

Bridges

Building relationships between Christians and Muslims



No. 85 December 2019

Contents

- 1 From the Editor
- 2 Centre News
- 4 World News
- 6 Features
- 11 Coming Events
- 12 Columban Resources
- 12 *Bridges* subscription

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From the Editor

Statistics show a rise in anti-Semitism around the world, including in Australia. Islamophobia continues to trigger harassment and violence towards Muslims. Analysis shows that Christians are the most persecuted group in the world. To **build positive relations** between believers from different religions, interreligious dialogue is needed, now more than ever.

Vatican II was a watershed in the Catholic Church's relations with other religions. In the subsequent years, the Catholic Church developed substantial teaching on interreligious dialogue, yet this teaching remains unknown to most Catholics. The **preaching and teaching** of interreligious dialogue is needed, now more than ever.

During 2019, in the preparatory stage of the Australian Catholic Church's 2020 Plenary Council, over 222,000 people participated in listening and dialogue encounters and contributed 17,457 submissions. The results were summarised in a 314-page document, *Listen to What the Spirit is Saying to the Churches*. Interreligious dialogue is not mentioned. **Promoting** interreligious dialogue as integral to the mission of the church is needed, now more than ever.

Pope Francis and other world religious leaders meet in friendship on various occasions. International conferences are held and agreed documents are published. But the cordiality and concord remains mostly at the level of the leaders and does not reach the followers in the congregations. The **spreading** of interreligious dialogue is needed, now more than ever.

Interfaith activists meet locally and become friends, attend the same interfaith events and share platforms together. They like each other's posts on Facebook. But they are mostly talking to each other and to the converted and do not seem able to reach the wider population. The **popularisation** of interreligious dialogue is needed, now more than ever.

The above challenges of interreligious dialogue are enormous. However, I take comfort in the words of Margaret Mead: "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed, citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has." Let us each then, do our little bit, that combined will become a tidal wave of interreligious dialogue to change our globalised world.

REV DR PATRICK MCINERNEY



Australia-ASEAN Muslim Exchange Program

On 12 September, the Centre hosted the Australia-ASEAN Muslim Exchange Program (AAMEP). This is an interfaith initiative of the Australia-ASEAN Council within the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. It aims to foster people-to-people links between Muslim communities in Australia and ASEAN, with a particular focus on the faith communities of both regions. The organisers selected CCCMR as “as one of Australia's foremost organisations in the field of interfaith dialogue and

understanding”. The AAMEP delegates were six young Muslim leaders, one male and one female, from each of Thailand, Malaysia and the Philippines, with backgrounds in areas such as interfaith dialogue, education, human rights, peace-building, religious freedom, media and gender. We introduced ourselves to each other and shared our CCCMR story and activities. The AAMEP delegates also visited Muslim and other interfaith organisations in Sydney, Canberra and Melbourne. *You can follow their journey on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/ausaseanmep/>.*

St Vincent's Parish, Ashfield

On 18 August, Fr Patrick McInerney celebrated the Sunday Masses in St Vincent's Parish, Ashfield (right), introducing the Centre's work in Christian-Muslim and interfaith relations. Afterwards, one parishioner said, “I am shocked!” It was the first time he had heard of the church's involvement in interreligious dialogue. Two weeks later, on a Saturday evening, Fr Patrick gave a detailed presentation on interfaith to the Social Justice Group and other parishioners. To set the context, he summarised the church's attitude towards others through 2000 years of history. Then he presented the novelty of the contemporary issue of interreligious dialogue – what it is not, what it is, and why go about it. Next, Fr Patrick suggested ways that the parish could go about building relations with other faiths, concluding with some resources to which they could refer. Thanks to the parish Social Justice Group for organising the event. *Contact the Centre to book a talk in your parish on (02) 9672 3616 or info.cccmr@columban.org.au.*



Interreligious training in South Korea

Ryan Epondulan participated in the Youth in Asia Training for Religious Amity (YATRA) program at Yonsei University, South Korea, in September. Hosted by the World Council of Churches, 31 young adults representing Christian denominations from 21 nations participated in an intensive training course to build up communities of harmony and hope from an interreligious view. The residential program involved lectures and workshops on interreligious dialogue, primarily through liberation theology and case study examples of IRD programs around the world. All course participants collaborated on a call to interfaith action statement. The statement's three focus areas are education, engagement and community. Each participant committed to building positive relations with people of different faiths.



