
**A COMPILATION OF QUOTES AND TEXTS OF POPE FRANCIS
ON DIALOGUE, ENCOUNTER, AND INTERRELIGIOUS
AND ECUMENCIAL RELATIONS**

“Dialogue is born from an attitude of respect for the other person, from a conviction that the other person has something good to say. It assumes that there is room in the heart for the person’s point of view, opinion, and proposal. To dialogue entails a cordial reception, not a prior condemnation. In order to dialogue, it is necessary to know how to lower the defenses, open the doors of the house, and offer human warmth.” On Heaven and Earth, Sudamericana, 2011

“The question of humility. It pleases me also to use the word ‘meekness,’ which does not mean weakness. A religious leader can be very strong, very firm without exercising aggression. Jesus says that the one who leads must be one who serves. For me, this idea is valid for the religious person of whatever religious confession. Service confers the real power of religious leadership.” - On Heaven and Earth, Sudamericana, 2011

“I very much hope to be able to contribute to the progress that relations between Jews and Catholics have experienced since the Second Vatican Council, in a spirit of renewed collaboration and at the service of a world that can be ever more harmonious with the will of the Creator.” - Letter of Pope Francis to Rome's Chief Rabbi, Riccardo Di Segni inviting him to the inauguration Mass

“In this work (peace building), the role of religion is fundamental. It is not possible to build bridges between people while forgetting God. But the converse is also true: it is not possible to establish true links with God while ignoring other people. Hence it is important to intensify dialogue among the various religions, and I am thinking particularly of dialogue with Islam.” -Pope Francis, March 23, 2013

“If we go in search of other people, other cultures, other ways of thinking, other religious, we come out of ourselves and begin that beautiful adventure that is called ‘dialogue’. Dialogue is very important for one’s maturity, because in relation with other people,

relations with other culture, also in healthy relations with other religions, one grows; grows, matures.” - August 21, 2013 to a group of Japanese students.

“Meekness is the ability to find people, to find culture, with peace; the ability to make intelligent questions.” - August 21, 2013 to a group of Japanese students.

“All wars, all struggles, all problems that are not resolved, with which we face, are due to a lack of dialogue,” - August 21, 2013 to a group of Japanese students.

“When there is a problem, dialogue: this makes peace. And this is what I wish for you in this journey of dialogue: that you may know how to dialogue; how this culture thinks.” - August 21, 2013 to a group of Japanese students.

“One of the titles of the Bishop of Rome is Pontiff, that is, a builder of bridges with God and between people. My wish is that the dialogue between us should help to build bridges connecting all people, in such a way that everyone can see in the other not an enemy, not a rival, but a brother or sister to be welcomed and embraced! My own origins impel me to work for the building of bridges. As you know, my family is of Italian origin; and so this dialogue between places and cultures a great distance apart matters greatly to me, this dialogue between one end of the world and the other, which today are growing ever closer, more interdependent, more in need of opportunities to meet and to create real spaces of authentic fraternity.

“In this work, the role of religion is fundamental. It is not possible to build bridges between people while forgetting God. But the converse is also true: it is not possible to establish true links with God, while ignoring other people. Hence it is important to intensify dialogue among the various religions, and I am thinking particularly of dialogue with Islam. At the Mass marking the beginning of my ministry, I greatly appreciated the presence of so many civil and religious leaders from the Islamic world. And it is also important to intensify outreach to non-believers, so that the differences which divide and hurt us may never prevail, but rather the desire to build true links of friendship between all peoples, despite their diversity.” Pope Francis's Remarks to Holy See Diplomatic Corps, March 2013

On March 20, the day following his inauguration of his ministry as Bishop of Rome and successor of the Apostle Peter, Pope Francis received fraternal delegates, that is representative envoys of Churches, Ecclesial Communities, and international ecumenical organizations, as well as representatives of non-Christian Religions, who had come to Rome. In his greeting to those belonging to other religious traditions, he first of all addressed the Muslims who “adore the one, living, and merciful God and who call upon Him in prayer.” Then, addressing all those gathered, he said: “I really appreciate your

presence. In it I see a tangible sign of the desire to grow in mutual respect and cooperation for the common good of humanity.”- Vatican Information Service, 20-03-2013, Year XXIII, Num. 67

“The Catholic Church is aware of the importance of the promotion of friendship and respect between men and women of different religious traditions. I want to repeat this: the promotion of friendship and respect between men and women of different religious traditions. [The Church] is also aware of the responsibility that we all bear to this our world, to all of creation, which we should love and protect. And we can do much for the good of the poorest, of the weak and suffering, to promote justice and reconciliation, to build peace. But, above all, we must keep alive the thirst for the Absolute in the world, not allowing a one-dimensional vision of the human person, in which humanity is reduced to that which it produces and consumes, to prevail. This is one of the most dangerous pitfalls of our times.

“We know how, in recent times, violence has produced an attempt to eliminate God and the divine from the horizon of humanity, and we feel the value of witnessing in our societies to the original openness to the transcendent that is inscribed in the human heart. In this, we also feel close to all men and women who, although not claiming to belong to any religious tradition, still feel themselves to be in search of truth, goodness, and beauty, God's Truth, Goodness, and Beauty, and who are our precious allies in the effort to defend human dignity, in building a peaceful coexistence between peoples, and in carefully protecting creation” -Vatican Information Service, 20-03-2013, Year XXIII, Num. 67

“Christians must respond to evil with good, taking the Cross upon themselves as Jesus did. This evening we have heard the witness given by our Lebanese brothers and sisters. They are the ones who composed these beautiful prayers and meditations. We extend our heartfelt gratitude to them for this work and above all for the witness they offer. We were able to see this when Pope Benedict visited Lebanon. We saw the beauty and the strong bond of communion joining Christians together in that land and the friendship of our Muslim brothers and sisters and so many others. That occasion was a sign to the Middle East and to the whole world: a sign of hope” - Concluding Remarks at the Good Friday Way of the Cross, March 29, 2013

In his homily during a mass on May 22nd, which conjured international attention, the pope affirmed. “The Lord has redeemed all of us, all of us, with the Blood of Christ: all of us, not just Catholics. Everyone!... Even atheists... And this blood makes us children of God of the first class! And we all have a duty to do good. And this commandment for everyone to do good, I think is a beautiful path towards peace. If we, each doing our own part, if we do good to others, if we meet there, doing good, and we go slowly, gently, little by little, we will make that culture of encounter encounter: we need that so much.

We need to meet one another doing good.” -

<http://www.theatlantic.com/international/print/2013/05/no-the-pope-didn't-just-say-all-atheists-go-to-heaven/>

Asked about interactions with other religions, the Holy Father said it was important “to foster a culture of encounter throughout the world.”

