



INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUE & THE XAVERIAN CHARISM

ABSTRACT

The Xaverian Interfaith Conference took place at the Conforti Centre in Scotland from the 4th – 8th of March of 2019. The confreres of the UK welcomed Xaverian Missionaries from Spain and USA, as well as lay and religious people working within our Regions, members of the Scottish Bishops' Interfaith Commission, Interfaith Scotland, Pax Christi, other Missionary Orders, visitors and speakers of other faiths and beliefs.

Introduction

The Xaverian Missionaries of the United Kingdom initiated an important gathering of Xaverian Missionaries working or interested in interreligious dialogue from Europe and the United States. The organization of the event brought an intense five days, together with sharing among confreres in an important area of our congregational mission today, along with friends and other colleagues.

The first day was an opportunity to share together on the impact of interreligious dialogue through our Xaverian charism. Fr. Carl Chudy facilitated a conversation that attempted to look at our experience of dialogue through the unique contexts of each of our regions, their challenges, stumbling blocks, and what the future could hold. On this same day Dr. John Stoer of the Catholic Bishops spoke of the important role of Catholic interreligious dialogue in contemporary catechesis and adult faith formation. Finally, Sr. Isabel Smyth, SND, also of the Bishop's Committee on Interfaith Dialogue, provided an informal and fascinating conversation on the history of the work of interfaith dialogue in Scotland.

The second day provided a wonderful opportunity to hear from Mr. Gary McClelland, Chief Executive of Humanist International Affairs, and the ever-widening experiences of dialogue that includes Secular Humanism and the nonreligious. Mr. McClelland was also an attendee at our first gathering of religious and nonreligious in Coatbridge through our Common Ground Project in 2013. In the afternoon Mr. Hugh Foy, Program Director of Xaverian Missionaries Centre, facilitated a dialogue on the role of dialogue with the expanding role of Pax Christi in Scotland.

The third day, Ash Wednesday, was a day out visiting two important non-Christian communities in the Lanarkshire area. The morning was spent at the Gurdwara or Sikh Temple in Glasgow, and in the afternoon the Lanarkshire Muslim Welfare Society, also in Glasgow. We were kindly welcomed in both of these communities and had an opportunity to have a conversation around the life of minority faiths in the community and their own contributions to dialogue in the community.

The final two days brought to us Imam Javed Ali, Director of the Andalus Institute of Glasgow provided a fascinating presentation on Islam in the European context, as well as an exploration of Catholic-Muslim dialogue through Muslim eyes. The final day provided opportunity for each of our regions to share the work, as well as dreams for dialogue in our respective regions. The local Xaverian communities, the local church, and the life of non-Christian faiths in our regions showed us both the extraordinary variety dialogue opportunities and the local challenges and difficulties that are also entailed. The close of our conversations looked at next steps for collaboration together.

Participants in the Interfaith Dialogue Conference

The participants representing Xaverian regions are:

United Kingdom

Fr. Jim Clark
Fr. John Convery
Fr. Patrick Duffy
Mr. Hugh Foy
Fr. Bideri Nyagasza
Fr. John Zampese
Fr. Ian Bathgate
Fr. Eugenio Montesi
Fr. Steve Mechand

Spain

Fr. Benjamin Gomez

United States

Fr. Michael Davitti
Mrs. Mary Aktay
Fr. Carl Chudy

Special Guests included

Dr. John Stoer

Scottish Bishops Committee on Interreligious Dialogue - Guest and speaker

Sr Isabel Smythe, SND

Speaker secretary to the Scottish Bishops Committee on Interreligious Dialogue

Dr Rosalyn Mauchline

Guest Steering Group Pax Christi Scotland

Dr. Marian Pallister

Vice Chair of The Scottish Bishops Justice and Peace Commission and Steering Group Pax Christi Scotland.