Ryan (left) with fellow participants of YATRA in South Korea.



The Sultan & the Saint at Event Cinemas

To commemorate the 800th anniversary of St Francis of Assisi's historic meeting with Sultan Malik al-Kamil of Egypt, CCCMR co-hosted a once-only screening of the Emmy-nominated docudrama *The Sultan and the Saint*, on Thursday, 5 September at Event Cinemas in Parramatta. More than 200 people from Christian and Muslim faiths attended the screening, sharing in a joyous evening that celebrated interfaith dialogue and friendship. After the screening, respondents, Dr Mahsheed Ansari and Sister Trish Madigan op, shared opinions and questions with the audience about the film, all of which highlighted just how relevant and necessary acts of courage and compassion are in our world today.

PoWR to the youth!

The Centre's interreligious initiative for young adults, Youth PoWR (Parliament of the World's Religions), has just completed workshops with youth across the four compass points of Sydney – Parramatta (West), Pennant Hills (North), Lakemba (South) and Bondi (East). More than 200 young adults across the four events gathered to create content for *The Sydney Statement*, a list of interfaith actions for building better relations between believers from different religions. The goal for the *Statement* is to ensure that Sydney flourishes as a multi-religious city, where mutual respect, understanding and cooperation occurs between people of different religions. Currently a drafting committee is compiling participants' responses into key themes to formulate the *Statement*.



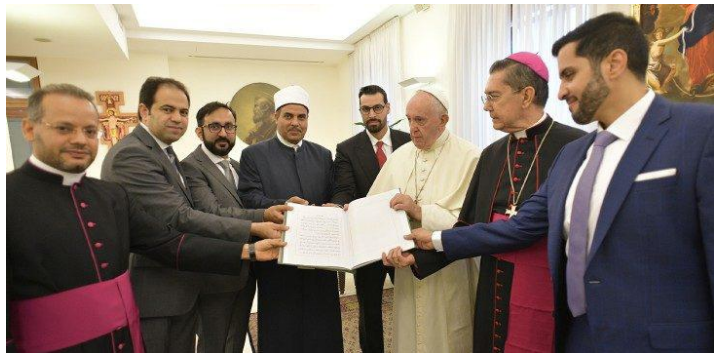
You can follow the journey at <https://www.facebook.com/YouthPoWR/> and <https://www.facebook.com/TheSydneyStatement/>.

New committee to promote *Document on Human Fraternity*

The UAE government has formed an international committee to implement the *Document on Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together*, which Pope Francis co-signed with Sheikh Ahmed al-Tayeb, Grand Imam of Al-Azhar University, during his historic visit to Abu Dhabi in February.

The Higher Committee of Human Fraternity will develop a framework to ensure the document's objectives are applied regionally and internationally. Members of the committee include newly appointed cardinal and president of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, Miguel Ángel Ayuso Guixot, who will be chairman, as well as Judge Mohamed Abdel-Salam, former advisor to grand imam, who will be secretary. Other members come from different faith traditions and hail from the UAE, Spain, Egypt and Italy. Together, they will draft, implement and oversee plans to reach the objectives, and engage legislative leaders to adhere to its provisions. The committee will also oversee the Abrahamic Family House, a building dedicated to interfaith harmony (see article below).