“Egoism must be pruned,” he explained, and people of all faiths should be concerned about taking care of the hungry and need.

People of faith “cannot sleep in peace knowing that there is one child dying of hunger,” he stressed. “We are going to be judged by our works of mercy.” –

<http://www.catholicnewsagency.com/news/pope-francis-calls-faithful-to-deeper-encounters-with-others/>

“I make a forceful and urgent call to the entire Catholic Church, and also to every Christian of other confessions, as well as to followers of every religion and to those brothers and sisters who do not believe: peace is a good which overcomes every barrier, because it belongs all of humanity!” - Wednesday audience, Sep 1, 2013

“It is neither a culture of confrontation nor a culture of conflict which builds harmony within and between peoples, but rather a culture of encounter and a culture of dialogue; this is the only way to peace.” - Wednesday audience, Sep 1, 2013

“Let us ask Mary to help us to respond to violence, to conflict and to war, with the power of dialogue, reconciliation and love. She is our mother: may she help us to find peace; all of us are her children!” - Wednesday audience, Sep 1, 2013

“With all my strength, I ask each party in this conflict to listen to the voice of their own conscience, not to close themselves in solely on their own interests, but rather to look at each other as brothers and decisively and courageously to follow the path of encounter and negotiation, and so overcome blind conflict.” - Wednesday audience, Sep 1, 2013

“It is clear that the faith is not intransigent, but grows in coexistence that respects the other. The believer isn’t arrogant; on the contrary, truth makes him humble, knowing that, more than our possessing it, it is truth that embraces and possesses us. Far from stiffening us, the certainty of the faith puts us on the way, and makes possible witness and dialogue with everyone.” - Lumen fidei. 34.

Letter to the Founder of La Repubblica

“You also ask me, in conclusion of your first article, what we should say to our Jewish brothers about the promise made to them by God: has it all come to nothing? Believe me, this is a question that challenges us radically as Christians, because, with the help of God, especially since Vatican Council II, we have rediscovered that the Jewish people are still for us the holy root from which Jesus germinated. In the friendship I cultivated in the course of all these years with Jewish brothers in Argentina, often in prayer I also questioned God, especially when my mind went to the memory of the terrible experience of the Shoa. What I can say to you, with the Apostle Paul, is that God’s fidelity to the close covenant with Israel never failed and that, through the terrible trials of these centuries, the Jews have kept their faith in God. And for this, we shall never be sufficiently grateful to them as Church, but also as humanity. They, then, precisely by persevering in the faith of the God of the Covenant, called all, also us Christians, to the fact that we are always waiting, as pilgrims, for the Lord’s return and, therefore, that we must always be open to Him and never take refuge in what we have already attained.” - Pope Francis' Letter to the Founder of La Repubblica Italian Newspaper, September 11, 2013

“You ask me if the God of the Christians forgives those who don’t believe and who don’t seek the faith. I start by saying – and this is the fundamental thing – that God’s mercy has no limits if you go to him with a sincere and contrite heart. The issue for those who do not believe in God is to obey their conscience. Sin, even for those who have no faith, exists when people disobey their conscience.” - Open letter to the founder of *La Repubblica* newspaper, Eugenio Scalfari

“The time has come, and the Vatican in fact inaugurated the season, of an open dialogue without preconceptions, which opens the doors for a serious and fecund meeting.” - Pope Francis' Letter to the Founder of La Repubblica Italian Newspaper, September 11, 2013

Pope Francis on Monday wished Jews around the world a sweet and peaceful year 5774, called for increased dialogue among the world’s religious communities and opposed fundamentalism in any faith. During his first private audience with an international Jewish leader since being elected Catholic pontiff in March, Francis asked World Jewish Congress (WJC) President Ronald S. Lauder to convey his New Year message to Jewish communities world-wide and said he also needed a sweet year because of the important decisions lying ahead. Using the Hebrew words for ‘Happy New Year’, Pope Francis wished a "Shana Tova" and asked the WJC to share that message with the Jewish people worldwide.”- <http://www.news.va/en/news/pope-francis-meets-jewish-leaders>

Pope Francis to members of the International Jewish Committee for Interreligious Consultations

“Humanity needs our joint witness in favor of respect for the dignity of man and woman created in the image and likeness of God, and in favor of peace which is above all God’s gift. Friendly relations are in a way the basis for the development of a more official dialogue.

I had the joy of maintaining relations of sincere friendship with leaders of the Jewish world,” Pope Francis remarked. “We talked often of our respective religious identities, the image of man found in the Scriptures, and how to keep an awareness of God alive in a world now secularized in many ways. But above all, as friends, we enjoyed each other’s company. We were all enriched through encounter and dialogue, and we welcomed each other, and this helped all of us grow as people and as believers. I encourage you to follow this path trying, as you do so, to involve younger generations.”

– Pope Francis to members of the International Jewish Committee for Interreligious Consultations on June 24.

Pope Francis' Address to Delegation of the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople
Vatican City, June 28, 2013

Here is the translation of the Holy Father’s address to the members of the delegation of the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople on the occasion of the solemnity of Sts. Peter and Paul.

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Dear Brothers in Christ,

I am particularly happy to receive you with a warm welcome in the Church of Rome, which is celebrating her Patron Saints Peter and Paul. Your presence at this event is the sign of the profound bond that unites the Church of Constantinople and the Church of Rome in faith, hope and charity. The beautiful custom of an exchange of delegations between our Churches for the respective patronal feasts, which began in 1969, is for me a cause for great joy: our fraternal meeting is an essential part of the journey towards unity. I would like to express my profound gratitude to His Holiness Bartholomew I and to the Holy Synod of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, who wished to send, also this year, high representatives. Of His Holiness Bartholomew I, I also recall with fraternal affection his gesture of exquisite attention in my meetings, when he wished to honor me with his presence in the celebration of the beginning of my ministry as Bishop of Rome. I am also extremely grateful to Your Eminence for your participation in that event and I am happy to see you again in this circumstance.

The search for unity among Christians is an urgency from which today, more than ever, we cannot subtract ourselves. In our world, hungry and thirsty for truth, love, hope, peace and unity, it is important for our own witness to be able to, finally, proclaim with one

voice the happy news of the Gospel and to celebrate together the Divine Mysteries of our new life in Christ! We know well that unity is primarily a gift from God for which we must pray incessantly for, but to all of us have the task of preparing the conditions, of cultivating the ground of the heart, so that this extraordinary grace will be received.

