

Cardinal Tauran: Bhatti Knew He Would Be Killed

Stresses Need for Interreligious Respect

ROME, MARCH 7, 2011 ([Zenit.org](http://www.zenit.org)).- Cardinal Jean-Louis Tauran, who knew the assassinated Pakistani Federal Minister for Minorities, Shahbaz Bhatti, recalled that the man knew he would be murdered for his beliefs.

Bhatti, 42, the only Christian member of Pakistan's cabinet, was shot repeatedly Wednesday as he left his mother's home in Islamabad.

Cardinal Tauran, president of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, recalled the "honor and joy" of meeting Bhatti several times.

The prelate said that the minister told him in confidence, "I know that I will die murdered, and I offer my life for Christ and for the [interreligious] dialogue."

"These are circumstances that make one proud to be a Christian," the cardinal said.

He made these comments on Friday at Rome's Pontifical University Antonianum during the inauguration of a new chair of spirituality and interreligious dialogue in honor of Bishop Luigi Padovese, who was murdered June 3, 2010 in Turkey.

Cardinal Tauran recalled Bishop Padovese's "intellectual aptitude, his kindness and smile, because in him there was no duplicity, he did not feel superior but wished to be a pastor, a successor of Paul of Tarsus."

Exchange of gifts

The prelate affirmed that despite these violent acts, interreligious dialogue, especially with Muslims, has been advancing.

He noted that with the Second Vatican Council "for the first time in the history of the magisterium a positive judgment was given on non-Christian religions."

Interreligious dialogue, the cardinal said, "is a dialogue between believers" and, therefore, "it isn't a dialogue between religions but between concrete persons."

He explained that it is "a dialogue between persons who profess different religions and whose aim is to get to know one another and to exchange spiritual gifts, respecting liberty of conscience, avoiding proselytism and accepting that one can change one's religion."

Therefore, Cardinal Tauran added, "each one agrees not to give up his convictions but to allow himself to be challenged, and to take into consideration matters that are different from those of his

community, hoping to acquire further knowledge to see the other's religion with objectivity and to enrich his own spiritual life with the positive elements" of the other religions.

He highlighted three necessary elements that go together: identity, otherness and exchange of ideas.

The cardinal specified that "it is not a question of creating a sort of universal and passé-partout religion but rather of placing oneself before God and engaging in this pilgrimage towards truth."

Identity

Meanwhile, he said, one must "have a clear identity of one's religion."

"For a Christian, Jesus is the only Savior and Mediator between God and men," the prelate clarified.

Without "this spiritual identity, one cannot dialogue," he said. "We have the good fortune of having a Pope like Benedict XVI who teaches these contents of the faith, because faith is not an ensemble of emotions but it has contents."

Moreover, Cardinal Tauran stated, "it is necessary to be humble and to acknowledge the errors of yesterday and of today" as well as to "recognize others' values" and also "to understand one another in order to live in good harmony and to share common values."

He underlined four dimensions of this arena: "The dialogue of life, good neighbor relations and occasional meetings; the dialogue of works when together there is collaboration for the common good such as in volunteer work; the theological dialogue, when possible, to understand in depth the respective religious heritages; and the dialogue of spirituality."

The cardinal affirmed that to "avoid any sort of syncretism, we do not say that all religions are more or less the same thing, but that all believers have the same dignity, which isn't the same thing."

Therefore, he added, "a Catholic begins by affirming his own faith without giving room to ambiguity."

"Other religions do not necessarily constitute a negative challenge," the prelate said, "because they drive us to reflect further on the signs of Christ in the heart of his followers."

| [More](#)

© Innovative Media, Inc.

Reprinting ZENIT's articles requires written permission from the [editor](#).