Condensed and adapted from <https://bit.ly/348EHSc> and <https://bit.ly/36jaGkw>. (NB: The Columban Centre for Christian-Muslim Relations has reproduced the Document in print and electronic formats. See <https://bit.ly/2PsMfLG>.)



The inaugural meeting of the Higher Committee of Human Fraternity with Pope Francis at the Vatican in September this year.



Abrahamic Family House design unveiled

Renowned British architect Sir David Adjaye has unveiled his design for the UAE-commissioned Abrahamic Family House (left), bringing together mosque, church and synagogue in one setting on Saadiyat Island, 500 metres off the coast of Abu Dhabi. Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed, Abu Dhabi's Crown Prince, commissioned the interfaith complex following Pope Francis' visit to the

UAE capital early this year. The complex will be a physical manifestation of the unifying values expressed in the *Document on Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together*, the signing of which was central to the pope's visit. The houses of worship will be distinct yet interrelated, facing each other, and with a garden, centre for education and museum among them. The church, mosque and synagogue will consist of designs that follow the religious requirements and traditions specific to the faith it represents. The complex is scheduled to open in 2022 and is the first initiative of the newly formed Higher Committee of Human Fraternity (see article above). Condensed and adapted from <https://dailym.ai/36qt9OZ>, <https://bit.ly/31Z7N59>, <https://bit.ly/2N2q6ZR> and <https://bit.ly/322ygyS>.



Governor-General defends Islam

Governor-General David Hurley has defended the role of Islam in Australian society and championed the importance of “faith in peoples” amid national debate on religious freedom protections. On his visit to Perth Mosque, General Hurley delivered a speech in front of an audience including the Australian Federation of Islamic Councils president, Dr Rateb Jneid, and current

and former members of parliament. General Hurley, a devout Christian, shared his experiences of Islam while living in Malaysia for a year in 1989. “I learnt a lot about Islam, its people, its tenets, its way of life, in that 12 months. And from that time on, I’ve had enormous respect for Islam and its people.” Mr Hurley said it was important for Australians to “celebrate our history” and discuss the desires of following generations for “Australia’s future”. *Condensed and adapted from <https://bit.ly/34dUMGm>.*

A submission to the Australian Government on the

EXPOSURE DRAFT

RELIGIOUS DISCRIMINATION BILL

2 OCTOBER 2019



A joint submission made by a number of national and state based organisations which are involved in the Australian Muslim community.

Religious Discrimination Bill

Legislating for religious freedom and against religious discrimination is difficult. There are genuine competing interests that need to be balanced, for example, the right to practise and promote one’s religion freely without fear; the right to critique behaviour, even if it claims religious justification, especially when that behaviour impacts others in society. Responses to the recently released *Exposure Draft of the Religious Discrimination Bill* are an example of the difficulty – some say it goes too far, others say it doesn’t go far enough. More than 150 national and state organisations representing the Australian Muslim communities have made a 40-page joint submission to the Federal Government. It is a detailed, informative and considered statement. It highlights the rising incidents of Islamophobia and the need for protection against religious-based harassment, vilification and incitement to hatred and violence.

The submission is available at <http://bit.ly/2NEnTw7>.

Religion necessary in pursuit of peace

In a time where racism, discrimination, intolerance and the fear of the other is on the rise, defusing conflicts and enhancing understanding for diversity is needed more than ever. In this spirit, dialogue between believers of different religions remains an essential vehicle for us to get to know, understand and respect one another. Interreligious and religious-secular dialogues have the power to promote lasting change by fostering mutual coexistence, tolerance and empathy. This entails sharing a relationship of respect and mutual confidence, as well as identifying commonalities among religions, creeds and value systems. This will help promote multidimensional equalities, diversity between human beings and compassion for our brothers and sisters of faith. *Condensed and adapted from <https://bit.ly/33qXydk>.*



New cardinals symbolise interreligious dialogue

New cardinals show interreligious dialogue is among the Pope's main priorities for the direction of the Church and its apostolate

By Rev Dr Patrick McNerney

On 5 October 2019, Pope Francis held his sixth consistory. He created 13 new cardinals, 10 of whom are under the age of 80 and will be able to vote for his successor at the next conclave. Pope Francis has now named a total of 91 new cardinals, including just more than 50 per cent of the voting cardinals. This ensures that his successor will most likely continue his legacy.