A fundamental contribution to the search for full communion between Catholics and Orthodox is offered by the Mixed International Commission for Theological Dialogue, co-presided by Your Eminence, Metropolitan Ioannis, and by the Venerable Brother , Cardinal Kurt Koch. I thank you sincerely for your precious and tireless commitment. This Commission has already produced many common texts and is now studying the delicate topic of the theological and ecclesiological relation between primacy and ecclesiastical governing in the life of the Church. It is significant that today we succeed in reflecting together, in truth and in charity, on these topics, beginning with what we have in common, without hiding, however, what still separates us. It is not a question of a mere theoretical exercise, but to know in depth the reciprocal traditions to understand them and, at times, to learn from them. I am referring, for instance, to the reflection of the Catholic Church on the meaning of episcopal collegiality, and to the tradition of, so typical of the Orthodox Churches. I am confident that the effort of common reflection, so complex and laborious, will bear fruits in its time. I am comforted to know that Catholics and Orthodox share the same concept of dialogue, which does not seek a theological minimalism on which to bring about a compromise, but, rather, is based on deeper reflection on the one truth that Christ has given His Church and that we do not cease to understand ever better, moved by the Holy Spirit. Because of this, we must not be afraid of meeting and of true dialogue. It does not distance us from the truth, rather, through an exchange of gifts, it leads us, under the guidance of the Spirit of Truth, to the whole Truth (cf. John 16:13).

Venerable Brothers, I thank you once again for being here with us on the occasion of the feast of Saints Peter and Paul. We confidently invoke their intercession and that of the Holy Apostle Andrew, brother of Peter, for our faithful and for the needs of the whole world, above all of the poor, the suffering and all those who are unjustly persecuted because of their faith. I ask you finally to pray for me and to have others pray for me, that the Lord may assist me in my ministry as Bishop of Rome and Successor of Peter.

<http://www.zenit.org/en/articles/pope-francis-address-to-delegation-of-the-ecumenical-patriarchate-of-constantinople>

Pope Francis to His Holiness Baselios Marthoma Paulose II Catholicos of the Makankara Orthodox Syrian Church

“The Apostle Thomas exclaimed, “My Lord and my God!” (*Jn* 2:28) with one of the most beautiful confessions of faith in Christ handed down by the Gospels, a faith which proclaims the divinity of Christ, his lordship in our lives, and his victory over sin and

death through his resurrection. This event is so real that Saint Thomas is invited to touch for himself the actual marks of the crucified and risen Jesus (cf. *Jn* 20:27). It is precisely in this faith that we meet each other; it is this faith that unites us, even if we cannot yet share the Eucharistic table; and it is this faith which urges us to continue and intensify the commitment to ecumenism, encounter and dialogue towards full communion. With deep affection I welcome Your Holiness and the members of your delegation and I ask you to convey my cordial greetings to the Bishops, clergy and faithful of the Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church. I also greet to the communities you are visiting in Europe. Thirty years ago, in June of 1983, Catholicos Moran Mar Baselios Marthoma Mathews I paid a visit to my venerable predecessor, Pope John Paul II and to the Church of Rome. Together, they recognised their common faith in Christ. Afterwards, they met again at Kottayam, in the Cathedral of Mar Elias, in February of 1986 during the pastoral visits of the Pope in India. On that occasion, Pope John Paul II said: “With you I desire that our Churches may soon find effective ways of resolving the urgent pastoral problems that face us, and that we may progress together in brotherly love and in our theological dialogue, for it is by these means that reconciliation among Christians and reconciliation in the world can come about. I can assure you that the Catholic Church, with the commitment she made at the Second Vatican Council, is ready to participate fully in this enterprise.

From those encounters began a concrete path of dialogue with the institution of a mixed commission, which brought to birth the agreement of 1990, on the day of Pentecost, a commission which continues its important work and which has brought us to significant steps on themes such as the common use of buildings of worship and cemeteries, the mutual concession of spiritual and even liturgical resources in specific pastoral situations, and the necessity to identify new forms of collaboration when faced with growing social and religious challenges.

I wanted to recall some of the steps in these 30 years of the growing closeness between us, because I believe that on the ecumenical path it is important to look with trust to the steps that have been completed, overcoming prejudices and closed attitudes which are part of a kind of “culture of clashes” and source of division, and giving way to a "culture of encounter", which educates us for mutual understanding and for working towards unity. Alone however, this is impossible; our witnesses and poverty slow the progress. For this reason, it is important to intensify our prayer, because only the Holy Spirit with his grace, his light and his warmth can melt our coldness and guide our steps towards an ever greater brotherhood. Prayer and commitment in order to let relationships of friendship and cooperation grow at various levels, in the clergy, among the faithful, and among the various churches born from the witness given by St Thomas. May the Holy Spirit continue to enlighten us and guide us towards reconciliation and harmony, overcoming all causes of division and rivalry which have marked our past. Your Holiness, let us walk this path together, looking with trust towards that day in which, with the help of God, we will be united at the altar of Christ's sacrifice, in the fullness of Eucharistic communion.” – Pope Francis to His Holiness Baselios Marthoma Paulose II Catholicos of the Makankara Orthodox Syrian Church. Thursday 5 September 2013

http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/francesco/speeches/2013/september/documents/papa-francesco_20130905_chiesa-sira-malankarese_en.html

Pope Francis and Anglican Archbishop Justin Welby of Canterbury.

"Since we began our respective ministries within days of each other, I think we will always have a particular reason to support one another in prayer. I pray that the nearness of our two inaugurations may serve the reconciliation of the world and the church.

The history of relations between the Church of England and the Catholic Church is long and complex and not without pain. However firm bonds of friendship have enabled us to remain on course even when difficulties have arisen in our theological dialogue that were greater than we could have foreseen at the start of our journey.

(Joint witness of Christian values is especially important today) in a world that seems at times to call into question some of the foundations of society, such as respect for the sacredness of human life or the importance of the institution of the family built on marriage, a value that you yourself have had occasion to recall recently.

We share many ideas on the topics of economics, social justice and peace. As you yourself have observed, we Christians bring peace and grace as a treasure to be offered to the world, but these gifts can bear fruit only when Christians live and work together in harmony." - Jun-14-2013 meeting Pope Francis and Anglican Archbishop Justin Welby of Canterbury.

Pope Francis audience with representatives of the Churches and Ecclesial Communities and of the Different Religions

"Yesterday morning, during Holy Mass, through you I felt the spiritual presence of the communities which you represent. In this expression of faith, it seemed that we were experiencing all the more urgently the prayer for unity between believers in Christ and at the same time seeing prefigured in some way its full realization, which depends on God's plan and our own faithful cooperation.

Yes, dear brothers and sisters in Christ, let us all feel closely united to the prayer of our Saviour at the Last Supper, to his appeal: *ut unum sint*. Let us ask the Father of mercies to enable us to live fully the faith graciously bestowed upon us on the day of our Baptism and to bear witness to it freely, joyfully and courageously. This will be the best service we can offer to the cause of Christian unity, a service of hope for a world still torn by divisions, conflicts and rivalries. The more we are faithful to his will, in our thoughts, words and actions, the more we will progress, really and substantially, towards unity.

