you. So if taking a stone out of the way of your friends in the village, then taking the hardships of violence, the hardships of unhappiness in the region or in the world is a bigger act or a bigger branch of faith and belief. And this is establishing the entity and the idea of peace in Islam.

According to Islamic tradition, Qur'an was revealed on the Night of Destiny (Lailatul Qadr) in the month of Ramadhan. Muslims usually celebrate it on the eve on the 27th and they say it's in the last 10 days of the fasting month of Ramadhan.

This is very important because this is the revelation of God to the Prophet, the message of God and how we become faithful and believers and how we can achieve salvation through the message of God. And characterizing this night, according to the Qur'an, it says 'salaamunhiya hatta mat lail fajr'. It's a night of peace until the coming of dawn. So peace is so important that the most important night in the mental life of the Muslims is the night when the Qur'an, which is the basic thing - revelation.

According to the Muslims, it is characterized as the night of peace until the coming up of dawn. And this shows how peace is central and important according to Islam. The opposite of peace is war, violence aggression. And this is completely unacceptable to the life of a true Muslim. The Muslims is characterized by the Prophet as 'the one from whom human beings are safe from his hands and his tongue (Almuslimu mansa limannasu min yadihi walisani.)

While the Prophet was asking who is a Muslim? What are the attributes of a Muslim? How do you characterize the Muslims? He said the Muslim person is the one from whom human beings - regardless of any culture, any religion, any color, any ethnicity are safe from his hand. And you know what it means. Anything that can be carried out in action. And his tongue, any word and you know that our tongues, especially words, can change into difficult things for nations and for individuals.

Aggression against any human being is a very big sin and a very big error and it is not acceptable at all. And the Qur'anic address to this matter of violence is very important, especially killing human beings comes in a way that is reminding the Muslim who is reading the Qur'an, that this has been revealed to the Jews and to the Christians and all the People of the Book. So this is the continuation of revelation throughout the ages. "He who ever kills a soul unjustly, as if that he had killed all human beings."

And this is the idea of terror. When you kill a single human being outside court or something like that, then your situation is exactly like the situation of somebody who killed all human beings who are living at his time. Or maybe if you want to enlarge it, human beings who are before you or after you. Because terror will make every human being fearful. And when somebody is terrified, he can not become the viceroy of God on this earth. He can not establish civilization, science, knowledge on this earth because he is completely terrified and he is running away in a cage and running away from faraway places.

So when one person kills another soul, another human being, then his situation is exactly like that of one who killed all human beings. And of course people who work for peace, they are in the opposite situation. The one who prefers life or encourages life for any soul, then he is exactly in the same situation like the one who makes life possible for all human beings. This means that the one who works for peace and makes life peaceful and stable for just a single soul, then his reward is exactly like the one who brought peace for all mankind. And this is an encouragement for the Muslims and the believers in general to work wholeheartedly for establishing peace for every human being.

From among my brothers here, the Muslim ulama, there are many people who can enlarge on this few aspects that I have brought to you about the Islamic vision with regards to peace and how Islam is a religion of peace.

In the workshops they can speak in detail about experiences during and after the Prophet's time and more quotations from the Qur'an and from the Traditions of the Prophet. I feel that what I mentioned here briefly without taking much of your time is enough to establish the idea that Islam is a religion of peace.

Islam is a religion of positive moral values. This is not my saying but this is a saying of revelation in Islam and the saying of the Prophet that Judaism and Christianity are also religions of peace and as mentioned in the Qur'an. And some of the quotations are even spoken of or attributed to the mouths of many prophets.

And man here is very important and very dear and very Glorious to God. We speak about the dignity of man all the time. And this is not just exchanging ideas on our level as human beings but this is the work of God, the saying of God, "Wala kad karramnaa bani Adam" (That We have given dignity to mankind.) Not to the believers, not the Jews, not to the Christians but to human beings.

That is why this is like a natural law. You are not supposed to work against the natural law. If you do, something will fall down. So any human being who will be making actions against the dignity of mankind, to degrade the human being, to do injustice to any human being, then he is doing something or saying something against the natural law, against the dignity of man which is attributed to him by God His Glorious of life. So who are you as a human being to withdraw or take away this dignity which is attributed by God to mankind and to human beings. Of course if you start doing that you will be working against peace because peace is established when dignity is preserved for human beings.

Now what went wrong? In the beginning of my talk I spoke about social injustice, political injustice, occupations in the world, lack of development, lack of even distribution of wealth in the world, unconcerned people, lack of education. All these things are part of the injustice in the world, part of the causes of grievances in the societies.

Religion, preaching peace, moral values and stability contributed in the past and can contribute now and in the future toward the solutions of many, if not all, of these problems. Now instead of that, we are caught sometimes with problems on the other direction, or on the other side of the situation. We are fighting people who are committing violence, committing terror, committing injustice in the name of religions. And this is what makes people unhappy and sometimes misunderstand the teachings of religion. Why is this happening?

What are the attitudes and divisions of individuals who could work for the solutions of these problems. Why sometimes this did not happen among some young people, among some old people, among some remote areas inhabited by some people, among some people in the metropolitan cities, individually or in groups. This happened also because of the ignorance individuals have about their religions.

This is one of the major tasks that should be addressed by this conference, by this gathering of the ulama and the bishops. Of course as human beings we are concerned about our life on this planet. We should politically, socially, economically through organizations or whatever, solve these injustices. But we should and we are in this great conference of ulamas and imams, we should bring through these religious values of peace, of morality, of stability.

If I don't know the exact teachings of my religion then I can use any part and enlarge in it according to my whims, according to my political ambitions, according to my ethnic grievances and say this is Islam-this is Christianity or whatever. And you find somebody who is killing children, somebody killing families, somebody burning houses and saying this is the message of Islam, this is the message of Judaism, this is the message of Christianity. While in fact, it is not the message of that religion at all. It is the message of somebody who did not know exactly what his religion is. Those people have problems but were not helped to solve those problems.