Fr Bernard Fox

Guest. Columban Missionaries

Imam Javed Ali

Director of the Andalus Institute of Glasgow

Mr. Gary McClelland

Chief Executive, Humanist International Affairs

Ms. Mary Catherine O'Reilly-Gindhart (Intern)

Scottish Bishops Committee on Interreligious Dialogue

Dialogue in the United Kingdom

Fr. Jim Clark, SX

“The decision to open a Global Education Centre to continue the work which had been done in Coatbridge, since the closure of the Junior Seminary, again was the fruit of much discernment, sweat and tears. This initiative has really become the focus of our efforts and probably the innovation that has used the most personnel, finances and energy within the Region. The late Superior General, Fr. Menegazzo, on his visit to Conforti shortly after his election at the XVI General Chapter, declared that the Conforti Institute was the “Congregation’s Dialogue Centre in Europe.” This also resonated with the strategy which emerged from the UK 2010 Regional Chapter where we prioritised interfaith and inter-religious dialogue, as the focus for our activities as a Region. There has been some debate within the region about the priority of the Conforti Institute, but at our recent Assembly on 16/06/17 we recommitted ourselves to this Regional project with almost a unanimous vote by the confreres.” (Report for the XVII Gen. Chapter.)

The many activities at the Conforti Institute come under the headings of interfaith/inter religious dialogue, school chaplaincy, youth ministry, global learning, missionary discipleship and missional activism plus ministry, supplies, and mission appeals.

A part of our charism which we pride ourselves on is our hospitality, and our communities must always reflect this dimension strongly. (Report for the XVII Gen. Chapter.)

In October 2018 we took responsibility to minister in the Parish of St. Bartholomew’s, Castlemilk, Glasgow. It was with the idea of the Parish would become an area where we could take the work of Conforti into a living community in quite a deprived area of Glasgow. The presence of two primary schools and a secondary school could help in implementing some of our work and also to make it more of a “missionary parish” in line with Francis’ vision found in *Evangelii Gaudium*.

In preparation for the XIII Regional Chapter in 2018 our communities planned to continue with interreligious and inter faith dialogue as a priority and and it found its way into the 3 priorities, we set ourself.

One community hoped our chapter would be ... “a renewed desire to be active in the aspect of interfaith/interreligious/intercultural dialogue” and the word - **encounter** was seen as how our presence in St. Bartholomew’s, Conforti and Preston could shape our witness. So perhaps our mission in the UK with the Brexit, Xenophobia, Islamophobia, Popularist Politics... is to be signs of unity, encounter, dialogue which leads to understanding, acceptance, tolerance and respect. (Preston Doc. For the XIII Reg. Chapter.)

Orientations from the XIII Regional Chapter.

- **Mission Spirituality**
- **Mission on the margins**
- **Lay Participation and Formation.**

And concretely we committed ourselves to dialogue in that ...

1. Each community will contextualise how, where and with whom to develop this mission spirituality, mission on the margins and lay involvement through a practical, realistic and well thought out Community Project of life.

2. We should seek avenues through which we share our mission spirituality with others, and we will be organising a course in training for Interfaith Dialogue.
3. Collaborate more with USA, Italy and Spain and use our resources of Conforti, Tabor, our programmes and courses to begin the European Study Centre. We should meet with these regions to plan for this.
4. Ad Extra is not just going abroad but, as religious missionaries, going out of our comfort zone, the familiar, the community, the culture, in order to meet the other and so encounter is fundamental to our community witness and our communities must be places of dialogue and meeting.
5. It is vital that we witness as a community, that we are hospitable, that we invite others into our home for prayers, meals, and moments together.
6. Engage in the promotion of programmes within social justice, mission, poverty and networking with others.

Some of our activities in the area of Dialogue.

Conforti Centre.

- Involvement on Interfaith Scotland.
- Participation on the Bishop's Conference on Interreligious/Interfaith Dialogue.
- School's Interfaith Week.
- Organising Interfaith Conferences.
- Interfaith Youth Camp.
- Prison Spirituality Course.
- Involvement with Pax Christi, Focolare, Justice and Peace and other interfaith initiatives.
- Youth ministry and School Chaplaincy.

Preston Centre.

- Interfaith Week
- Preston Faith Forum
- Deanery Interfaith work.
- Youth and School Ministry.
- Ecumenical activities.
- New Centre initiatives.

St. Bartholomew's.