For my part, I wish to assure you that, in continuity with my predecessors, it is my firm intention to pursue the path of ecumenical dialogue, and I thank the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity for the help that it continues to provide, in my name, in the service of this most noble cause. I ask you, dear brothers and sisters, to bring my cordial greetings and the assurance of my prayerful remembrance in the Lord Jesus to the Christian communities which you represent, and I beg of you the charity of a special prayer for me, that I may be a pastor according to the heart of Christ.

And now I turn to you, the distinguished representatives of the Jewish people, to whom we are linked by a most special spiritual bond, since, as the Second Vatican Council stated "the Church of Christ recognizes that in God's plan of salvation the beginnings of her faith and her election are to be found in the patriarchs, Moses and the prophets" (*Nostra Aetate*, 4). I thank you for your presence and I trust that, with the help of the Most High, we can make greater progress in that fraternal dialogue which the Council wished to encourage (cf. *ibid.*) and which has indeed taken place, bearing no little fruit, especially in recent decades.

I also greet and cordially thank all of you, dear friends who are followers of other religious traditions; first Muslims, who worship God as one, living and merciful, and invoke him in prayer, and all of you. I greatly appreciate your presence: in it, I see a tangible sign of a will to grow in mutual esteem and in cooperation for the common good of humanity.

The Catholic Church is conscious of the importance of promoting friendship and respect between men and women of different religious traditions – I want to repeat this: promoting friendship and respect between men and women of different religious traditions – a sign of this can be seen in the important work carried out by the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue. The Church is likewise conscious of the responsibility which all of us have for our world, for the whole of creation, which we must love and protect. There is much that we can do to benefit the poor, the needy and those who suffer, and to favour justice, promote reconciliation and build peace. But before all else we need to keep alive in our world the thirst for the absolute, and to counter the dominance of a one-dimensional vision of the human person, a vision which reduces human beings to what they produce and to what they consume: this is one of the most insidious temptations of our time.

We know how much violence has resulted in recent times from the attempt to eliminate God and the divine from the horizon of humanity, and we are aware of the importance of witnessing in our societies to that primordial openness to transcendence which lies deep within the human heart. In this, we also sense our closeness to all those men and women who, although not identifying themselves as followers of any religious tradition, are nonetheless searching for truth, goodness and beauty, the truth, goodness and beauty of God. They are our valued allies in the commitment to defending human dignity, in building a peaceful coexistence between peoples and in safeguarding and caring for creation.” – Pope Francis audience with representatives of the Churches and Ecclesial Communities and of the Different Religions, 20 March 2013

Venezuelan opposition leader talks with pope at Vatican, says Francis promotes dialogue

VATICAN CITY – The Venezuelan opposition leader who narrowly lost his country's presidential election earlier this year has met with Pope Francis.

Henrique Capriles says Francis used the 20-minute meeting on Wednesday to encourage dialogue as a way to overcome polarization between the government and the opposition.

The Vatican said Francis received Capriles at the end of the weekly public audience in St. Peter's Square. It gave no details about what the two men discussed.

Capriles also said he invited the Argentine-born pope to visit Venezuela.

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<http://www.foxnews.com/world/2013/11/06/venezuelan-opposition-leader-talks-with-pope-at-vatican-says-francis-promotes/>

International Meeting for Peace, organized by Sant'Egidio Community, from September 29-October 1, on the topic: "The Courage of Hope: Religions and Cultures in Dialogue."

Your Beatitudes/ Your Eminences,

Distinguished Representatives of the Churches, of the Ecclesial Communities and of the great religions,

I thank you joyfully from my heart for having made this visit. You are living intense days in this meeting, which brings together people from different religions and which has a significant and demanding title: "The Courage of Hope." I thank Professor Andrea Riccardi for the words of greeting he addressed to me on behalf of all and, with him, Sant'Egidio Community for having followed tenaciously the path traced by Blessed John Paul II in the historic meeting of Assisi: keep the lamp of hope lit, praying and working for peace. It was in 1986, in a world still marked by the division of opposing blocs, and it was in that context that the Pope invited the religious leaders to pray for peace: no longer one against another, but one beside the other. It should not and could not remain an isolated event. You have continued this path and have increased its impulse, involving in the dialogue significant personalities of all the religions, and lay and humanistic exponents. Precisely in these months we feel that the world is in need of the "spirit" that animated that historic meeting. Why? Because it is in such need of peace. No! We can never be resigned in face of the pain of entire populations, hostages of war, of misery, of exploitation. We cannot be indifferent and impotent in face of the drama of children, families, elderly affected by violence. We cannot let terrorism imprison the heart of a few

violent men to sow grief and death to so many. In a special way we all say forcefully, continually, that there can be no religious justification for violence, in whatever way it manifests itself. As Pope Benedict XVI stressed two years ago, on the 25th anniversary of the Assisi meeting, we must do away with every form of religiously motivated violence, and watch together so that the world will not fall prey to that violence contained in every project of civilization that is based on “no” to God.

As leaders of the different religions we can do very much. Peace is everyone’s responsibility. To pray for peace, to work for peace! A religious leader is always a man of peace, because the commandment of peace is inscribed in the depth of the religious traditions we represent. But, what can we do? Your meeting with one another every year suggests the way to you: the courage of dialogue, which gives hope. In the world also, in societies, there is little peace because dialogue is lacking, it is hard to come out of the narrow horizon of one’s interests to open to a true and sincere encounter. Peace needs a tenacious, patient, strong, intelligent dialogue where nothing is lost. Dialogue can defeat war. Dialogue makes people of different generations live together, who often ignore one another; it makes citizens of different ethnic provenance and different convictions live together. Dialogue is the way of peace. Because dialogue fosters understanding, harmony, concord, peace. Because of this, it is vital that it grow, that it spread among people of every condition and conviction as a network of peace that protects the world and the weakest.

We, religious leaders, are called to be “dialoguers,” to act in the making of peace not as intermediaries, but as genuine mediators. Intermediaries seek to make reduction to all parties, in order to obtain a gain for themselves. Instead, a mediator is one who does not take anything for himself but spends himself generously, to the point of consuming himself, knowing that the only gain is that of peace. Each one of us is called to be an artisan of peace, uniting and not dividing, extinguishing hatred and not harboring it, opening the ways of dialogue and not raising new walls! We must dialogue, meet with one another to establish in the world the culture of dialogue, the culture of encounter.