By knowledge I don't mean piling books very high, big books in details that you come and read 4,000 pages so that you will learn Islam or 5,000 pages you learn Judaism or 3,000 pages you learn Christianity. This is not what I meant. There are people who mean that. I don't know about other religions. Maybe I know little about Christianity. But in Islam who write four volumes about how to start prayers or something like that. We go back to the teachings in the Qur'an and how the Prophet taught Islam. Sometimes he just gave an answer in a paragraph about how to be a Muslim. And this has all these humanitarian qualities of peace, morality and living with others.

Unfortunately we find sometimes some people within our religion, speaking as a Muslim, who ignores something like this or don't pay much attention to it. And then they enlarge on something which has something to do with their dress or with the beard or the treatment of women or whatever it is and make it a very big issue and forget about the social justice, the development of the people, the educational side, the reaching out to others. And people become ignorant completely.

Muslims, Christians and Jews, for example lived in the Middle East together for more than 1400 years and they learned from each other - not only learned from each other in the social, educational or whatsoever, they learned their religions from each other. We can trace that. We can make study about that. We can speak about that. And they were working in the field of science, of technology, of commerce, of navigation or whatever.

Why suddenly in the 20th century with all these knowledge, with all these high education, with all this closeness among people on this planet, do we find this kind of violence? We need to learn more about our religions and to make the teachings of our religions obvious and within the reach of every individual who wants to know about these religions. And to emphasize the basics of these religions and their humanitarian aspects.

We don't and we can not and we shouldn't change these

religions. They are here to last for the period of mankind on this planet. It's a God-revealed message.

By our failure to make this known to our people who profess this religion, we let them drift away from the main course and they try but the result is negative. To build their own vision that are colored by their problems, by their grievances, their unhappiness and come with something which can be violent, can be against human beings, and against stability in the region, in the country, in the area and in the world.

What I am saying now is known to all of you. I am not bringing something new but what I am doing is reminding myself and reminding you of the importance of real understanding and real knowledge of the message of each religion. If we can successfully do that, automatically we will find ourselves living as brothers, building our country the way you are trying to do here in the Republic of the Philippines.

I hope that this forum is a step forward -very much forward in this country, in the region of East Asia and Southeast Asia and hopefully throughout the world. There are many dialogues taking place.

We in the Islamic Call Society are honored to participate, we have participated and we are going to participate in many of these dialogues and exchange of ideas about religions and religious concern about life among human beings. We in the Islamic Call Society are calling for meetings like that. One of them is going to be held on the 20th of September in Tripoli. Insha Allah. But what we are learning from here is very important. This forum is not an abstract, academic, intellectual discussion of religion and peace, of religion and stability or dialogue among Muslims and Christians. This forum is addressing the practical issue of Muslims and Christians living together in this country and in a particular part of this country and building peace and stability. May Allah (SWT) make successful all these efforts that are being carried out by you, by your government and by your citizens. Wassalamu alaikum warahmatullahi wabarakatuh!

Dr. Ahmad Mohammad A. ShariEFF

Secretary General
World Islamic Call Society

Christianity As A Religion Of Peace

1. *The Teaching of Gaudium et Spes*

Let me start this presentation with a quotation from one of the documents of the Second Vatican Council. It is the document *Gaudium et Spes* on the Church in the Modern World. It states:

Mankind... will not succeed in accomplishing the task awaiting it, that is, the establishment of a truly human world for all men over the entire earth, unless everyone devotes himself to the cause of true peace with renewed vigour...

The council proposes to... exhort Christians to cooperate with all in securing a peace based on justice and charity and in promoting the means necessary to attaining it, under the help of Christ, author of peace (GS 77).

From this text one can draw several conclusions. First, that peace is a desirable goal for all. It is not something to be sought just for a few, but for the whole of humanity throughout the entire world. Secondly, to achieve such a peace much effort is required, and moreover it has to be a collaborative effort. Christians are exhorted to work with others in order to promote peace in the world. Finally, for Christians the model given is that of Christ, who is proclaimed the author of peace.

2. *The teaching of the Scriptures*

To understand how Christ can be the author of peace, it is necessary to refer first to the Jewish scriptures, to what Christians call the Old Testament, particularly to the prophets. Here is what the prophet Isaiah says, speaking in God's name:

I am exalted and holy in my dwelling, but I am with the contrite and humble person, to give renewed vigour to humble minds, to give renewed vigour to contrite hearts....

Peace! Peace to whoever is far away, and to whoever is near, says the Lord, and I will give healing....

No peace, says God, for the wicked (Is 57:15,19,21).

From this text it can be seen that peace is a gift from God, a gift offered to all, both near and far. Yet it is something that has to be received, and it can only be received by the humble. It will not reach the wicked.

The book of Psalms presents God as a king of justice:

The Lord is king; let the earth rejoice....

Justice and judgment are the foundations of his throne (Ps 97:1-2).

The King in his might loves justice; you have established equity (Ps 99:4).

This justice is an inseparable condition of peace:

I will hear what God proclaims; the Lord – for he proclaims peace to his people and to his faithful ones, and to those who put in him their hope...

Kindness and truth shall meet;
justice and peace shall embrace.

Truth shall spring out of the earth,
and justice shall look down from heaven (Ps 86:9, 11-12)

The prophet Isaiah foretells the coming of the future king of peace who will have these divine characteristics:

And there shall come forth a rod out of the root of Jesse, and a flower shall rise up out of his root. And the spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him...

He shall judge the poor with justice, and shall reprove with equity for the meek of the earth. And he shall strike the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breadth of his lips he shall slay the wicked. And justice shall be the girdle of his loins, and faith the girdle of his reins (Is 11:1-5).

Christian tradition has always seen in this text an announcement of Jesus Christ, son of David, and Prince of peace.

In another text Isaiah gives the portrait of a messenger, known as the Suffering Servant:

Behold my servant....on whom I have sent my spirit,

he will bring righteousness to the nations.

He does not shout, or raise his voice,

he does not make his voice heard in the street;

he does not break the crushed reed

or put out the smouldering wick,

faithfully he brings righteousness (Is 42:1sq).