The new cardinals symbolise Pope Francis' interests. They come from the periphery. Many of them have served as missionaries, often in countries where the Catholic Church is a minority. They represent a missionary church that goes out to meet other people and engages with them in interreligious dialogue.

Two of the new cardinals, the present and former presidents of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, are known to us at the Centre.

Bishop Miguel Ángel Ayuso Guixot MCCJ

Bishop Guixot is a Spanish Comboni missionary ordained in 1980. He has served along the Nile, from Egypt to the Sudan. He has taught Islamic studies at Khartoum, Cairo and Rome. Pope Benedict appointed him Secretary of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue (PCID) in June 2012. Pope Francis appointed him President of the PCID in 2019.

Bishop Guixot has a long history of working with Muslim leaders on religious cooperation. He spearheaded the rapprochement between the Vatican and Al-Azhar University, with mutual visits by Imam Ahmed al-Tayeb and Pope Francis. One fruit of this relationship is the *Document on Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together*, co-signed by the two leaders on 4 February this year in the UAE.



Newly appointed cardinal Miguel Ángel Ayuso Guixot, President of the Vatican's Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue.

Bishop Guixot said, "I interpreted [my appointment as a cardinal] from the point of view that the pastoral, missionary and interreligious dimension in this consistory is of notable importance," explaining that "the future of humanity passes through inter-cultural and inter-religious dialogue."

Bishop Guixot led a PCID delegation to Australia in September 2018, when we had the privilege of meeting with him.

Archbishop Michael Louis Fitzgerald MAf

Archbishop Fitzgerald is an English Missionary of Africa ordained in 1961. After post-graduate studies, he taught in Uganda. From 1972 to 1978, he was Director of the Pontifical Institute for Arabic and Islamic Studies. After two years in Sudan he served on the General Council of the Missionaries of Africa. In 1987 Pope John Paul II appointed him Secretary to the Secretariate for Non-Christians (re-named the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue in 1988), and its President in 2002. Pope Benedict appointed him Apostolic Nuncio of Egypt where he served from 2006 to 2012.

For the following eight years he was based in Jerusalem, and is now helping his community in a parish in Liverpool.

“Judging from the messages of congratulations that I am receiving from different people, and not only Christians, it seems that people who are engaged in interfaith relations are greatly encouraged. They see this appointment as a sign of hope at a time when work in interfaith relations is often called into question, but when in fact it is more necessary than ever,” he added.

“The Church is always outward-looking. The Church has been created by Jesus as a sign of God’s love for all people.”

Over the years, Archbishop Fitzgerald has several times visited the Centre and been the keynote speaker at the Abraham Conference, at World Youth Day and other public lectures.

Other Appointees

Other appointees are also engaged in Christian-Muslim relations. Archbishop Cristóbal López Romero SDB has served in Spain, Paraguay and Morocco. Pope Francis appointed him Archbishop of Morocco in 2017. On his nomination as cardinal, he said, “I think that the pope wanted to make visible the churches that were almost invisible.” He sees the appointment as affirmation by the pope “to continue to work on interreligious and inter-Christian dialogue and with immigrants”.



Pope Francis poses with 13 new cardinals during a consistory in St Peter's Basilica at the Vatican on 5 October 2019.

Archbishop Ignatius Suharyo Hardjoatmodjo is the archbishop of Jakarta, capital of Indonesia, the largest Muslim population country in the world. He said the Catholic Church in Indonesia models “how to practise the Christian faith by promoting peace, tolerance, and a spirit of compassion towards others. [It] has been able to make peaceful and friendly gestures towards all fellow citizens despite differences in terms of religion, cultures, languages and social values”.