The legacy of the first Assisi meeting , nourished a year after, year also in your journey, shows how dialogue is profoundly connected with each one’s prayer. Dialogue and prayer grow and wither together. Man’s relationship with God is the school and food of dialogue with men. Pope Paul VI spoke of the “transcendental origin of dialogue” and he said: “Religion is by its nature a relationship between God and man. Prayer expresses this relationship through dialogue“(Encyclical Ecclesiam suam, 72). Let us continue to pray for peace in the world, in Syria, in the Middle East, in so many countries of the world. This courage of peace gives the courage of hope in the world, to all those who suffer because of war; to young people who look with concern to their future. May Almighty God, who hears our prayers, support us on this path of peace. And I would like to suggest now that each one of us, all of us, in the presence of God, in silence, wish one another peace.

- <http://www.zenit.org/en/articles/pope-francis-address-to-the-participants-international-meeting-for-peace-by-the-sant-egidio>

Pope Francis: War Is Always A Defeat For Humanity

September 7, 2013

My Christian faith urges me to look to the Cross. How I wish that all men and women of good will would look to the Cross if only for a moment! There, we can see God's reply: violence is not answered with violence, death is not answered with the language of death. In the silence of the Cross, the uproar of weapons ceases and the language of reconciliation, forgiveness, dialogue, and peace is spoken. This evening, I ask the Lord that we Christians, and our brothers and sisters of other religions, and every man and woman of good will, cry out forcefully: violence and war are never the way to peace! Let everyone be moved to look into the depths of his or her conscience and listen to that word which says: Leave behind the self-interest that hardens your heart, overcome the indifference that makes your heart insensitive towards others, conquer your deadly reasoning, and open yourself to dialogue and reconciliation. Look upon your brother's sorrow — I think of the children, look upon these - look upon your brother's sorrow, and do not add to it, stay your hand, rebuild the harmony that has been shattered; and all this not by conflict but by encounter! May the noise of weapons cease! War always marks the failure of peace, it is always a defeat for humanity. Let the words of Pope Paul VI resound again: 'No more one against the other, no more, never! ... war never again, never again war!'. 'Peace expresses itself only in peace, a peace which is not separate from the demands of justice but which is fostered by personal sacrifice, clemency, mercy and love'. Forgiveness, dialogue, reconciliation — these are the words of peace, in beloved Syria, in the Middle East, in all the world! Let us pray for reconciliation and peace, let us work for reconciliation and peace, and let us all become, in every place, men and women of reconciliation and peace! Amen".

- <http://www.news.va/en/news/francis-war-is-always-a-defeat-for-humanity>

Monday, October 21, 2013, Pope Francis met with members of the Lutheran World Federation and representatives of the Lutheran-Catholic Commission on Unity.

Dear Lutheran brothers and sisters,

I warmly welcome you, the members of the Lutheran World Federation and the representatives of the Lutheran-Catholic Commission on Unity. This meeting follows upon my very cordial and pleasant meeting with you, dear Bishop Younan, and with the Secretary of the Lutheran World Federation, the Reverend Junge, during the inaugural celebration of my ministry as the Bishop of Rome.

It is with a sense of profound gratitude to our Lord Jesus Christ that I think of the many advances made in relations between Lutherans and Catholics in these past decades, not

only through theological dialogue, but also through fraternal cooperation in a variety of pastoral settings, and above all, in the commitment to progress in spiritual ecumenism.

In a certain sense, this last area constitutes the soul of our journey towards full communion, and permits us even now a foretaste of its results, however imperfect. In the measure in which we draw closer to our Lord Jesus Christ in humility of spirit, we are certain to draw closer to one another. And, in the measure in which we ask the Lord for the gift of unity, we are sure that he will take us by the hand and be our guide.

This year, as a result of a now fifty year old theological dialogue and with a view to the commemoration of the five-hundredth anniversary of the Reformation, the text of the Lutheran-Catholic Commission on Unity was published, with the significant title: From Conflict to Communion. Lutheran-Catholic Common Commemoration of the Reformation in 2017.

I believe that it is truly important for everyone to confront in dialogue the historical reality of the Reformation, its consequences and the responses it elicited. Catholics and Lutherans can ask forgiveness for the harm they have caused one another and for their offenses committed in the sight of God. Together we can rejoice in the longing for unity which the Lord has awakened in our hearts, and which makes us look with hope to the future.

In light of this decades-long journey and of the many examples of fraternal communion between Lutherans and Catholics which we have witnessed, and encouraged by faith in the grace given to us in the Lord Jesus Christ, I am certain that we will continue our journey of dialogue and of communion, addressing fundamental questions as well as differences in the fields of anthropology and ethics. Certainly, there is no lack of difficulties, and none will lack in the future.

They will continue to require patience, dialogue and mutual understanding. But we must not be afraid! We know well - as Benedict XVI often reminded us - that unity is not primarily the fruit of our labors, but the working of the Holy Spirit, to whom we must open our hearts in faith, so that he will lead us along the paths of reconciliation and communion.

http://www.catholic.org/international/international_story.php?id=52824

On June 19, 2013, during his teaching on the Church as the Body of Christ "I pray not only for them, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, so that they may all be one, as you, Father, are in me and I in you, that they also may be in us, that the world may believe that you sent me." (John 17:21) Francis said:

Divisions among us, but also divisions among the communities: evangelical Christians, orthodox Christians, Catholic Christians, but why divided? We must try to bring about

unity. Let me tell you something, today, before leaving home, I spent 40 minutes more or less, half an hour, with an evangelical pastor. And we prayed together, seeking unity.

But we Catholics must pray with each other and other Christians. Pray that the Lord gift us (with) unity! Unity among ourselves! How will we ever have unity among Christians if we are not capable of having it among us Catholics, in the family, how many families fight and split up? Seek unity, unity builds the Church and comes from Jesus Christ. He sends us the Holy Spirit to build unity!

http://www.catholic.org/international/international_story.php?id=52824

March 20, 2013 Pope Francis to delegates of the Orthodox Churches, the Oriental Orthodox Churches and Ecclesial Communities of the West:

Let us all be intimately united to our Savior's prayer at the Last Supper, to his invocation: *ut unum sint*. We call on the merciful Father to be able to fully live the faith that we have received as a gift on the day of our Baptism, and to be able to it free, joyful and courageous testimony. The more we are faithful to his will, in thoughts, in words and in deeds, the more we will truly and substantially walk towards unity.

Argentina's Rabbi Abraham Skorka, in this interview, tells how Pope Francis and he are making history by their friendship, and reveals that they dream of travelling together to the Holy Land soon.