- Through the primary and secondary schools – interfaith week, other faiths present in the school.
- Highlighting Interfaith Week in the Parish itself.
- Citizen's Refugee Sponsorship Programme

Dialogue in the Region of Spain

Fr. Benjamin Gomez, SX

Awareness of the circumstances

The way of fulfilling the Church's mission depends upon the particular circumstances of each local Church, of each Christian. It always implies a certain sensitivity to the social, cultural, religious and political aspects of the situation, as also attentiveness to the "signs of the times" through which the spirit of God is speaking, teaching and guiding.

The Church's mission extends to all. The Church in dialogue can be seen to have a prophetic role. The plurality of religious and ideological convictions and ways of life has become a feature of the culture of Europe. Eastern religions and new religious groups are expanding and also attract the interest of many Christians and non-Christians. We want to take seriously the critical questions that are presented to us and strive to enter into a loyal debate.

Religious freedom (Spanish Bishops Conference)

No group, whatever its sign, can cause the entry or abandonment of a particular religious belief or confession: it must propose its message with doctrine and behavior, and only the person decides in conscience.

Interfaith Relations

In our country, interreligious dialogue has not yet begun. Our long history has been marked by wars, prejudices, ignorance and even discrimination and intransigence. We are still in need of Christians and non-Christians to move from tolerance to the recognition of existing values in every religion. In each Spanish diocese, the diocesan Bishop is the main promoter of ecumenical and interreligious dialogue.

Modalities

Interreligious Monastic Dialogue (IMD): We are still concerned about the lack of interest in our religious communities on the subject of interreligious relations. In our pastoral work, we have dealt with "our", "our Christians", our parishes, our works. It is true that, in a certain way, it was our duty. And we continue doing it.

Being Muslim in Spain today means being a member of a religious minority in a country with very little development of religious freedoms, a democratic country that just got out of almost five hundred years of religious monopoly imposed by force, along period in which Islam has been brutally persecuted and officially presented as enemies of the homeland.

Our intention is to put on the table a number of issues that we consider crucial to understand the internal problems of Muslim communities, characterized broadly by social instability, the failure of their religious rights, the legal inequality respect to the religion of the majority, Islamophobia, the persistence of national Catholicism. And internally, because of the internal fragmentation, poor preparation of most religious leaders and imams, ideological rivalries, the advance of Salafi

currents and foreign interference. All this in the context of globalization, in which immigrants maintain close ties with their countries of origin, a global context characterized by the constant flow of information, in which what happened in the other side of the planet can affect our daily lives.

We are witnessing the creation of a culture of violence, in which the Muslims appear to be contrary to the western values.

We must refer to intra-Islamic difficulties, such as fragmentation of communities, the lack of a minimally serious leadership, foreign interference and the spread Salafism and other Islamic discourses that break with society. For it is clear that not all problems of the Muslims in Spain come from outside, and that Muslim communities have not found the appropriate mechanisms to facilitate their integration.

The inability of many Islamic leaders is related to unfamiliarity with the environment in which they move, and this leads us to the next topic: Being Muslim in Spain involves being part of a religious community heavily fragmented, which must assume the foreign interference and ideological control by conservative currents.

There are Muslim religious institutions in our country that are supported by the State or the autonomous communities, but whose mission is not to encourage the development of the rights of Muslims, but to ensure that they do not deviate doctrinally, by the standards of foreign countries.

Being a Muslim in Spain involves witnessing the growth of fundamentalism and Salafism, especially among youngsters.

The current situation generates internal dynamics of resentment within communities: the breakdown of social ties, disaffection and disinterest towards the culture of the host society and identity reactions. Salafism offers many young Muslims in Europe a response to the uprooting, it gives a strong identity in a society that refuses them (or so they think). Islam offers in this situation a strong counter-identity that is playing in certain areas a key role as a factor of cohesion within the community outside the dominant ideology. This is multiplied because of the international situation: Palestine, Iraq, Chechnya, Kashmir ... We are finding dynamics on closing identity, the clearest symptom of which is drawing a mental border between the values of Islam and the values of the dominant culture. Put simply: if you are Muslim you cannot be Western, and vice versa.