The writers of the New Testament have seen in this prophecy a portrait, as it were, of Jesus Christ. The Evangelist Luke shows Jesus announcing in the synagogue of Nazareth that he has been sent by God and anointed by the Spirit to bring healing and to proclaim peace. Paul will say quite succinctly that 'Christ is our peace' (Eph 2:14), for he is the one who, through his death on the cross, has broken down enmity and has brought about reconciliation.

Jesus himself, before his passion, said to his disciples:
Peace I leave with you, my peace I give to you;
not as the world gives do I give to you. (Jn 14:27).

How far this peace promised by Jesus is from any peace imposed from outside, can be seen from the programme he gives to his disciples through the Beatitudes. These start in the following way:

Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are the meek, for they shall possess the earth (Mt 5:3-4)

Then later is added:

Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.

Blessed are the clean of heart, for they shall see God.

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God (Mt 5:7-9).

3. *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*

How does the Catholic Church understand peace? An answer to this question can be found in a paragraph of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. It reads:

Respect for and development of human life requires *peace*. Peace is not merely the absence of war, and it is not limited to maintaining a balance of powers between adversaries. Peace cannot be attained on earth without safeguarding the goods of persons, free communication among men, respect for the dignity of persons and peoples, and the assiduous practice of fraternity. Peace is the “tranquillity of order”. Peace is the work of justice and the effect of charity (CCC 2304).

Each one of these statements would need an extended commentary, but time does not permit this. It seems fitting nevertheless to refer to a document which is several decades older than the *Catechism* and which preceded the Second Vatican Council. It is the letter written by the pope who convened the council, Blessed John XXIII.

4. *Pacem in Terris*

Forty years ago, Pope John XXIII addressed to all people of good will his encyclical *Pacem in Terris*, Peace on Earth. In this letter John XXIII suggested that peace is an edifice resting on our pillars: Truth, Justice, Love and Freedom. Each of these qualities has to be present if there are to be good and harmonious relations between peoples and between nations.

Truth is the first pillar, for it includes the recognition that man is not his own master, but is called to fulfil the will of God, the Creator of all, who is the Absolute Truth. In human relations truth implies sincerity, essential to mutual

confidence and fruitful dialogue leading to peace. Truth moreover brings each individual to acknowledge his or her own rights, but also to recognize his or her own duties towards others.

Yet peace cannot exist without *justice*, respect for the dignity and rights of each human person. It is the lack of justice, in individual as well as in international relations, that causes so much unrest in our world today, and brings about violence.

Justice must nevertheless be tempered by *love*. This implies the ability to recognize that we all belong to one human family, and so to see our fellow human beings as brothers and sisters. It gives the capacity to share in both sorrows and joys. It makes people feel the needs of others as if they were one's own, and this empathy leads them to share their own gifts with others, not only material goods but also the values of mind and spirit. Love also makes allowances for weakness, and so includes the capacity to forgive. This forgiveness is essential to the restoration of peace when conflict has broken out, for it gives the possibility of beginning again, on a new basis, in a restored relationship.

All this supposes *freedom*, an essential characteristic of the human person. For freedom allows people to act according to reason and to assume responsibility for their own actions. Indeed each of us is responsible before God for our contribution to society.

5. *The Importance of Prayer*

To these four pillars I would be inclined to add a fifth, namely *prayer*. For we know that, as human beings, we are weak. We find it hard to live up to these ideals. We need God's help, and this we have to implore humbly. Let me quote here some words of Pope John Paul II:

If peace is God's gift and has its source in him, where are we to seek it and how can we build it, if not in a deep and intimate relationship with God? To build the peace of order, justice and freedom requires, therefore, a priority commitment to prayer, which is openness, listening, dialogue and finally union with God, the prime wellspring of true peace. The Pope added:

To pray is not to escape from history and the problems which it presents. On the contrary, it is to choose to face reality not on our own, but with the strength that comes from on high, the strength of truth and love, which have their ultimate source in God. Faced with the treachery of evil, religious people can count on God, who absolutely wills what is good. They can pray to him to have the courage to face even the greatest difficulties with a sense of personal responsibility, never yielding to fatalism or impulsive reactions (cf. Pontifical Council for

Interreligious Dialogue, *Peace: a Single Goal and a Shared Intention*, Vatican City, 2002, p. 91).

6. *Common Commitment to Peace*

Prayer for peace, therefore, joint prayer for peace by people of different religions, is necessary. It is encouraging to realize that such prayers are becoming more common. The words of Pope John Paul II just quoted were pronounced on 24 January 2002 during a day of prayer for peace, held in Assisi, which brought together representatives of different religions. But sincere prayer supposes also commitment, the representatives gathered in Assisi on that day made a solemn tenfold commitment to peace, each commitment being read out in a different language by a person of a different religious tradition. Let me quote some of these which emphasize the need for cooperation and dialogue among people of different religions.

1. We commit ourselves to proclaiming our firm conviction that violence and terrorism are incompatible with the authentic spirit of religion, and, as we condemn every recourse to violence and war in the name of God or of religion, we commit ourselves to doing everything possible to eliminate the root causes of terrorism.
2. We commit ourselves to educating people to mutual respect and esteem, in order to help bring about a peaceful and fraternal coexistence between people of different ethnic groups, cultures and religions.
3. We commit ourselves to fostering a culture of dialogue, so that there will be an increase of understanding and mutual trust between individuals and among peoples, for these are the premise of authentic peace.
4. We commit ourselves to frank and patient dialogue, refusing to consider our differences as an insurmountable barrier, but recognizing instead that to encounter the diversity of others can become an opportunity for greater reciprocal understanding.

In 1999 the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue organized in the Vatican an interreligious assembly. Its purposes was to examine the role of religions in the Third Millennium. The participants formulated a final message in which they declared:

We are conscious of the urgent need

- ❖ to confront together responsibly and courageously the problems and challenges of our modern world...
- ❖ to work together to affirm human dignity as the source of human rights and their corresponding duties, in the struggle for justice and peace for all.
- ❖ to create a new spiritual consciousness for all humanity in accordance with the religious

traditions so that the principle of respect for freedom of religion and freedom of conscience prevail (Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, *Towards a Culture of Dialogue*, Vatican City, 2000, p. 79).

The participants in this assembly added:

We know that the problems in the world are so great that we cannot solve them alone.