<http://vaticaninsider.lastampa.it/en/the-vatican/detail/articolo/francesco-francis-francisco-28206/>

Pope Francis to World Council of Churches

30 October 2013

To My Venerable Brother Cardinal Kurt Koch
President Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity

On the occasion of the Tenth General Assembly of the World Council of Churches, I ask you to convey my cordial greetings and good wishes to all gathered in Busan, and in a particular way to the General Secretary, Dr Olav Fykse Tveit, and the representatives of

the Christian communities present. I assure you of my close pastoral interest in the deliberations of the Assembly and I willingly reaffirm the commitment of the Catholic Church to continuing its long-standing cooperation with the World Council of Churches. The theme of the Assembly, God of Life, Lead us to Justice and Peace, is above all a prayerful invocation of the Triune God who draws all creation to its fulfillment through the redemptive power of the Cross of Jesus Christ and the outpouring of the manifold gifts of the Holy Spirit. Truly, wherever the gift of life is cherished, and justice and peace prevail, God's Kingdom is present and his sovereign power is already at work.

For this reason, I trust that the present Assembly will help to consolidate the commitment of all Christ's followers to intensified prayer and cooperation in the service of the Gospel and the integral good of our human family. The globalized world in which we live demands of us a common witness to the God-given dignity of every human being and the effective promotion of the cultural, social and legal conditions which enable individuals and communities to grow in freedom, and which support the mission of the family as the fundamental building-block of society, ensure a sound and integral education for the young, and guarantee for all the untrammelled exercise of religious liberty. In fidelity to the Gospel, and in response to the urgent needs of the present time, we are called to reach out to those who find themselves in the existential peripheries of our societies and to show particular solidarity with the most vulnerable of our brothers and sisters: the poor, the disabled, the unborn and the sick, migrants and refugees, the elderly and the young who lack employment.

Conscious that the soul of ecumenism remains authentic conversion, holiness and prayer (cf. *Unitatis Redintegratio*, 8), I pray that the General Assembly will contribute to a new impulse of vitality and vision on the part of all committed to the sacred cause of Christian unity, in fidelity to the Lord's will for his Church (cf. *Jn 17:21*) and in openness to the promptings of the Holy Spirit. Upon all gathered in Busan I invoke the abundant blessings of Almighty God, source of all life and of every spiritual gift.

From the Vatican, 4 October 2013, Feast of Saint Francis of Assisi

FRANCIS

<http://www.news.va/en/news/pope-francis-to-wcc-show-solidarity-to-the-most-vu>

Burmese Nobel Peace Laureate Aung San Suu Kyi visits Pope Francis at the Vatican. "The two leaders discussed the culture of encounter and interreligious dialogue."

(I studied a broad selection of media coverage of this event, and this was the only coverage that mentioned the culture of encounter and interreligious dialogue.)

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_M49Hdix2-Q

Pope Francis on August 29th received the King of Jordan, Abdullah II, and his wife, Queen Rania. Several themes were touched upon, including the negotiations which have resumed between Israelis and Palestinians, and on the question of Jerusalem. Particular attention was given to the crisis in Syria. It was said that the path of dialogue and negotiation between all components of Syrian society, with the support of the international community, is the only option for putting an end to the conflict and the violence which every day claims many lives, including the helpless civilian population. Also during meetings, King Abdullah was commended for his commitment in the field of interreligious dialogue, including September's conference in Amman.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OdithEEXINw>

Pope's Address to Plenary Assembly of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue
- Vatican City, November 28, 2013

Your Eminences,

Dear Brothers in the Episcopate,

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

I am happy to meet with you in the context of your Plenary Session: I give each one a most cordial welcome and I thank Cardinal Jean-Louis Tauran for the words he addressed to me in your name.

The Catholic Church is aware of the value of the promotion of friendship and of respect among men and women of different religious traditions. We understand its importance increasingly, be it because the world has become, in some way, "smaller," be it because the phenomenon of migrations increases contacts between persons and communities of different traditions, cultures and religions. This reality interpellates our conscience as Christians; it is a challenge for the understanding of the faith and for the concrete life of the local Churches, parishes and very many believers.

Hence, of particular timeliness is the topic chosen for your gathering: "Members of Different Religious Traditions in the Society." As I stated in the Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, "an attitude of openness in truth and in love must characterise the dialogue with the followers of non-Christian religions, in spite of various obstacles and difficulties, especially forms of fundamentalism on both sides" (n. 250). In fact, contexts are not lacking in the world in which coexistence is difficult: often political and economic motives superimpose themselves on cultural and religious differences, also fueling misunderstandings and mistakes of the past: all this risks generating diffidence and fear. There is only one way to overcome this fear, and it is that of dialogue, of encounter marked by friendship and respect.

To dialogue does not mean giving up one's own identity when one goes against the other, and less so to yield to compromising the faith and Christian morality. On the contrary, "true openness implies maintaining oneself firm in one's deepest convictions. With a

clear and joyful identity” (Ibid., 251) and because of this, open to understand the reasons of the other, capable of respectful human relations, convinced that the encounter with someone who is different from us can be an occasion of growth in fraternity, of enrichment and of witness. It is for this reason that interreligious dialogue and evangelization do not exclude one another, but nourish one another mutually. We do not impose anything, we do not use any deceitful strategy to attract faithful, rather we witness with joy, with simplicity what we believe in and what we are. In fact, an encounter in which each one puts to one side what he believes in, pretending to give up what is dearest to him, would certainly not be a genuine relation. In such a case, one could speak of a false fraternity. As disciples of Jesus we must make an effort to overcome fear, ready always to take the first step, without letting ourselves be discouraged in face of difficulties and misunderstandings.

A constructive dialogue between persons of different religious traditions also helps to overcome another fear, which we unfortunately find in the most strongly secularised societies: the fear of the various religious traditions and of the religious dimension as such. Religion is seen as something useless or downright dangerous. Sometimes it is required that Christians give up their religious and moral convictions in the exercise of their profession (cf. Benedict XVI, Address to the Diplomatic Corps, January 10, 2011). Here is a widespread belief that co-existence would be possible only by concealing one's own religious identity, encountering one another in a sort of neutral space, without references to the transcendent. But how is it possible to create true relations, to build a society that is an authentic communal home, imposing on its members to set aside an intimate part of their being? It is not possible to think of it as a “laboratory” brotherhood. Certainly, it is necessary that all this occurs with respect for the convictions of others, even those who do not believe, but we must have the courage and the patience to encounter and come towards each other as we are. The future is in respectful co-existence in diversity, not in the uniformity of a single theoretically neutral thought. The recognition of the fundamental right to religious freedom, in all its dimensions, therefore becomes indispensable. In this regard, great efforts have been made to express the Magisterium of the Church during recent decades. We are convinced that this is the route to building peace in the world.

I thank the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue for the precious service it carries out, and I invoke upon each of you an abundance of the Lord's blessings.