Dialogue in the United States

Fr. Michael Davitti, SX

USA Provincial Dialogue Commission Report

This event was led, organized and hosted by the UK Province of the Xaverian Missionaries. As chair of the American “Provincial Commission for Interreligious Dialogue” (PCID), I was privileged to attend this gathering and give a report of the steps taken by our Province to implement the recommendation by the XVI General Chapter that looked at dialogue as the constitutive method of the mission today.

The PCID was created to equip ourselves, with the suitable instruments for dialogue with cultures, religions and current world affairs. Its specific purpose is to bring together confreres from our different houses who have an interest in interfaith dialogue and as a way to model the “**Missio ad Gentes**” for the local church, and even to involve them into it. In addition, we also affirmed the new dialogue with the humanist and atheist communities. Our Concern for dialogue is **not simply academic**, but very practical: dialogue in action.

The Commission comprises four members: Fr. Michael Davitti, Fr. Carl Chudy, Fr. Alejandro Rodriguez, Fr. Adolph Menendez.

The 2017 Provincial Assembly of May 14 -19, 2017 at Techny, Illinois was organized by the newly established PCID. It focused on the importance of dialogue both within our own communities and with other faiths and the secular culture of the United States. Fr. Luciano Mazzocchi SX, founder of the community "Zen and the Gospel" was our guest speaker and he shared with us his experience of dialogue with Islam first, and then with Buddhism. At the end of our Assembly we pledged ourselves to promote the common values of the Kingdom through a fraternal and qualified dialogue of faith and life.

In the dialogue with Islam the Commission was inspired by what we read in the Quran:

“To each of you We prescribed a law and a method. Had Allah willed, He would have made you one nation [united in religion], but [He intended] to test you in what He has given you; so race to [all that is] good. To Allah is your return all together, and He will [then] inform you concerning that over which you used to differ.”

Quran: Surat Al-Maaidah (5:48):

In the light of this we discovered the many communalities with Muslim Sufism, where its adherents cherish tolerance and pluralism, qualities that in many religions unsettle extremists. The complexity of the Muslim World made us realize that we had to focus on one specific religion at the time and that we should be equipped with the necessary tools for a better understanding of the same.

Fr. Chudy decided to focus on Islam. Given my interest in mysticism and my pastoral activities I felt more comfortable with Buddhism and the practice of” Silent Meditation.”

PCID attended two “Parliaments of the World Religions.” The first one was held in Salt Lake City, Utah, on Oct. 15-19, 2015 and the second occurred in Toronto, Nov.1-7, 2018. The Toronto Parliament spurred us on to *going beyond verbal dialogue and common action*. It was felt that the next step we should take was to deepen our prayer-life. In the presence of the Absolute we recognize each other as sparks of the same “Burning Bush.”

Three different and complimentary paths were laid open in front of us:

1. “Religious Experience”, as the commune factor at the very core of the Historical Great Religions (Fr. Michael)
2. Dialogue with non-believers, (Fr. Chudy)
3. “Conversations Among Humanists and Religious Believers” (Fr. Michael and Mrs. Aktay for Wayne and Fr. Carl for Holliston).

This group begun at Wayne, and it’s now at its 6th year. It meets monthly at the Provincial Library on last Sunday of the month. We are a very flexible and informal groups. There is no proselytizing. Fr. Michael and Mrs. Aktay organize the meetings. A second similar group operates in Framingham MA and it is organized by Fr. Carl. These conversations are an opportunity to build bridges of understanding in order to encourage a sense of solidarity despite our differences.

Religious Experience and “Silent Meditation”

This branch of PCID focuses specifically on Religious Experience, as the commune element of the Historical Great Religions.

Buddhism is very popular and fashionable in USA, especially for its meditation techniques. Buddhist meditation shows us, in great detail, how self-centered we are, and how our solid sense of self is an illusion. The challenge for both Christians and Buddhists who practice meditation is to be simultaneously grounded in our moment-to-moment experience while we are actively engaged in our relationships and political environments.