Therefore there is an urgent need for interreligious collaboration.

We are all aware that interreligious collaboration does not imply giving up our own religious identity, but is rather a journey of discovery:

- We learn to respect one another as members of the one human family.
- We learn both to respect our differences and to appreciate the common values that bind us to one another.

Therefore we are convinced that we are able to work together to strive to prevent conflict and to overcome crises existing in different parts of the world.

Collaboration among the different religions must be based on the rejection of fanaticism, extremism and mutual antagonisms, which lead to violence (*ibid.* pp. 79-80).

Finally the message addresses several appeals:

We appeal to religious leaders to promote the spirit of dialogue within their respective communities and to be ready to engage in dialogue themselves with civil society at all levels.

We appeal to all leaders of the world whatever their field of influence:

- To refuse to allow religions to be used to incite hatred and violence
- To refuse to allow religion to be used to justify discrimination
- To respect the role of religion in society at international, national and local levels (*ibid.* p.80)

The presentation of some extracts from this message has taken us beyond the Christian view of peace, but the sentiments expressed are surely those which animate this historic gathering. May Almighty God, the God of Peace, bless this assembly and its deliberations for the well-being of the peoples of Asia.

Archbishop Michael L. Fitzgerald

President

Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue

Peace and Development: The Islamic Perspective

I. Introduction

Peace and development are two sides of the same coin: they are concomitant to each other so that there is no genuine peace without development and vice-versa. If development is the process then peace is its end-product. All human beings in their right mind are striving to attain peace and development despite the human differences in their philosophical and ideological outlook otherwise human endeavor is an exercise in futility.

To have a crystal clear view of peace and development from the Islamic perspective and how they can come about, there is the need to shade light on the meaning of peace and development, their scope, philosophical and ideological bases, the road leading to them and the right to self-defense.

II. Meaning and Scope of Peace and Development

Peace is literally translated into Arabic as *salaam* derived from *silm* from which Islam is also derived. *Salaam* and Islam are inseparable even they are undistinguishable from each other. So that when one says, "he is a Muslim" or "this is an Islamic community" he is simply referring to a peaceful individual and community.

Peace is an integral part of Islam. It is its landmark. Every time a Muslim meets his co-Muslim he extends to him the greeting of *salaam* or every time a Muslim closes his prayer, he closes it with *salaam*. It is his wish to live in peace in this world and in the Hereafter.

In his prayer he says: Oh Allah! You are Peace and from You comes the Peace, grant us to live in peace, enter us to heaven, the abode of peace."

As Peace is one of the 99 beautiful names of Allah, Muslims revered peace. Peace in Islam is sacred. It is the freedom from fear and sorrow, from oppression, from poverty, pain, further desire and everything that causes affliction and distress.

Development in Arabic is *tanmiyah* derived from the word *numu* or growth. It is the process of growth from simple to the more complex stage occurring in living organism. In Islam this definition is rather broader for it embraces spiritual, intellectual and material development.

It is the hope of every individual and society to live in peace as they move towards development. Sadly, it is not always the cause because the kind of development most people conceived is devoid of spiritual development. The miniature of which is a person who is mentally and physically sound but morally deficient. He is efficient but deceitful serving his personal interest under the expense of the general welfare of the society. That kind of development brings more a destruction rather than peace to the society.

Islam established the perfect and balanced system where spiritual, intellectual and material development are intertwined so that there will be a just and human world order which can ensure sufficiency and peace for all in this world and in the Hereafter.

III. The Philosophical And Ideological Foundation of Peace and Development

No human endeavor can prosper ungrounded on solid philosophical and ideological foundation. Islam satisfies this need to guide human beings in their development efforts and quest for peace. The following, among others, is the brief illustration of the foundation of peace and development from the Islamic perspective.

- 1- The strong conviction that Allah (S.W.T.) is the Creator of all creation including man and that all development efforts are undertaken for his sake. He is the Sovereign and Ruler who controls the destiny of man and nation.
- 2- Allah (S.W.T.) has given man the power on earth and means of sustenance to fulfil his mission as the vicegerent of God by establishing the *Khilafah* (Islamic system) with the Holy Qur'an as the fundamental law of the land.
- 3- In the establishment of the *Khilafah*, the pious, the righteous and the most knowledgeable of both the revealed and acquired knowledge should assume the leadership of the Ummah.
- 4- Muslims belong to the one Ummah or nation. There is no distinction among them based on colour, geographical origin, wealth or any other consideration except piety, righteousness and knowledge as such they must exist as an organized body. The Prophet said, "When you are in the company of three, assign one of you as your (leader) Amir.
- 5- Fair competition, consultation and cooperation should be the guideposts in the development process. Individual freedom of enterprise and initiative is respected and encouraged but the society is given the right to check any misuses of freedom and authority to maintain the equilibrium between the individual needs and that of the society. In Islam, the monopoly of production and the distribution of the same is eschewed because the aim of development is the welfare and well-being of mankind. The humanitarian aspect of development is given the

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Symposium On PACEM IN TERRIS

Theme: Our Paths To Peace Today

Pope Pius XII Center, UN Avenue, Manila
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The Witness of Monotheistic Religions

Pope John XXIII knew that the dignity of human being was still being trampled upon in many parts of the world. Yet, he was convinced that despite the dramatic situation, the world was becoming increasingly conscious of certain spiritual values and increasingly open to the meaning of those pillars of peace – truth, justice, love and freedom. Seeking to bring these values into local, national and international light, men and women who are becoming more aware that their relationships with God, the source of all good, must be the solid foundations and supreme criterion of their lives. As individuals and in society, these evolving spiritual intuition would be the purpose to convince profound public and political consequences.

One of these spiritual values I would like to take is the absolutely fundamental and that is the belief in God -- belief in one God. So, monotheism. I'm really going to speak about three religions: Judaism, Christianity, Islam. But we should extend these idea of monotheism to other religions as well. It's not confined to these three religions. We should remember that.