<http://www.zenit.org/en/articles/pope-s-address-to-plenary-assembly-of-the-pontifical-council-for-interreligious-dialogue>

Apostolic Exhortation “*Evangelii Gaudium*” of the Holy Father Francis

IV. Social dialogue as a contribution to peace

238. Evangelization also involves the path of dialogue. For the Church today, three areas of dialogue stand out where she needs to be present in order to promote full human development and to pursue the common good: dialogue with states, dialogue with society – including dialogue with cultures and the sciences – and dialogue with other believers who are not part of the Catholic Church. In each case, “the Church speaks from the light which faith offers”,[\[186\]](#) contributing her two thousand year experience and keeping ever in mind the life and sufferings of human beings. This light transcends human reason, yet it can also prove meaningful and enriching to those who are not believers and it stimulates reason to broaden its perspectives.

239. The Church proclaims “the Gospel of peace” (*Eph* 6:15) and she wishes to cooperate with all national and international authorities in safeguarding this immense universal good. By preaching Jesus Christ, who is himself peace (cf. *Eph* 2:14), the new evangelization calls on every baptized person to be a peacemaker and a credible witness to a reconciled life.[\[187\]](#) In a culture which privileges dialogue as a form of encounter, it is time to devise a means for building consensus and agreement while seeking the goal of a just, responsive and inclusive society. The principal author, the historic subject of this process, is the people as a whole and their culture, and not a single class, minority, group or elite. We do not need plans drawn up by a few for the few, or an enlightened or outspoken minority which claims to speak for everyone. It is about agreeing to live together, a social and cultural pact.

240. It is the responsibility of the State to safeguard and promote the common good of society.[\[188\]](#) Based on the principles of subsidiarity and solidarity, and fully committed to political dialogue and consensus building, it plays a fundamental role, one which cannot be delegated, in working for the integral development of all. This role, at present, calls for profound social humility.

241. In her dialogue with the State and with society, the Church does not have solutions for every particular issue. Together with the various sectors of society, she supports those programmes which best respond to the dignity of each person and the common good. In doing this, she proposes in a clear way the fundamental values of human life and convictions which can then find expression in political activity.

Dialogue between faith, reason and science

242. Dialogue between science and faith also belongs to the work of evangelization at the service of peace.[\[189\]](#) Whereas positivism and scientism “refuse to admit the validity of forms of knowledge other than those of the positive sciences”,[\[190\]](#) the Church proposes another path, which calls for a synthesis between the responsible use of methods proper to the empirical sciences and other areas of knowledge such as philosophy, theology, as well as faith itself, which elevates us to the mystery transcending nature and human intelligence. Faith is not fearful of reason; on the contrary, it seeks and trusts reason, since “the light of reason and the light of faith both come from God”[\[191\]](#) and cannot contradict each other. Evangelization is attentive to scientific advances and wishes to shed on them the light of faith and the natural law so that they will remain respectful of the centrality and supreme value of the human person at every stage of life. All of society can be enriched thanks to this dialogue, which opens up new horizons for thought and expands the possibilities of reason. This too is a path of harmony and peace.

243. The Church has no wish to hold back the marvellous progress of science. On the contrary, she rejoices and even delights in acknowledging the enormous potential that God has given to the human mind. Whenever the sciences – rigorously focused on their specific field of inquiry – arrive at a conclusion which reason cannot refute, faith does not contradict it. Neither can believers claim that a scientific opinion which is attractive but not sufficiently verified has the same weight as a dogma of faith. At times some scientists have exceeded the limits of their scientific competence by making certain statements or claims. But here the problem is not with reason itself, but with the promotion of a particular ideology which blocks the path to authentic, serene and productive dialogue.

Ecumenical dialogue

244. Commitment to ecumenism responds to the prayer of the Lord Jesus that “they may all be one” (*Jn 17:21*). The credibility of the Christian message would be much greater if Christians could overcome their divisions and the Church could realize “the fullness of catholicity proper to her in those of her children who, though joined to her by baptism, are yet separated from full communion with her”.^[192] We must never forget that we are pilgrims journeying alongside one another. This means that we must have sincere trust in our fellow pilgrims, putting aside all suspicion or mistrust, and turn our gaze to what we are all seeking: the radiant peace of God’s face. Trusting others is an art and peace is an art. Jesus told us: “Blessed are the peacemakers” (*Mt 5:9*). In taking up this task, also among ourselves, we fulfil the ancient prophecy: “They shall beat their swords into ploughshares” (*Is 2:4*).

245. In this perspective, ecumenism can be seen as a contribution to the unity of the human family. At the Synod, the presence of the Patriarch of Constantinople, His Holiness Bartholomaios I, and the Archbishop of Canterbury, His Grace Rowan Williams, was a true gift from God and a precious Christian witness.^[193]

246. Given the seriousness of the counter-witness of division among Christians, particularly in Asia and Africa, the search for paths to unity becomes all the more urgent. Missionaries on those continents often mention the criticisms, complaints and ridicule to which the scandal of divided Christians gives rise. If we concentrate on the convictions we share, and if we keep in mind the principle of the hierarchy of truths, we will be able to progress decidedly towards common expressions of proclamation, service and witness. The immense numbers of people who have not received the Gospel of Jesus Christ cannot leave us indifferent. Consequently, commitment to a unity which helps them to accept Jesus Christ can no longer be a matter of mere diplomacy or forced compliance, but rather an indispensable path to evangelization. Signs of division between Christians in countries ravaged by violence add further causes of conflict on the part of those who should instead be a leaven of peace. How many important things unite us! If we really believe in the abundantly free working of the Holy Spirit, we can learn so much from one another! It is not just about being better informed about others, but rather about reaping what the Spirit has sown in them, which is also meant to be a gift for us. To give but one example, in the dialogue with our Orthodox brothers and sisters, we Catholics have the opportunity to learn more about the meaning of episcopal collegiality and their experience of synodality. Through an exchange of gifts, the Spirit can lead us ever more fully into truth and goodness.

Relations with Judaism

247. We hold the Jewish people in special regard because their covenant with God has never been revoked, for “the gifts and the call of God are irrevocable” (*Rom* 11:29). The Church, which shares with Jews an important part of the sacred Scriptures, looks upon the people of the covenant and their faith as one of the sacred roots of her own Christian identity (cf. *Rom* 11:16-18). As Christians, we cannot consider Judaism as a foreign religion; nor do we include the Jews among those called to turn from idols and to serve the true God (cf. *I Thes* 1:9). With them, we believe in the one God who acts in history, and with them we accept his revealed word.

