



Pope Says Diversity Is Key to Peaceful Coexistence

Highlights the Need to Protect Religious Freedom Throughout the World

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Meeting with participants of the plenary assembly of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, Pope Francis emphasized the importance of “an attitude of openness in truth and in love” when communicating with non-Christians.

The assembly, which is reflecting on the theme “Members of different religious traditions in society”, were accompanied by Cardinal Jean-Louis Tauran, president of the Pontifical Council.

The Holy Father told participants that this attitude must characterise dialogue with other faiths despite obstacles, such as fundamentalism.

"In fact, there is no lack, throughout the world, of contexts in which co-existence is difficult: often political or economic motives overlap with cultural and religious differences, exploiting misunderstandings and past mistakes: all this risks generating diffidence and fear," the Pope said. "There is only one route to conquering this fear, and it is encounter, characterized by friendship and respect."

To dialogue, he continued, does not mean compromising one's faith, but rather an opportunity to grow in brotherhood. When evangelizing, instead of imposing, we are called to share the joy and simplicity of what we believe.

“Indeed, an encounter in which each person sets aside his belief, pretending to renounce that which is most dear to him, would certainly not be an authentic relationship. This could be described as a false fraternity,” he stressed.

The 76 year old Pontiff went onto say that constructive dialogue can help in overcoming the fear of religion, both its traditions and dimensions. Echoing this morning's homily at Casa Santa Marta, the Pope warned of a false belief that co-existence is only possible by concealing one's own religious identity.

“How is it possible to create true relations, to build a society that is an authentic communal home, imposing that its members set aside an intimate part of their being?” the Holy Father asked. “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.”

Concluding his address, Pope Francis stressed that diversity, and not one neutral thought, is the key to a future of respectful co-existence.

“The recognition of the fundamental right to religious freedom, in all its dimensions, therefore becomes indispensable,” he said. “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.” (J.A.E.)

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