Divine Unicity

Let us dwell for a moment on this concept of divine unicity. Some people tend to assert that Jews, Christians and Muslims do not adore the same God. This is certainly not the teaching of the Catholic Church. The Second Vatican Council, in its central document, the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church (*Lumen Gentium*), stated clearly: "But the plan of salvation also includes those who acknowledge the Creator, in the first place among whom are the Muslims; these profess to hold the faith of Abraham, and together with us they adore the one, merciful God, mankind's judge on the last day" (LG 16). This did not even have to be stated with regard to Judaism, for God's dealings with the chosen people form, as it were, the pre-history of Christianity and "the Church cannot forget that she received the revelation of the Old Testament by way of the people with whom God, in his inexpressible mercy, established the ancient covenant" (*Nostra Aetate* 4).

Each tradition has a liturgical expression of this primary article of faith.

Judaism makes use of the *Shema*: "Listen, Israel... I am the Lord, your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. You shall have no gods except me" (Dt 5:1, 6-7).

Christians proclaim *Credo in unum Deum*, I believe in one God.

Muslims, at every ritual prayer (*salat*), recite the *shahada*: *La ilaha illa Llah*: There is no divinity except God.

There are, of course, differences in the way of understanding this God. For the first of these religions, God has chosen *one single people* to bear witness before the world. For Christians, God has become incarnate, and in so doing has shown his solidarity with the whole of the human race that he has created. It is through the incarnate Son of God that the Trinitarian nature of God comes to be known... For Muslims, such a Trinitarian concept would seem to destroy the essential unicity of God. Moreover God's transcendence would exclude the possibility of incarnation. But God has raised up within each people a prophet to remind them of their primordial covenant with him. He has finally sent Muhammad to be the Seal of Prophecy and a mercy (*rahma*) for the whole humanity.

We are dealing then with three distinct religions, and indeed the differences are to be found at the very heart of that which unites them, faith in the one God. Moreover these

three traditions have seen their boundaries defined through historical development. Christianity did not set out to be a distinct religion, but it separated itself from Judaism, perhaps not without anguish. Islam discovered that Jews and Christians did not accept its message, and had to come to terms with the continued existence of their communities. So the three traditions have to co-exist, leaving it to God to resolve their differences in his own good time.

Despite the differences in understanding, the common faith in the unicity of God remains. This means a refusal of any sort of *dualistic* vision of the world. Good and Evil do certainly exist, but they are not two co-equal principles that are eternally struggling one with the other. We know too that we cannot really divide good and evil into two distinct camps. We are conscious that in each one of us these two forces exist. Saint Paul has described in vivid terms this inward conflict: "I cannot understand my own behaviour. I fail to carry out the things I want to do, and I find myself doing the very things I hate... The fact is, I know of nothing good living in me – living, that is, in my unspiritual self – for though the will to do good is in me, the performance is not, with the result that instead of doing the good things I want to do, I carry out the sinful things I do not want... In fact, this seems to be rule, that every single time I want to do good it is something evil that comes to hand" (Rm 7:15, 18-19, 21). Yet Paul is also certain that there is a way out of this predicament. His cry is well known: "What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body doomed to death? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!" (Rm 7:24-25). Faith in the One Almighty God includes belief that, whatever appearances might suggest, the forces of evil will be overcome. Good will have the final word.

A further dimension of monotheism is naturally a refusal of *polytheism* where God would have to share his prerogatives with other divinities, and where indeed there could arise a certain rivalry between divinities jealous of their own spheres of influence. Our traditions are full of satirical arguments against such a conception of God. Yet there are other forms of polytheism, or at least of associating something with 'God, which can insidiously creep into religion. Like the Little Prince who had to be vigilant lest baobabs should take root on his asteroid and completely take it over, so the one devoted to God has to beware lest the relationship become corrupted. It is necessary to act for God alone and, in seeking to do his will, to be careful not to associate with this worship our own desires and ambitions. Islamic spirituality has developed the idea of this fight against *shirk*, associating something with God, in ways that certainly have a resonance with Christians, and I presume also with Jews.

Witness

Jews, Christians and Muslims, we are called to give witness to God in the world. Witness is a key concept in these three traditions and is worth examining a little more closely.

The Law which God gives to his people, as an expression of his divine will, is inscribed on two tablets. When Moses is

instructed on how to build the sanctuary, he is told: "Inside the ark you will place the Testimony that I will give you" (Ex 26:16). This is understood as a reference to the two tablets on which the Decalogue was written. It is there as a constant reminder to the people of their obligations. Now if the law is not observed, if the people abandon their God, then God will bear witness against his people. The prophet Micah presents God as if he were conducting a trial: "Listen, you peoples, all of you. Attend, earth, and everything in it. The Lord is going to give evidence against you" (Mi 1:2). This witnessing *against* is always, however, in view of conversion and a return to God, for the prophet Ezechiel conveys the word of the Lord: "As I live – it is the Lord who speaks – I take pleasure not in the death of a wicked man, but in the turning back of a wicked man who changes his ways to win life" (ES 33:11).

In the Christian tradition, the Good News of the Kingdom, preached by Jesus, is destined to be "proclaimed to the whole world as a witness to all the nations" (Mt 24:14). This is why Jesus sends his disciples to be his witnesses "not only in Jerusalem but throughout Judaea and Samaria, and indeed to the ends of the earth" (Ac 1:8)

In Islam the profession of faith takes the form of witness, but the witness of human beings is founded on divine witness: *lakin Allahu yashhadu bi-ma anzala ilay-ka anzalahu bi-ilmi-hi wa-l-mala'ikatu yashhaduna wa-kafa bi-Llahi shahidan*: "God testifies concerning that which he has revealed to you (Muhammad); in His knowledge He has revealed it, and the angels also testify. And God is sufficient as a witness" (Q 4:166). Also in Islam this witness has a community dimension: *wa-kadhalika ja'alna-kum ummatan wasatan li-takunu shuhada ala l-nas wa-yakuna l-rasul alay-kum shahidah*: "Thus We have appointed you a middle nation, that you may be witnesses against mankind, and that the messenger may be a witness against you" (Q 2:143).