Karl Rahner reminds us that: “*the Christian of the future will be a mystic or will not exist.*” Christians need more than just moral guidance and instruction in the proper way to think about God, what is needed is a personal and transforming experience of the “Divine.” Hesychasm and Centering Prayer are the tradition Christian tools to prepare for this encounter. Soyen Shaku, a Zen Master, reminds Buddhist followers that: “Without the awakening of the religious sense, God/Divine is a shadow, the soul a ghost, and life a dream.”

It came as a welcome surprise the realization that, in many ways, Buddhism and humanism are on common ground. The primary commonalities are the rejection of a creator deity and the emphasis on social justice and reason. The common values which various schools of Buddhism associate with humanism center on empathy and the inherent dignity of all people, as well as compassion and the values of prompting humanistic action, namely, the deep respect for human rights. In the Buddhist vision of life, God is not a problem: the suffering of Humans is, and demands an answer.

Availing ourselves of Skype, I engaged in bi-monthly conversations with Buddhist monks in Myanmar. During these conversations we discovered several similarities and differences between Buddhist and Christian Hesychia. This led to a very enriching sharing of Buddhist meditation and Meister Eckhart apophatic practices. The Lenten Season became more meaningful when compared to a "Vassa" (Buddhist rain retreat),

Truly: God is too big to be contained in one religion

Interfaith Outreach: Our Lady of Fatima Shrine, Holliston, MA

Fr. Carl Chudy, SX

Orientation

Grassroots interfaith and intersecular dialogue is at the heart of our orientation. Although it involves theological dialogue to some extent, it focuses more strongly on the dialogue of life, religious experience and the dialogue of the common good. This dialogue hopes to include all religious traditions that wish to participate in our local area, along with secular voices, such as the unaffiliated, secular humanists, who are the second largest group in our area in comparison to religious adherents. We are attempting to explore ways to come to know more intimately our multifaith neighbors, as well as public advocacy together in light of Islamophobia, antisemitism, and xenophobia.

Interfaith Faith Outreach of Fatima Shrine

<https://www.xaverianmissionaries.org/interfaith-dialogue/>

We coordinate an interfaith dialogue program called **The Metrowest Interfaith Dialogue Project**. It is a local network of Christian and Jewish clergy in our town of Holliston and the outlying vicinity. They include four Christian communities, two Jewish, and two Muslim communities. (<https://hollistoninterfaith.org>) Twitter handle: @hollistonclergy.

We began planning in 2018 with our first conference in October 2018, and our second event February 24, 2019. We are doing additional planning for the year and are looking at an interfaith scripture study, as well as an interfaith service day for families later this year.

The Multifaith Collaborative of the Open Spirit Center

<https://www.openspiritcenter.org/multifaith-collaborative>

The Multi-Faith Collaborative brings people from diverse spiritual and cultural traditions together to build bridges of understanding, appreciation, and friendship.

Our offerings have included:

- Celebrations of holidays from our different faith traditions, including periodic Shabbat dinners, Passover Seders, an annual Iftar (the Muslim fast-breaking during the season of Ramadan) and more. The celebrations are open to people of all faiths and people who do not identify with a faith tradition and are opportunities to learn and build community in a joyous setting.
- A monthly interfaith book club and periodic special book discussions.
- Multi-faith prayer, meditation and music gatherings in times of community crisis.

- Comparative scripture studies on themes such as loving kindness and creation.
- A monthly gathering called "Common Ground," which facilitates dialogue between people who identify with a faith tradition and those who identify as secular humanists, agnostics or atheists.
- A "Spiritual and Healing" panel discussion series, reflecting on healing in different spiritual traditions.

Common Ground Project (Religious/unbelief engagement)

<https://www.xaverianmissionaries.org/religious-secular-dialogue/>

The religious context in the northern hemisphere has been changing enormously. The growing impact of secularity, the cultural trends of our young people, teens, emerging adults, and young adults leaving traditional religious institutions, the proliferation of new “spiritualities” that contain elements that can be both secular and religious (religious disaffiliation), and the societal issues that require the collaboration of the secular and religious speak of new contexts for interfaith dialogue that includes secular voices.

