

Interfaith Harmony Week Dialog Organized by SUNFO at BMICH

February has been designated by the United Nations as Interfaith Harmony Week to promote mutual understanding and respect among religious communities of different faiths. In line with this initiative, the Sri Lanka United Nations Friendship Organization (SUNFO) organized a discussion at the BMICH, where religious leaders were invited to share their thoughts on interfaith harmony. What follows is a summary of the key speeches delivered at the event, on the themes of faith, spirituality, and the imperative of interfaith understanding.



WORLD INTERFAITH HARMONY WEEK



SUNFO- SRI LANKA



VEN Madugasthalave
Nanda Thero



Fr. Dixon Fernando SDB



Ash sheikh Moulavi A.N.M.Firdous



Madam Poongothai
Balachandren



Rtn. PP. PHF Marshad Barry



Mr. Murthaaz Barry

WIFHW Dialogue - 4 Feb 2025

BMICH, Colombo, Sri Lanka-04.02.2025



Faith and Spirituality

Rev Nanda Thero started off discussing the topic of faith, comparing trusting in our day-to-day lives to trusting in a greater power. He clarified that faith is not specifically religion but is an essential element of human life. An example would be going to see a doctor or dining at a restaurant, and we automatically trust that doing such things will have positive effects on us. This mutual trust is also applied to our trust in a higher power that governs the world, something which is universal to all religions.

Rev Nanda Thero noted the interdependence of humanity, noting that while we embrace independence, we are also interdependent on one another to live and prosper. He emphasized the importance of respecting such interdependence and utilizing it in our spiritual lives. In Christianity, he noted, the paramount commandment is love—love for God and love for neighbor. This summary of two commands encapsulates the essence of Christian teachings and makes a foundation for coexistence across faiths.

Rev Nanda Thero also drew a line between religion and spirituality, stating that whereas religions have structure and laws, spirituality goes beyond religious boundaries. He called on the people to embrace spiritual values, which promote harmony and love across any given one denomination. He concluded by stating how vital it was to live each day by these values, for this is the way one could measure his or her faith.

<https://youtu.be/1UsJXItnfww>

Fr. Dixon Fernando SDB : Harmonizing Through Awareness

Rev. Ash Sheikh Moulavi A. N. M. Firdous began with thanks for having been given a chance to contribute to the summit that was jointly organized by SUNFO. He emphasized the immediate need for coexistence among the religions in contemporary times. Referring to an admission that religions have, as a matter of fact, traditionally been a point of contention, he attributed that not to their teachings but rather to ignorance and misinterpretation of religious thought.

Fr. Dixon Fernando SDB identified hate, greed, and splits as the root causes of conflict. He felt that by the cultivation of mental clarity and awareness, individuals could overcome these negative tendencies and bring about harmony. To achieve this, he recommended four key things:

1. **Study your own religion thoroughly:** Deepen your understanding of your faith.
2. **Practice your faith sincerely:** Live according to its teachings.
3. **Cultivate a clear mind:** Develop mental discipline to overcome biases.
4. **Respect other faiths:** Acknowledge and honor the beliefs of others.

Fr. Dixon Fernando SDB concluded his speech by quoting Buddha, who has taught that a man's worth is determined by actions, not by birth or creed. The speaker called everyone to shared action for a better world, inviting all to come together in the spirit of interfaith cooperation.

<https://youtu.be/85h5I7BFvD4>