



## Catholic, Muslim Leaders Join Together to Promote Peace

Summit in Rome Aims to Foster Interreligious, Intercultural Relationships

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As the dramatic situation in the Middle East continues, an interreligious meeting of Christians and Muslims in Rome not only brought together world faith leaders, senior Vatican officials, and royalty, but also “was characterized by mutual respect, opening and listening to each other.”

This was the observation made in a statement by the Vatican today on the Christian-Muslim Summit of Religious Leaders and Scholars which began Tuesday and concluded yesterday, intended to explore the theme “Christians and Muslims: Believers in Society.”

This summit, the statement noted, “constitutes a message of reconciliation, peace and fraternity of which our world is in great need.

The Christian-Muslim Summit gathered Christians, both Catholic and Anglican Episcopal, and Muslims, both Sunni and Shia, as well as religious leaders and scholars from around the world. Their goal was to “foster interreligious and intercultural relationships” and “address issues of conflict, in particular between the followers of both religions.”

Delegation leaders, their respective delegations, guests of honor from the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople, from Judaism, and elsewhere, the statement noted, “are aware of this dramatic time in our world, especially in the Middle East and in some African countries, with an unprecedented and unhuman violence.”

A highlight of the conference, was their brief meeting with Pope Francis, prior to his weekly General Audience. The Pope expressed his gratitude to them for their work.

"This helps to make our fellowship stronger," the Pope said to them on December 3rd. I thank you for your work, for what you do so that we can understand each other better and, above all, for peace. This is the path of peace: dialogue. Thank you very much."

Cardinal Jean-Louis Tauran, president of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue headed the Catholic delegation, while the Anglican Episcopal delegation was lead by the Right Reverend John Bryson Chane, eighth bishop of the Anglican Episcopal Diocese of Washington and senior Advisor on Interreligious Dialogue to Washington National Cathedral.

Prince El Hasan bin Talal of Jordan and Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the Royal Institute for Interfaith Studies Amman Jordan led the Sunni delegation and Ayatollah Sayyed Professor Mustafa Mohaghegh Damad, director of Islamic Studies at the Iran Academy of Sciences led the Shia Delegation.

Some invited guests of honor included His Eminence Metropolitan Emmanuel of France, representing the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople, and Rabbi Abraham Skorka of Buenos Aires.

At the end of the seminar, there was a public session held, to which diplomats accredited to the Holy See, persons involved in interreligious dialogue and media were invited. There also was a question and answer session.

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