- *This is a collaborative project that began with our confreres of the United Kingdom in 2012. Our first international conference bringing together religious adherents and the nonreligious took place at Conforti Institute in 2013, as well as an encounter in 2015 on global climate change prior to the UN Climate Change Conference in Paris.*
- *In 2015 we held an American conference at Rutgers University in New Jersey, co-sponsored by Rutgers University and the American Humanist Society.*
- *We hold two Meetup.Com gatherings in New Jersey and Massachusetts where religious believers, atheists and the unaffiliated (Spiritual but not religious) gather for monthly discussions.*
- *We have a blogging network where we share experiences, insights, and research. They include the provincial blog, **Global Catholic Mission** (<https://xaverianmissionaries.org/missionblog>) and a nonreligious blog called **Secular Spectrum** (<https://www.patheos.com/blogs/secularspectrum>).*

Research and writing

In 2016, I had the opportunity to have a sabbatical where I pursued a master’s degree in interfaith dialogue, focused on Christian Muslim relations, and the impact of secular culture on both. Presently, I am working on a Doctor of Ministry program specifically focusing on religious and nonreligious engagement. Some essays, articles, and working papers can be found on our website. https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Carl_Chudy/research.

Unity in Diversity: Making of the World One Family

Mrs. Mary Aktay

Sharing my story

During our ‘recreation’ time, partaking refreshments, people were talking about how many years they have been participating in dialogue with other faith traditions. I thought about it and realized I have been in dialogue with Muslims for 57 years! I met the young boy who was to become my husband in 1962 and have been in dialogue with Islam ever since.

Side by side

In our seminar, we talked about dialogue being not only “face to face” but also “side by side” because all “faith is lived through the work of caring for people.” We determined that interfaith dialogue needs to be in collaboration with the local Church and should be part of seminary formation, young adult and youth formation and parish faith formation. We learned that the “Models of Mission” can be aptly applied to interfaith dialogue: Respect, Openness, Willingness to Lean, Attentiveness and Vulnerability, Hospitality and Humility with a Frankness that demands a commitment to dialogue.

Hospitality

For me hospitality is at the core of interfaith and intercultural dialogue. Henri Nouwen writes:

“Hospitality means primarily the creation of a free space where the stranger can enter and become a friend instead of an enemy. Hospitality is not to change people but to offer them space where change can take place. It is not to bring men and women over to our side, but to offer freedom not disturbed by dividing lines. . . It creates a friendly emptiness where strangers can enter and discover themselves as created free; free to sing their own songs, speak their own languages, dance their own dances; free also to leave and follow their own vocations. Hospitality is not a subtle invitation to adore the lifestyle of the host, but the gift of a chance for the guest to find his own.¹”

Service

Pursuing my Master of Theology I read Paul Knitter’s book, *One Earth, Many Religions*. In it, he stresses that interfaith and intercultural dialogue must not be simply about sharing beliefs, practices, rituals, morals and ethics. Rather, it is to have a goal of service to those he defines as the “suffering other.” If there is no service, dialogue becomes merely a hollow exercise in comparative religion and traditions.²

A Passion for Compassion

During our time together we heard the phrase “passion for compassion” for all people, no matter what they *do or do not* believe. Humanist Interfaith Chaplain Chris Highland concurs with Paul Knitter’s views:

When we have a “passion for compassion” it says quite a bit about our enthusiasm. What we think *and feel* moves us to do something for others who think and feel.

Any person with a heart can step up and out to care... “represent[ing] the compassion of the community,” from Protestant to Pagan, Catholic to Evangelical, Jewish to Muslim, nonprofits and individuals – believers and nonbelievers.³

¹ Accessed online March 8, 2019 <https://henrinouwen.org/meditation/hospitality/>

² Knitter, Paul, *One Earth Many Religions: Multifaith Dialogue and Global Responsibility*, Maryknoll NY, Orbis (1995)

³ Highland, Chris, BEING PRESENT TO WHAT IS REALLY NEEDED, Collaborative Compassion: A Secular Perspective, Jan. 15, 2019, The Interfaith Observer, Accessed online 2/27/2019 <http://www.theinterfaithobserver.org/journal-articles/2019/1/8/collaborative-compassion-a-secular-perspective?rq=BEING%20PRESENT%20TO%20WHAT%20IS%20REALLY%20NEEDED>

Dialogue and Mission proclaims that we “meet followers of other traditions in order to walk together toward truth and work together in projects for the common good” (DM 13).⁴ Javid Ali told us “there is no point in having religion if you don’t have humanity.” Our responsibility is to make the world a better place as we make of it “one family.”