Conclusion

We are grateful for the dedication, service and inspiration that these missionaries have given and continue to give, especially in the field of interreligious dialogue. We are encouraged that the pope has affirmed the importance of this missionary apostolate by appointing them as cardinals. We pray for them, for those appointed with them, and for all the members of the college of cardinals, in the words of Pope Francis, that each of them would have “the grace to have a compassionate heart, in order to be witnesses of the One who has looked with favor upon us, who chose us, consecrated us and sent us to bring to everyone his Gospel of salvation”. A brief biography of each of the new cardinals is available from the Vatican News website at <http://bit.ly/2pudVFd>. For further details see <http://bit.ly/2JC8awe> and <http://bit.ly/36PLNgR>.

Cardinal Michael Louis Fitzgerald poses for photographers prior to meeting relatives and friends after he was elevated to cardinal by Pope Francis.

Religions for Peace advance shared well-being

The 10th World Assembly of Religions for Peace gathered in Lindau, Germany, in August, with participants collaborating on calls-to-action for the good of our common humanity. Around 800 religious leaders; 100 representatives of governments, intergovernmental organisations and civil society groups; and people of faith from 125 countries came together, making this assembly the world's most representative of different religions gathered together.

The theme of the assembly was “Caring for our Common Future – Advancing Shared Well-Being”. The focus was to form a greater moral consensus on contemporary issues and multi-religious action throughout the world.

A shared declaration was developed by delegates representing their religious communities, with a commitment to advancing the well-being of all.

Guided by the principles of their own faith communities and groups, and respectful of differences, participants committed to fostering peace in the following areas: preventing and transforming violent conflict; promoting just and harmonious societies; nurturing sustainable and integral human development; and protecting the earth.

Commitment for our common future

In concrete terms, the delegates vowed to promote the positive roles of women in preventing and transforming conflicts, and on the issue of violence against them, and work for the well-being of refugees and migrants. They resolved to raise public awareness about deforestation, take action against climate change and advocate policies that protect the earth. In this regard, Religions for Peace urged religious communities to invest their resources in tune with achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and support the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons.

Among other actions, the participants pledged to foster public acts of forgiveness and reconciliation, and to produce positive peace materials and workshops for multi-religious contexts. They would also actively express concern for war, poverty, refugees, migrants and people on the move, the arms race and global warming, saying they weighed heavily on the human family. In their work for human rights, members also resolved to cultivate solidarity by fostering virtues such as mercy, compassion and love that are common to all religions and faiths.

Regarding themselves as an “alliance of care, of compassion, of love”, members of Religions for Peace expressed gratitude for 49 years of their “determined

focus on building peace and on speaking for those most in need”. The 10th Assembly had participants from the various conflict zones of the world, underscoring the group's commitment to preventing conflicts and advancing peace.

Woman at the helm

Women at the assembly consisted of a quarter of all participants, the largest representation at an assembly to date. With this, there was a push to highlight

the role that women play in peace-building efforts. In a first for the association, a woman was unanimously elected to the role of Secretary General of Religions for Peace. Prof. Azza Karam, an Egyptian-born Dutch academic of Religion and Development at the Vrije Universiteit in Amsterdam succeeded Dr William F. Vendley of the USA, who served in the position for 27 years. Prof. Karam previously served as Senior Advisor on Culture and Social Development, UN Population Fund, and Chair of the UN Inter-Agency Task Force on Religion and Development. She has worked in various academic institutions in Europe, North America, Africa and the Middle East. *Condensed and adapted from “Religions for Peace” pledge concrete actions for common good of mankind’, by Robin Gomes, Vatican News, <https://bit.ly/32jtJlk>.*



Abrahamic faiths sign joint statement on euthanasia

Leaders from the Catholic and Orthodox churches and the Muslim and Jewish faiths recently signed a joint declaration at the Vatican reaffirming each of the religion's opposition to physician-assisted suicide and euthanasia. Signatories included representatives from the Vatican, the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople, the Patriarchate of Moscow and All Russia, and Muslim and Jewish scholars and leaders.