This theme could be further developed, but I would like to suggest some ways in which a common witness can be given in the world today. Three points will be touched upon:

- The primacy of God
- The responsibility of human beings
- Service to humanity

The Primacy of God

Are we not called, as believers in God, to that Truth which surpasses us? Is it not our duty to remind this modern society of ours that the human being cannot be its own measure? Human dignity has its source in the creative act of God, whether or not we would wish to go on and affirm that God has created the human person in his own image and likeness. This last-mentioned belief does in fact reinforce the requirement of respect for each human being. It is perhaps good to recall here the teaching of the final section of the Declaration *Nostra Aetate*:

We cannot truly pray to God, the Father of

all, if we treat any people in other than brotherly fashion, for all men are created in God's image. Man's relation to God the Father and man's relation to his fellowmen are so dependent on each other that the Scripture says: "He who does not love, does not know God" (1 Jn 4:8). There is no basis, therefore, for any discrimination between individual and individual, or between people, arising either from human dignity or the rights which flow from it (NA 5).

To accept the will of the Creator is not to go against the interests of humanity but rather to act to its advantage, for it helps to achieve its destiny.

As believers in God, are we not called to make our voices heard in society in this way? It is surely an obligation on our part to demand respect for the fundamental rights of human beings: the right to life, to physical integrity (which would include opposition to torture and any form of punishment that is incompatible with human dignity), the right to respect for one's reputation, the right to the means necessary for living a decent life, the right to education and of access to cultural development and to objective information, the right to freedom in the search for the truth, freedom of conscience and religious freedom which includes also the right to profess and practise one's faith not only as an individual but as a member of a community.

There is a vast field here for common endeavour. We should remember that to show respect for our fellow human beings is also to show respect for God.

The Responsibility of Human Beings

To insist on the primacy of God does not mean that the human being is reduced to the status of a pawn on the divine chess-board. On the contrary, faith in the Creator God leads to an acceptance of the role that he has entrusted to the human being, namely to be a "co-creator", or, in Islamic terminology, God's *khal'ifa*, his lieutenant or deputy. We are responsible for the created world and all it contains.

The very existence of evil becomes a challenge to the one whom God has placed in this world to take charge of it. As a result of sin it is said that the earth will produce brambles and thistles and that it is only at the sweat of his brow that man will be able to reap its fruits (cf Gen 3:18-19). Yet this has not prevented human beings from making progress in agriculture and inventing machinery that can reduce the fatigue of labour. Similarly it is said that the woman will give birth to her children in pain and that her husband will lord it over her (cf Gen 3:16), but this has not put the breaks on advances in gynecology nor of helping couples to live in a relationship of equality and love.

Paul, in his letter to the Romans to which reference has already been made, says: "From the beginning till now the entire creation, as we know, has been groaning in one great act of giving birth; and not only creation, but all of us who possess the first-fruits of the Spirit, we too groan inwardly as we wait for our bodies to be set free" (Rm 8:22-23). This, as

we are well aware, does not imply waiting passively. It is our duty to cooperate with the Spirit of God, to work so that the Kingdom of God may come.

Service to Humanity

From what has just been said about human responsibility, it is an easy step to the idea of service to humanity. Believers in God, we are called to bear witness to our faith in God but also to our faith in the human person. Strengthened by our faith in God the Creator, the Provident Master of all, whom we like to call Father, we can bring to the world the hope it needs. We are convinced that evil, that sin, will not be victorious. We believe that God helps us and gives us the strength to continue to strive for the good of our brothers and sisters. It is these convictions of ours that sustain us, in good moments and bad, in times of distress as in times of happiness, in the midst of conflict and when there is peace, at times of failure, apparent or real, and also in times of success.

In the Service of Peace

Because we are dealing with *Pacem in Terris*, something about the service of peace, there is a need for the cooperation of people of different religions in the service of peace. It is in fact often said that there will be no peace in the world until there is peace among the religions. A finger is pointed to religions as being at the origin of conflicts. It could be questioned whether this is wholly true. Of course, it must be admitted that religion has, in the course of history, produced conflicts, and can do so today. But such conflicts may have a multiplicity of causes, and so it is only faith to distinguish between those which are strictly speaking religious, taking their origin from differences of belief, and those which are based on non-religious motivations but take on a religious colouring.

Tensions and disputes can arise within a given religious tradition because of different ways of envisaging the faith or of understanding it. One could cite the christological disputes of the first centuries of Christianity, in which the imperial power became involved. Even today, within the various Christian confessions, there arise serious causes of division, though these do not usually end up in armed combat. Islam too has known in its history grave dissensions which have given rise to assassinations and conflict.

Very often, however, conflicts which appear to be religious are caused by non-religious factors. These may be socio-economic causes, such as in Northern Ireland where the social difference between Catholics and Protestants and lack of equal opportunities has consolidated the opposition between the two groups. Something similar could be said about the recent clashes in Indonesia, in Ambon and Kalimantan, where migration has brought different groups which happen to be Islamic on the one hand and Christian on the other to oppose one another. Ethnic and cultural factors also come into play, as in the struggle between Tamils and

Sinhalese in Sri Lanka, or Hindus and Muslims in Kashmir. And how should one categorize the conflict between Israelis and Palestinians?

Whether the causes are religious or not, the followers of different religions feel the duty to contribute to overcoming these conflicts and to work for peace. They are conscious that peace is a gift from God which has to be implored, but which also has, in a sense, to be earned.

Finally, let me quote some of the words Pope John Paul II used on January 24, 2002 at the Assisi to pray for peace with representatives of different religions:

If peace is God's gift and has its source in him, where are we to seek it and how can we build it, if not in a deep and intimate relationship with God? To build the peace of order, justice and freedom requires, therefore, a priority commitment to prayer, which is openness, listening, dialogue and finally union with God, the prime wellspring of true peace.

To pray is not to escape from history and the problems which it presents. On the contrary, it is to choose to face reality not on our own, but with the

strength that comes from on high, the strength of truth and love which have their ultimate source in God. Faced with the treachery of evil, religious people can count on God, who absolutely wills what is good. They can pray to him to have the courage to face even the greatest difficulties with a sense of personal responsibility, never yielding to fatalism or impulsive reactions (cf Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, *Peace: A Single Goal and a Shared Intention*, Vatican City, 2002, p. 91).