Answered prayers

It seems to me that the reason we gathered is more than just to share our stories and talk about the ways and means of dialogue. We gathered in order to “do something.” Please permit me to quote from two of my favorite American authors. The first is a poet and the second is a teacher and parenting guide.

“my god
is not waiting inside a church
or sitting above the temple's steps
my god
is the refugee's breath as she's running
is living in the starving child's belly
is the heartbeat of the protest
my god
does not rest between pages
written by holy men
my god
lives between the sweaty thighs
of women's bodies sold for money
was last seen washing the homeless man's feet
my god
is not as unreachable as
they'd like you to think
my god is beating inside us infinitely” ~ **Rupi Kaur, The Sun and Her Flowers**⁵

Get up off of your knees. Come out of your churches, your mosques, your temples. God can hear your prayers for peace, justice, and hope in this broken world just fine while you're out creating peace, working for justice, and giving hope to this broken world. When are we finally going to realize that *humanity is the solution to inhumanity*? When will we finally understand that we are all drops of the same ocean, hurting together, healing together, hoping together? Don't just pray for hands to heal the hurting. Pray with hands that are healing the hurting. Don't just pray for arms to help the helpless. Pray with arms that are helping the helpless. Don't just pray for feet to respond to need. Pray on feet that are responding to need. Don't just pray for someone to do something. *Be someone who does something*. Don't just pray for answers. *Be the answer*. ~**L.R. Knost**⁶

⁴ Accessed online on March 11, 2019

http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/interelg/documents/rc_pc_interelg_doc_1984_0610_dialogo-missione_po.html

⁵ Accessed online March 11, 2019 <https://underthebluedoor.org/2018/01/04/my-god-is-not-waiting-inside-a-church-or-sitting-above-the-temples-steps-my-god-is-the-refugees-breath-as-shes-running-is-living-in-the-starving-childs-belly-is-the-heartbeat-of-the-p/>

⁶ Accessed online March 11, 2019

https://www.goodreads.com/author/quotes/5116439.L_R_Knost?page=2
L.R.Knost - Little Hearts/Gentle Parenting Resources October 2, 2017

I am reminded of the words of Rabbi Hillel: *If I am not for myself, then who will be. But if I am only for myself, then what am I? And if not now, when?*⁷

In my view, the Xaverian Missionaries *are the change* we “want to see in the world.”

There are prayers that need to be answered. What are we waiting for?

Final Conversations

In the final afternoon we spoke together about some specific proposals and priorities.

Proposals:

1. Conforti Centre is an international gathering place for interfaith dialogue and dialogue with nonreligion for Xaverian Missionaries and others. Given the economic climate today, is it possible for expenses for collaborative events to be shared by regions in Europe and the United States?
2. Can Conforti Centre be a place for formation in interfaith dialogue for Xaverian Missionaries in English and other languages?
3. Can there be an ongoing publication (online) of interfaith dialogue in the regions of Europe and the United States?
4. How can we help bring people of other faiths/beliefs to theologize around the option of the poor?
5. Can we have a General Coordinator for dialogue as a desk from the General Direction?
6. Can we continue to work for inclusivity/networking/partnerships, particularly with lay people?
7. Can we link up with the dialogue centres in Asia, bringing together both academics and praxis?

Priorities

8. The European Forum may be a place where we can develop some of these priorities.
9. We would like to prioritize one or two of these proposals in dialogue with the General Direction.

Pictures of the Conference

<https://flic.kr/s/aHsmzkQukK>

⁷ Rabbi Hillel (Pirke Avot 1:14) Accessed online March 11, 2019
https://www.sefaria.org/Pirkei_Avot.1.14?lang=bi