Discussions about end-of-life issues and policies in society prompted the monotheistic faiths to clearly present their positions concerning “values and practices relevant to the dying patient”, their families, health-care providers and policy makers who belong to one of these religions. The faith leaders, it said, “are in complete agreement in their approach to end-of-life situations”.

The declaration, [Position Paper of the Abrahamic Monotheistic Religions on Matters Concerning the End of Life](#), was prepared by the Pontifical Academy for Life. It encourages quality palliative care whereby the dying receive the best, most comprehensive physical, social, emotional, religious and spiritual care, and support for their families. The faiths also oppose relentless treatment, stating: “When death is imminent despite the means used, it is justified to make the decision to withhold certain forms of medical treatments that would only prolong a precarious life of suffering.”

The 12 points in the declaration state:

1. Euthanasia and physician-assisted suicide are inherently consequentially morally and religiously wrong and should be forbidden with no exceptions. Any pressure upon dying patients to end their lives by active and deliberate actions is categorically rejected.
2. No health-care provider should be coerced or pressured to either directly or indirectly assist in the deliberate and intentional death of a patient through assisted suicide or any form of euthanasia, especially when it is against the religious beliefs of the provider.
3. We encourage and support validated and professional palliative care everywhere and for everyone. Even when efforts to continue staving off death seem unreasonably burdensome, we are morally and religiously duty-bound to provide comfort, effective pain and symptoms relief, companionship, care and spiritual assistance to the dying and to her/his family.
4. We commend laws and policies that protect the rights and the dignity of the dying patient, in order to avoid euthanasia and promote palliative care.



5. We, as a society, must assure that patients' desire not to be a burden does not inspire them the feeling of being useless and the subsequent unawareness of the value and dignity of their life, which deserves care and support until its natural end.
6. All health-care providers should be duty-bound to create conditions by which religious assistance is assured to anyone who asks, explicitly or implicitly.
7. We are committed to use our knowledge and research to shape policies that promote socio-emotional, physical and spiritual care and wellbeing, by providing the utmost information and care to those facing grave illness and death.
8. We are committed to engage our communities on the issues of bioethics related to the dying patient, as well as to acquaint them with techniques of compassionate companionship for those who are suffering and dying.
9. We are committed to raising public awareness about palliative care through education and providing resources concerning treatments for the suffering and the dying.
10. We are committed to providing succor to the family and to the loved ones of dying patients.
11. We call on policy-makers and health-care providers to familiarise themselves with this wide-ranging Abrahamic monotheistic perspective and teaching in order to provide the best care to dying patients and to their families who adhere to the religious norms and guidance of their respective religions.
12. We are committed to involving the other religions and all people of goodwill. *Condensed and adapted from 'End of Life: Joint Declaration of the Three Abrahamic Religions', by Anne Kurian, Zenit, <https://bit.ly/2oWbBqk>; and 'Jewish, Christian, Muslim leaders sign declaration against euthanasia', by Carol Glatz, Crux, <https://bit.ly/2NstVRj>.*

Muslims and Christians must join hands to bear witness

Catholics are often surprised to learn that the church has formal teaching about Christian and Muslim relations, reports Robert George in the 14 October issue of *America Magazine*. Quoting the Second Vatican Council's *Nostra Aetate*, George writes:

"The Church regards with esteem also the Muslims. They adore the one God [...] who has spoken to men; they take pains to submit wholeheartedly to even His inscrutable decrees, just as Abraham, with whom the faith of Islam takes pleasure in linking itself, submitted to God [...] Christians and Muslims, this sacred synod urges all to forget the past and to work sincerely for mutual understanding and to preserve as well as to promote together for the benefit of all mankind social justice and moral welfare, as well as peace and freedom."