In a sense, Pope John Paul II is echoing the spirit of Pope John XXIII. And if this spirit is an appeal to all people of goodwill that Pope John XXIII launched back in 1963, and in very difficult times of the world, it is an appeal that all of us should still listen to.

Archbishop Michael Fitzgerald

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prime importance. Thus, development from the Islamic standpoint is socio-economic and assumes the character of worship.

- 6- Wealth belongs to God and He has ordained it for the good of society. Saving for investment, moderate spending, prohibition of usury, of hoarding, of extravagance and of conspicuous consumption are among the measures laid down by Islam to attain peace and development. God says: "They who hoard up gold and silver and spend it not in the way of God, unto them give tidings of a painful doom." (Al-Qur'an 9:34) And again, He says, "And those who, when they spend are neither prodigal nor grudging and hold a just balance between the two extremes." (Al-Qur'an 25:67)
- 7- Reward or remuneration for every good thing or good deed an individual performed either in merit or in kind. Allah says: "Whoever among you, male or female, perform a good deed, his reward is with Allah." But a Muslim, while accepting his immediate reward expects the much better reward to Allah in the Hereafter."
- 8- Sense of responsibility and accountability. A Muslim is a shepherd and he is responsible and accountable for his flocks. Muslim has responsibility for himself, for his family, for his community, for the Ummah and for humanity at large according to his available resources; intellect, physical or material and as such accountable for it.

IV. The Road to Peace and Development

Allah (S.W.T.) in his infinite blessings has paved the way leading to peace and development by the series of revelation that came down to the human race at the different epochs of history. The messengers and the prophets were tasked to bring this message until finally completed and perfected by the coming of the last and the final messenger Mohammad (P.B.U.H) with the Holy Qur'an as the final message.

The Holy Qur'an has clearly emphasized how man can attain peace and development through refinement of the soul, intellectual advancement, and doing righteous deeds.

The spiritual development is realized through the worship enjoined by Allah (S.W.T.) upon every believer. This is epitomized in the belief of the Six Articles of Faith: in the Hereafter and in Pre-destination. This belief is translated into practice by performing the five pillars of Islam: to testify that there is no god but Allah and Mohammad is His Last and Final Messenger, performing the five daily prayers, paying alms, fasting the month of Ramadan and pilgrimage to Mecca once in a lifetime (for those who has the means), continuous remembrance (Zikr) of Allah (S.W.T.) is also a form of worship. The Muslim who observes that worship, in effect, develops in himself the Islamic personality and acquired positive attitudes such as trust in Allah (S.W.T.), honesty, dedication, kindness, courage, perseverance, peaceful and production.

Intellectual development is achieved through the teaching-learning process from cradle to the grave. Islam

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Symposium On PACEM IN TERRIS

Reflections on *Pacem in Terris* and 2003 Message of Peace

From the Message of the Holy Father on the World Day of Peace, January 1, 2003, Pope John Paul II tries to emphasize the permanent relevance of *Pacem in Terris*, a document written 40 years ago by Pope John XXIII.

In *Pacem in Terris*, Pope John XXIII mentioned the case of the coming war that divided the world into two, i.e. the East and the West and bring about at dead stop nuclear conflict. In spite of all that, the optimistic Pope John perceived the undercurrent of a spiritual revolution. That's the character of Pope John XXIII – he's a very optimistic man. He could see the signs of the times and listen to the call of the Spirit in the midst of chaos and conflict. He found the sign of a new stage of humanity's journey.

In the midst of all these conflicts, Pope John XXIII found a sign for a new stage of humanity's journey. Humanity, John XXIII wrote, enters a new stage of its journey. The end of colonialism, the rise of newly independent states, the protection of workers' rights, the new and welcome presence of women in public life, all testified to the facts that the human race was indeed entering a new phase of its history, one characterized by the conviction that all men and women are equal by reason of their natural dignity. This is the very key statement of *Pacem in Terris*, quoted by the Holy Father, Pope John Paul II.

These are what Pope John XXIII would call the signs of the times. He also speaks of the human rights movements spreading all over the world. During the 50s, there are already increasing consciousness of the spiritual values, the awareness of relationship with God. These are the signs of the times which he picked up in the 50s and early 60s. In *Pacem in Terris*, he reflected on these signs of the times and he mentioned that there are four foundational principles of peace or the four pillars of peace. These are truth, justice, love and freedom.

With the profound intuition that characterized him, John XXIII identified the essential conditions for peace in four precise requirements of the human spirit: *truth, justice, love and freedom* (cf. *ibid.*, I: *l.c.*, 265-266).

Truth will build peace if every individual sincerely acknowledges not only his rights, but also his own duties towards others. So truth has two aspects: rights and duties. And in *Pacem in Terris*, the Holy Father gives a long list of rights and duties.

Justice will build peace if in practice everyone respects the rights of others and actually fulfills his duties towards them. Truth means to recognize rights and duties, while justice means to practice them. Truth, as a matter of fact, is acknowledgement and justice is practice.

Love will build peace if people feel the needs of others as their own and share what they have with others, especially the values of mind and spirit which they possess.

Freedom will build peace and make it thrive if, in the choice of the means to that end, people act according to reason and assume responsibility for their own actions. (So the two elements are reasons and responsibility).

So these are the four pillars of peace which Pope John Paul II finds relevant even for today. In the encyclical, Pope John XXIII proposed a very concrete urgent way in which to attain international peace. A public authority on the international level, an authority that's constituted not by force but through mutual consent of nations. An international authority that would maintain and strengthen world peace on moral principles. In that connection, in *Pacem in Terris*, the Pope esteems the contribution of UN and refers to the Declaration of Human Rights.

Having said this about *Pacem in Terris*, Pope John Paul II now reflects on the relevance of this encyclical for today. What is the situation today? The Berlin Wall is there no more. The threat of the Cold War is contained. There is a growing international collaboration and dialogue. New challenges and problems of globalisation are coming up.

And yet there are still some problems. What are the problems that the Holy Father mentioned? The problems of growing divide between economically prosperous countries and the poorer nations. Here we will find a big shift. When Pope John XXIII wrote the encyclical, the divide was between the east and the west, symbolized by the Berlin Wall. Today, when Pope John Paul II writes, the divide is much more the so-called the North and the South – the economically rich nations and the poorer nations. That is one issue he has addressed.