248. Dialogue and friendship with the children of Israel are part of the life of Jesus’ disciples. The friendship which has grown between us makes us bitterly and sincerely regret the terrible persecutions which they have endured, and continue to endure, especially those that have involved Christians.

249. God continues to work among the people of the Old Covenant and to bring forth treasures of wisdom which flow from their encounter with his word. For this reason, the Church also is enriched when she receives the values of Judaism. While it is true that certain Christian beliefs are unacceptable to Judaism, and that the Church cannot refrain from proclaiming Jesus as Lord and Messiah, there exists as well a rich complementarity which allows us to read the texts of the Hebrew Scriptures together and to help one another to mine the riches of God’s word. We can also share many ethical convictions and a common concern for justice and the development of peoples.

Interreligious dialogue

250. An attitude of openness in truth and in love must characterize the dialogue with the followers of non-Christian religions, in spite of various obstacles and difficulties, especially forms of fundamentalism on both sides. Interreligious dialogue is a necessary condition for peace in the world, and so it is a duty for Christians as well as other religious communities. This dialogue is in first place a conversation about human existence or simply, as the bishops of India have put it, a matter of “being open to them, sharing their joys and sorrows”.^[194] In this way we learn to accept others and their different ways of living, thinking and speaking. We can then join one another in taking up the duty of serving justice and peace, which should become a basic principle of all our exchanges. A dialogue which seeks social peace and justice is in itself, beyond all merely practical considerations, an ethical commitment which brings about a new social situation. Efforts made in dealing with a specific theme can become a process in which, by mutual listening, both parts can be purified and enriched. These efforts, therefore, can also express love for truth.

251. In this dialogue, ever friendly and sincere, attention must always be paid to the essential bond between dialogue and proclamation, which leads the Church to maintain and intensify her relationship with non-Christians.^[195] A facile syncretism would ultimately be a totalitarian gesture on the part of those who would ignore greater values of which they are not the masters. True openness involves remaining steadfast in one’s deepest convictions, clear and joyful in one’s own identity, while at the same time being “open to understanding those of the other party” and “knowing that dialogue can enrich each side”.^[196] What is not helpful is a diplomatic openness which says “yes” to

everything in order to avoid problems, for this would be a way of deceiving others and denying them the good which we have been given to share generously with others. Evangelization and interreligious dialogue, far from being opposed, mutually support and nourish one another.[197]

252. Our relationship with the followers of Islam has taken on great importance, since they are now significantly present in many traditionally Christian countries, where they can freely worship and become fully a part of society. We must never forget that they “profess to hold the faith of Abraham, and together with us they adore the one, merciful God, who will judge humanity on the last day”. [198] The sacred writings of Islam have retained some Christian teachings; Jesus and Mary receive profound veneration and it is admirable to see how Muslims both young and old, men and women, make time for daily prayer and faithfully take part in religious services. Many of them also have a deep conviction that their life, in its entirety, is from God and for God. They also acknowledge the need to respond to God with an ethical commitment and with mercy towards those most in need.

253. In order to sustain dialogue with Islam, suitable training is essential for all involved, not only so that they can be solidly and joyfully grounded in their own identity, but so that they can also acknowledge the values of others, appreciate the concerns underlying their demands and shed light on shared beliefs. We Christians should embrace with affection and respect Muslim immigrants to our countries in the same way that we hope and ask to be received and respected in countries of Islamic tradition. I ask and I humbly entreat those countries to grant Christians freedom to worship and to practice their faith, in light of the freedom which followers of Islam enjoy in Western countries! Faced with disconcerting episodes of violent fundamentalism, our respect for true followers of Islam should lead us to avoid hateful generalisations, for authentic Islam and the proper reading of the Koran are opposed to every form of violence.

254. Non-Christians, by God’s gracious initiative, when they are faithful to their own consciences, can live “justified by the grace of God”, [199] and thus be “associated to the paschal mystery of Jesus Christ”. [200] But due to the sacramental dimension of sanctifying grace, God’s working in them tends to produce signs and rites, sacred expressions which in turn bring others to a communitarian experience of journeying towards God. [201] While these lack the meaning and efficacy of the sacraments instituted by Christ, they can be channels which the Holy Spirit raises up in order to liberate non-Christians from atheistic immanentism or from purely individual religious experiences. The same Spirit everywhere brings forth various forms of practical wisdom which help people to bear suffering and to live in greater peace and harmony. As Christians, we can also benefit from these treasures built up over many centuries, which can help us better to live our own beliefs.

Social dialogue in a context of religious freedom

255. The Synod Fathers spoke of the importance of respect for religious freedom, viewed as a fundamental human right. [202] This includes “the freedom to choose the religion which one judges to be true and to manifest one’s beliefs in public”. [203] A healthy pluralism, one which genuinely respects differences and values them as such, does not entail privatizing religions in an attempt to reduce them to the quiet obscurity of the

individual's conscience or to relegate them to the enclosed precincts of churches, synagogues or mosques. This would represent, in effect, a new form of discrimination and authoritarianism. The respect due to the agnostic or non-believing minority should not be arbitrarily imposed in a way that silences the convictions of the believing majority or ignores the wealth of religious traditions. In the long run, this would feed resentment rather than tolerance and peace.

256. When considering the effect of religion on public life, one must distinguish the different ways in which it is practiced. Intellectuals and serious journalists frequently descend to crude and superficial generalizations in speaking of the shortcomings of religion, and often prove incapable of realizing that not all believers – or religious leaders – are the same. Some politicians take advantage of this confusion to justify acts of discrimination. At other times, contempt is shown for writings which reflect religious convictions, overlooking the fact that religious classics can prove meaningful in every age; they have an enduring power to open new horizons, to stimulate thought, to expand the mind and the heart. This contempt is due to the myopia of a certain rationalism. Is it reasonable and enlightened to dismiss certain writings simply because they arose in a context of religious belief? These writings include principles which are profoundly humanistic and, albeit tinged with religious symbols and teachings, they have a certain value for reason.

257. As believers, we also feel close to those who do not consider themselves part of any religious tradition, yet sincerely seek the truth, goodness and beauty which we believe have their highest expression and source in God. We consider them as precious allies in the commitment to defending human dignity, in building peaceful coexistence between peoples and in protecting creation. A special place of encounter is offered by new Areopagi such as the Court of the Gentiles, where “believers and non-believers are able to engage in dialogue about fundamental issues of ethics, art and science, and about the search for transcendence”.^[204] This too is a path to peace in our troubled world.

258. Starting from certain social issues of great importance for the future of humanity, I have tried to make explicit once again the inescapable social dimension of the Gospel message and to encourage all Christians to demonstrate it by their words, attitudes and deeds.

http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/francesco/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20131124_evangelii-gaudium_en.html#IV.
Social_dialogue_as_a_contribution_to_peace