Features of the Catholic teaching that are particularly salient today include the understanding that:

1. Muslims worship God. Often, this is doubted or denied by Christians, even some Catholics. But the church herself unambiguously affirms it. Of course, as *Nostra Aetate* notes, Islam and Christianity differ in important ways in how they understand God. Christians believe God is a Trinity of persons. Muslims do not. Christians believe Jesus is God – the second person of the Blessed Trinity. Muslims do not. Still, the God whom Muslims (and Jews) worship is the true God.
2. The church has esteem for Muslims. One cannot hold in contempt those for whom one has esteem. Catholics are enjoined to eschew hatred for Muslims and oppose discrimination against them. We must recognise that most Muslims are decent, honorable people. Yes, there are evildoers who claim to act in the name of Islam while committing atrocities – and they must be resolutely opposed by all legitimate means, including the use of force. But we must not tar innocent Muslims with responsibility for their crimes.
3. Christians and Muslims must work together. Vatican II acknowledges a history of "quarrels and hostilities" but pleads with us to forget them. In faith, we are to strive for mutual understanding and stand together for what is right and against what is wrong.



Pope Francis walks with Sheikh Ahmad al-Tayeb, Grand Imam of al-Azhar University, before a meeting with members of the Muslim Council of Elders in Abu Dhabi, 4 February 2019.

"It has been my privilege and joy to work with Muslims such as the Islamic scholar Hamza Yusuf, the author Suzy Ismail, and the director of the Islam and Religious Freedom Action Team for the Religious Freedom Institute, Ismail Royer," George writes. "Together we have defended human life in all stages and conditions; secured religious freedom for people of all faiths; protected refugees from persecution and terror; and opposed pornography and human trafficking; and upheld marriage as the union of husband and wife."

He urges fellow Christians of all traditions to remember how much we share with faithful Muslims, the vast majority of whom want for themselves and their children what we want for ourselves and our children – a peaceful society, a decent culture, a fair and flourishing economy, an excellent system of education, and the freedom to worship and to bring our religiously inspired convictions concerning justice and the common good into the public square and to make our case, in freedom and peace, to our fellow citizens.

Christians and Muslims must join hands to bear witness to God's love for each and every member of the human family, to God's desire that we lead upright lives. Allow Christians and Muslims to never again regard each other as enemies. Let us recognise each other as brothers and sisters under the fatherhood of "the one God, living and subsisting in Himself; merciful and all-powerful, the Creator of heaven and earth". Condensed and adapted from 'A Time for Solidarity', by Robert George, *America Magazine*, issue 14 October 2019, <https://bit.ly/2rwv0PH>.

Coming Events

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31			

December 2019

- 01** First Sunday of Advent, season of preparation for the birth of Christ (Christian)
- 08** Feast of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary (Catholic Christian)
- 10** Human Rights Day, anniversary of 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights
- 25** Christmas, birth of Jesus Christ (Christian)

January 2020

- 01** Mary, Mother of God (Catholic Christian)
- 07** Feast of the Nativity (Orthodox Christian)
- 25** Lunar New Year (Confucian, Daoist, Buddhist)

February 2020

- 01-07** World Interfaith Harmony Week
- 26** Ash Wednesday, beginning of Lent (Christian)

March 2020

- 02** Great Lent begins (Orthodox Christian)
- 08** International Women's Day
- 25** Feast of the Annunciation, Angel Gabriel to the Blessed Virgin Mary (Christian)

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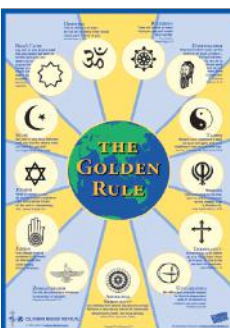
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