THE CHALLENGES AND PROMISE OF INTERFAITH DIALOGUE

_Nostra ætate_ 50 Years Later:
Where We Have Come From
Where We Are
Where We Hope to Go

April 13, 2016 7-8:30pm
Pasadena California, Holy Family Church
William Skudlarek OSB
This evening’s presentation

• *Nostra ætate*: Its history and significance
  – 50\textsuperscript{th} anniversary international conference
• Precursors and Pioneers
• John Paul II and Interreligious Dialogue
• Monastic Interreligious Dialogue
  – Dialogue with monks
  – Dialogue with Muslims
• Catholics and Muslims in Dialogue
NOSTRA ÆTATE

DECLARATION ON THE RELATION OF THE CHURCH TO NON-CHRISTIAN RELIGIONS

PROCLAIMED BY HIS HOLINESS

POPE PAUL VI

OCTOBER 28, 1965
NOSTRA ÆTATE

• Not on the original agenda of the Council
• Originally proposed as a document on the Church’s relation to the Jewish people
  – John XXIII and Jules Isaac
• Gradually expanded to include the Church’s relation to other major religions
• Shortest of all the conciliar documents—just over 1500 words (LG 27,000; GS 33,500)
• Perhaps the most revolutionary: From “anathema” to “dialogue and collaboration”
• Precursors and Pioneers
Precursor

Saint Francis of Assisi
1182-1226

Audience with the Sultan of Egypt, Malik-al-Kamil, in 1219
Precursor

Matteo Ricci
1552-1610

Jesuit missionary to China
Pioneer Hinduism

Jules Monchanin
1895-1957
Pioneer
Hinduism

Henri Le Saux OSB
(Abhisiktananda)
1910-1973
Pioneer Buddhism

Hugo-Enomiya Lasalle SJ
1898-1990
Japan
Pioneer
Buddhism

Edmond Pezet
1923-2008
Thailand
Pioneer
Islam

Charles de Foucauld
1858-1916
Pioneer Islam

Louis Massignon 1883-1962
“The Church, therefore, exhorts her children, that through dialogue and collaboration with the followers of other religions, carried out with prudence and love and in witness to the Christian faith and life, they recognize, preserve and promote the good things, spiritual and moral, as well as the socio-cultural values found among these people” (2:3).
“We give thanks for the witness of the followers of other religions who, by sharing with us their search for what is of ultimate value, help us and all Christians in our search for God.”
Buddhist/Catholic Dialogue
Rome, June 24, 2915
The Example and Teaching of Saint John Paul II

October 16, 1978  
Election

March 30, 2005  
Last Public Appearance
Eight Meetings with the Dalai Lama
“The Catholic Church . . . wishes to do everything possible to cooperate with other believers in preserving all that is good in their religions and cultures.”
Tokyo, 24 February 1981
Speech to Representatives of Non-Christian Religions

“You are the heirs and guardians of a venerable wisdom. . . I am happy that God has entrusted these gifts to you.”
“All of us, Christians and Muslims, live under the sun of the one merciful God. We both believe in one God who is the Creator of Man. We acclaim God’s sovereignty and we defend man’s dignity as God’s servant. We adore God and profess total submission to him. Thus, in a true sense, we can call one another brothers and sisters in faith in the one God.”
Thailand, 10 May 1984
Greeting the Buddhist Patriarch—and then Preaching to Catholics

“The majority of your fellow citizens embrace Buddhism . . . as people of Thailand you are heirs of the ancient and venerable wisdom contained therein.”

—From Pope John Paul’s homily later that day
Ecuador, 31 January 1985
Speech to the Indigenous Peoples

“Four hundred years ago the Christian faith arrived in this land. But even before that, without your suspecting it, God was present enlightening your path. . . .”
Morocco, 19 August 1985
Speech to Young Muslims

“I believe that, today, God invites us to change our old practices [of polemics and wars]. We must respect each other, and . . . stimulate each other in good works.”
Visit to the Synagogue of Rome
13 April 1986

“Each of our religions, in full awareness of the many ties that bind us to one another . . . wishes to be recognized and respected in its own identity.”
World Day of Prayer for Peace
Assisi, 27 October 1986
Speech to the Roman Curia
22 December 1986

“By showing the Catholic Church hand in hand with her Christian brothers and sisters, and by showing all of us hand in hand with our brothers and sisters of other religions, Assisi gave expression to our conviction, inculcated by the Second Vatican Council, that the human family is one in its origin and final goal, and that non-Christian religions have meaning and value.”
Every authentic prayer is inspired by the Holy Spirit, who “helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words. And God, who searches the heart, knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God (Rom 8: 26-27).
Bamaka (Mali), 28 January 1990
Speech to the Bishops of Mali

“It is time to encourage close attention to the values [of traditional African religions] . . . in order to recognize what may be an integral part of the common good.”
Manila, 15 January 1995
Speech to the Federation of Asian Bishops’ Conferences

“Interreligious dialogue . . . must reach to the grass-roots, correcting misunderstandings which communities have of one another, and fostering solidarity in the building of a more just and human society.”
“Dialogue is never an attempt to impose our own views upon others. . . . Holding firmly to what we believe, we listen respectfully to others, seeking to discern all that is good and holy, all that favours peace and cooperation.”
God of our fathers, you chose Abraham and his descendants to bring Your name to the nations: we are deeply saddened by the behavior of those who in the course of history have caused these children of Yours to suffer and asking Your forgiveness we wish to commit ourselves to genuine brotherhood with the people of the Covenant.