Secondly, the Holy Father said, the basic human rights are not being met today (for instance the right to food and drinkable water, to housing and security, to self-determination and independence). And he said very clearly promises made to the poor are not kept. Many international conferences and governments lose their moral credibility. In this message, the Holy Father said, the poor do not trust the government because, often the international agencies do not keep their promises made to the poor. And this has caused a lot of conflict.

The principles laid down in *Pacem in Terris* are relevant. No peace is relevant without respect for human dignity and

human rights. This has been the contribution of *Pacem in Terris* – true peace and lasting peace is possible only the basis of recognizing the dignity of human person.

Thirdly, work together for a new constitutional organization of the human family, that's the proposal made by Pope John XXIII. The Holy Father picks that up again saying that there is a need for the reconstitution of human family, transparency and accountability at every level of public life and integration of political life with moral principles.

Those in positions have to undergo a veritable revolution in the way they use their power. It is a tragedy in many countries today. Honesty in supplying information. International media actually rule the world today. They are focusing on dishonesty. Gestures of peace coming from the lives of people. So these are the concrete proposals which the Pope is making in the message.

Towards the vision which the present Holy Father is sharing with us, he calls for a spirituality of culture of peace. Three elements are important in this culture of peace:

- (1) trust in the merciful and compassionate God who calls us to brotherhood. This is the basis of any lasting peace – trust in the merciful and compassionate God.
- (2) confidence in the men and women of our times carrying the image of God. This is the optimism of Pope John XXIII. In spite of all negative phenomena, in spite of all conflicts and violence, we should have trust in the human person.
- (3) And finally, a new relationship under the sway of truth, justice, love and freedom. So these are the key expressions of this message.

What could be the Asian approach to interpreting this message, or what could be the Asian reception of this message of the Holy Father? Both Popes, John Paul II and John XXIII picked up four principles of peace or the four pillars of peace. Archbishop Michael Fitzgerald added another pillar, the fifth pillar, *prayer*. It was good that it was made in Asia. It was very much part of our own culture.

Perhaps another pillar should be added, a basic foundational element, which is dialogue, the sixth pillar. Because all these four principles will be effective in the world today, especially in Asia only if we take a dialogical approach to truth, justice, love and freedom.

In *Pacem in Terris*, Pope John Paul II and John XXIII speak of these four principles – truth, justice, love and freedom. Unfortunately, after 40 years, we live in a new world very much divided from the lines of religions. So we have to approach these four principles through dialogue. We needed dialogical approach to the perception of truth, promotion of justice, practice of love and the experience of freedom. How is this possible? What are the challenges? What is God or the Spirit asking us to do?

There are four important elements when we speak of cultural dialogue in Asia.

(1) Listen to the other. Listening to the other is the pre-requisite of any genuine dialogue. We should ask ourselves whether we Christians could really listen to the others. We speak too much, we don't listen. We may hear somebody speaking but do we listen to the others. Do we try to understand the other person especially listening to God's experience of the other in a very sympathetic, compassionate and open way? These are the questions we have to ask. Are Christian minds set to prepare to listen?

(2) The second element into dialogue is to share. Not so much to talk but much more to share. Not so much to preach and

proclaim but share our life experience with the other. Often our proclamation lacks credibility in Asia because we proclaim in so many words, words that may not come out of real experience. That is the second element. Sharing our lives with the others. Sharing our God-experience with the others not so much sharing the dogma with the others but what Jesus Christ means to me. What does faith in God mean to me? This has to be shared with the others.

(3) The third element into dialogue is to work together. To work together for peace, justice and harmony of integration of nature.

(4) And fourthly, to wake up to the divine together with believers of other religions. In other words, to pray together. To pray does not mean that you talk the whole time, perhaps in contemplative silence that binds the heart of believers more than the words.

So, listen, share, work and pray together. These four seem to be the important elements of a cultural dialogue.

Both in *Pacem in Terris* and the present message of peace, both the Popes speak of the four pillars of peace – truth, love, justice and freedom. How could we interpret these four pillars in an Asian sensitivity? Or how can we re-interpret these four pillars from a dialogical perspective?

Let me just mention a few things for further discussion – truth. I think dialogical approach to truth would mean that we are all hope pilgrim. John Paul II used this term again and again that the Church in Asia, are called pilgrims. In *Tertio Millenio Adveniente*, the Pope said, "God wants the future of the humanity to be a pilgrimage in which they accompany one another towards the goal that God has sent for us." I think this the dialogical perception of truth. Not that we have the truth which others don't have, but the humility to say that with the Buddhists, Muslims, Hindus, we are co-pilgrims in search of truth.

The second principle, love. In dialogical sense, love would mean, respecting the otherness of the others. Respecting also the religious otherness of the other. Respecting the Muslim as a Muslim, not merely as a human person, not just a potential Christian but respecting the otherness of the other. Respecting a Muslim as a Muslim, a Buddhist as a Buddhist and listening to the person and pilgrimaging with him.

Thirdly, justice. From a dialogical point of view this would mean recognition of the integral human welfare, recognizing the integral human welfare with the others, exploring the rights and duties with our Muslim friends, with our Buddhist companions, and becoming sensitive to the ways justice is denied if you are oppressed. Our Muslim neighbor and Hindus, they are also sensitive to human sufferings, which note that not only the Christians are sensitive to these. So, here we need a lot of common sense to discover the deeper dimension of rights and duties.

And finally, freedom from the dialogical point of view would mean, above all, freedom to explore the mystery of God, which is very much Asian. The Asian mind that is not resonate with dogmatism. They are indeed explorative. You can find them beautifully in Taoism, Buddhism and Hinduism. God is greater than all religions.

So this exploring with the others, together is also exploring human freedom, areas of freedom in human communities. So this could be a dialogical perception of the four principles of peace.

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*A star shines down on earth
And in every place of the planet
We make the same wish
on that very same star.....*

**Peace
On
Earth**



Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year to all....

FABC - OHD Secretariat

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