

*Let us recognize, preserve and promote the Truth found in the followers of the world religions*

“The creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the children of God” (*NRSV Romans 8: 19*). The children of God are human beings who radiate the glory of the Divine Reality. Human beings have not yet been revealed as children of God. Their history has been so far one of violent negative excluding thinking of and feeling for one another. People of different thoughts and religions through their interactions can give to one another and to creation fullness of Life, wholeness. What kind of interactions is needed? So far relations between people, and especially people of different faiths, can be termed as “you *and* me”. This type of relationship has led many times to “you *against* me”. The life-giving relationship that is needed today is a “*with*-relationship”: “you-*with*-me”.

We need a more relevant way to establish a life-giving relationship between people of different faiths and ideologies. Philosophical, sociological, political, and theological reflections have produced in the course of history many different ways of thinking the other and relationship in society. Yet we are still experiencing violence, exclusion of one another, and in a very particular way in our times we live in fear of the Other. We are living in a time of phobias that shows clearly that we do not live *together*; we do not live *with* the other. Whenever we meet the Other we are “angry and downcast” (cf. *Genesis 4:5*) ready to kill, if not physically, at least psychologically.

We wholeheartedly welcome the World Interfaith Harmony Week. The upsurge of interfaith initiatives in the world is a sign of a deep longing for life. It is also a sign of a deep anguish for the future of humanity. Life is threatened everywhere: “death is crouching at the door hungry to get us”. The message we hear in the depth of our conscious is clear: “unless we repent we will all perish.” Religions have to undergo a deep transformation. They have to be transfigured through a process of dying to oneself to rise to a new life-giving conscience in order for them to “master death” and blow life. Since life overflows only through unconditional and non-pre-fabricated relations, this process of transformation of the religions, and consequently of the relations between people, will be possible only through dialogue between people of different ideologies and religions.

Many ways have been proposed to make this process happen. Unfortunately they have not been successful because people are still “angry and downcast” at one another. The missing point is the “*homoousios*”, “the one indivisible substance” that makes life-giving interaction possible. What is really at stake is our living together. All the interfaith approaches should aim ultimately at improving the life of people in a society through a “right way”, a life-giving way. We have to meet in such a way that our relations bring fullness of life to each one of us and to the whole world. We need to gather the scattered and divided children of the one undivided divine reality.

We have to enter into deep dialogue. We have to be in relation, to live in relation, to conceive ourselves as relational being. Thus we will put our “personal” truths in deep dialogue, so that they become universally valid truths. If we have to “*live-with-the other*” (and not I live *and* you live) then we have to identify clearly that “*homoousios*” (that one indivisible substance) hidden in our different religions that makes such a deep relationship possible. It is not just about commonalities. It is about the “source”, the “substance”, from which fullness of life overflows. We believe that the more relevant way for interfaith dialogue is to recognize, preserve and promote the truth or any values found in the followers of the world religions.

To recognize the truth in the other religions means to search for it through critical thinking. We set on a journey to search for the truth in the other religions. It may appear to be an intellectual journey at the beginning. But it will turn to be a deep spiritual and human journey of growth to maturity. It demands to enter in the world of the other with intellectual, moral, and spiritual honesty. We have to listen. To listen to somebody is a great act of love. We need interfaith institutes where followers of different religions study and research together. Most of the actual interfaith institutes belong to one religious tradition with the aim to understand other religious traditions. We need to move forward, towards interfaith institutes where people of different religions search together for the truth.

The truth demands commitment. We have to commit ourselves to the truth. We need to adhere all of us, though in different ways, to that one-undivided substance (*Homoousios*) or Truth. We have to preserve it. It is a duty. It is a mission. I suggest three ways of preserving the truth: 1. to transmit it through teaching and preaching; 2. to read the holy scriptures of the world religions as valid scriptures capable of transmitting the “The mind and heart of God” (cf. *Philippians 2:5*). 3. To include the other religious view in our theological reflection. Concretely, it means that we reflect on “our own” truths in dialogue with other religions. We think in a dialogical way since we are dialogical beings.

When we have recognized the truth, when we have preserved it, we need to promote it. We promote it *together*. Togetherness has lacked greatly in our interfaith initiatives. It is not enough to invite the other to join us. We can create interfaith communities. We can feast together. We have to always pray for the other. It is a duty. It is an act of love. We should never cease to pray together for peace and harmony. We will give a great witness of harmony and reconciliation by organising interfaith commemorations of painful events. We can go on pilgrimage together so that we turn those common holy lands that have become lands of violence into havens of peace. By studying together we will build up a new *common* civilization. We need to develop more and more interfaith art. Art, beauty pacifies the mind and the hearts.

Once we have discovered the goodness of those we have long considered our enemies, we are ready to begin the process of reconciliation. The healing of the memories is the central objective of this process. Interfaith dialogue makes possible the reading of human history from the point of view of the Divine Reality, the same Reality present in each one affected by the historical incident. We are then called to see things in the logic of the Life-giver Divine Reality—to make a *Theo-logical* reading of human history. A *Theo-logical* reading focuses on the impact of the events on hearts, particularly the innocent hearts of the individuals involved. When we look upon these hearts, we discover that in violence there is no victor, there are only victims. Such a reading of history helps us see evil for what it is, without qualifying it as “Christian”, “Palestinian”, or “Jewish”. Seeing evil in such a universal manner compels us to fight it together. An interfaith reading of human history in the logic of God will help us move beyond our narrow and defensive beliefs about what happened, and focus on what God wants of us now—how God is calling us to make things new.

Both those who are fighting and those who are holding peace talks are believers. Over the past decades, we have witnessed an upsurge in praiseworthy interfaith conflict resolutions initiatives across the globe. Yet the world is not much better. The problem is that we do not seek for the solution *together* and we do not address the problem from the Divine Reality’s perspective. If we want religions to be really efficacious in dealing with conflicts, we need to

learn how the Divine Reality deals with human conflicts like God's resolution of the first conflict between two brothers: Cain and Abel. We look for a solution to our conflicts through a dialogue with God. It is in his name that we love. It is in his name that we kill. So we want him to guide us. We listen to him together, and we answer to him together. It is important to feel that we are in communion with one another in the search for harmony. We seek for a solution together in sincerity and humility. Nobody has a readymade solution. If you dream alone, it will always remain a dream. If we dream together our dream has already become reality, said Don Helder Camara.

May this new initiative of the World Interfaith Harmony Week be a moment of grace and blessings for all believers!

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