Joannnes Paulus II
“Better mutual understanding will surely lead, at the practical level, to a new way of presenting our two religions *not in opposition*, as has happened too often in the past, *but in partnership for the good of the human family*.”
From Gemelli Hospital, 11 March 2005
To Tanzanian Bishops on their *ad limina*

“A serious commitment to inter-religious dialogue . . . will give a shining example to other nations of the harmony that should always exist between diverse ethnic and religious groups.”
Dialogue Interreligieux Monastique
Monastic Interreligious Dialogue
Spiritual Exchange with Japanese Zen Buddhists
“There is much you can do through hospitality. . . . a meeting of mind and heart can take place, a meeting characterized by a shared sense of brotherhood in the one human family that opens the way for ever deeper spiritual dialogue.”
Gethsemani Encounters
Nuns in the West (2003)
Hsi Lai Temple, Hacienda Heights
Monks in the West (2004)
City of 10,000 Buddhas, Ukiah
A journal of the dialogue of spiritual experience

DILATATO CORDE

Une revue du dialogue de l'expérience spirituelle

www.dimmid.org
Hospitality and Friendship
Monastic Dialogue with Muslims

“Even though there are no monks in Islam, they have a deeply spiritual practice, with the presence of a master, the discipline of fasting, a daily “Liturgy of the Hours,” and a tradition of reading of the Qur'an with great devotion. Since their spiritual practices are very similar to ours, we wanted to enter into dialogue with this aspect of Islam.”

Daniel Pont OSB
The Monastic (Trappist) Community at Tibhirine, Algeria
Kidnapped 26–27 March 1996
Killed 21 May 1996
Christian de Chergé  OCSO
1937-1996
Ribât es Salâm
The Bond of Peace
“Des hommes et des dieux”
“To speak of God in another way is not to speak of another God.”

“Mais voir les choses différemment ne signifie pas qu’on ne voit pas les mêmes choses. De même, quand Dieu se dit autrement, il ne se dit pas autre, mais Tout-Autre, c’est-à-dire autrement que tous les autres » (L’invincible espérance, p. 127).
Last Will and Testament of Christian de Chergé

“My death, clearly, will appear to justify those who hastily judged me naïve, or idealistic: ‘Let him tell us now what he thinks of it!’ But these must realize that my avid curiosity will then be satisfied. This is what I shall be able to do, if God wills—immerse my gaze in that of the Father, and contemplate with him his children of Islam just as he sees them, all shining with the glory of Christ, the fruit of His Passion, and filled with the Gift of the Spirit, whose secret joy will always be to establish communion and to refashion the likeness, playfully delighting in the differences.”
Dom Christian’s Last Will and Testament

Quand un A-DIEU s'envisage...

S'il m'arrivait un jour - et ça pourrait être aujourd'hui - d'être victime du terrorisme qui semble vouloir englober maintenant tous les étrangers vivant en Algérie, j'aimerais que ma communauté, mon Église, ma famille, se souviennent que ma vie était DONNÉE à Dieu et à ce pays. Qu'ils acceptent que le Maître Unique de toute vie ne saurait être étranger à ce départ brutal. Qu'ils prient pour moi: comment serais-je trouvé digne d'une telle offrande?

When an “A-DIEU” is envisaged. . .

If it should happen one day—and it could be today—that I become a victim of the terrorism which now seems ready to engulf all the foreigners living in Algeria, I would like my community, my Church, my family, to remember that my life was GIVEN to God and to this country. I ask them to accept that the Sole Master of all life was not a stranger to this brutal departure. I ask them to pray for me—for how could I be found worthy of such an offering?
Tibhirine and Midelt
Benedictines and Muslims
Belgium, United States
European DIMMID Commissions
Sheikh Bentounès, Sufi Master
International Dialogue with Iranian Shi‘a Muslims

2011 Rome: Monastic and Shi’a Spirituality in Dialogue

2012 Qom, Iran: Creating Communities of Friendship

2014 Assisi: Towards a Global Abrahamic Community

2016, Qom: Human Dignity and Human Rights
Godefroy Raguenet de Saint-Albin
Mohammad Ali Shomali
Christianity and Islam
The Road Ahead
Resources

- Scholars, activists, and community leaders from various religious and cultural backgrounds address Islamophobia as it exists within the United States today.

- [Website: Knowledge Base](#)
Catholic Bishops of Canada

Part I
• Origins of Islam
• Contemporary currents
• Similarities with and differences from Christianity

Part II
• History and present state of dialogue

PDF on line
Scarboro Foreign Mission Society

Principles and Guidelines for Interfaith Dialogue
“Better mutual understanding will surely lead, at the practical level, to a new way of presenting our two religions not in opposition, as has happened too often in the past, but in partnership for the good of the human family.”

–John Paul II, Speech at the Omayyad Great Mosque Damascus on 6 May 2001
Dialogue . . .

- is not between religions but between religious people
- is not apologetics
- does not compare our best with their worst
- does not equate being different with being wrong 違います
- proceeds through friendship (Sant’Egidio)
- works best with first-person language
- leads to and follows from collaboration
• “Be ready to listen patiently and attentively to everything the other person wants to say. This requires the self-discipline of not speaking until the time is right.”

• “Develop the habit of giving real importance to the other person. This means appreciating them and recognizing their right to exist, to think as they do and to be happy. Never downplay what they say or think, even if you need to express your own point of view.”

• "Keep an open mind. Don’t get bogged down in your own limited ideas and opinions, but be prepared to change or expand them. The combination of two different ways of thinking can lead to a synthesis that enriches both.”
The Enlightened One and the Anointed one

The meeting of Buddhism and Christianity will come to be viewed as the most important event in modern history.
- Arnold Toynbee

Their meeting is the hope for the world.
- Thich Nhat Hanh

Icon: Br. Richard Maidwell CSSR