



Ecumenical Interfaith Committee Joint Committee on Franciscan Unity

ACCEPTING ALL PEOPLE AS A GIFT OF THE LORD

FROM: VATICAN II IN PLAIN ENGLISH

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With Pope Francis, the Franciscan Family celebrates the 800th anniversary of the meeting of Br. Francis and Br. Illuminato with Sultan Malek al Kamil. Considering the Pope's efforts, let's take a moment to reflect on what the Church has to say regarding our active involvement with non-Christian religions.

The following excerpts are from Book 3 of *Vatican II in Plain English*

Book 3 – The Decrees and Declarations

Chapter 4, The Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to Non- Christian Religions

(Although the “verses” below are written in psalm-scripture style in the book, I present them in paragraph form to save space.)

1. In our day and age, people everywhere are growing closer together, and their ties are becoming more profound, even when they are socially diverse. Because of this reality, the Church is giving more attention to its relationship with non-Christian religions and, toward that end, gives primary consideration in this document to what unites all people and to what people have in common.

This furthers the Church's task of fostering unity and love among people and even among various nations. For we believe and teach that all men and women form one human family, have a common origin and God, and share a common destiny in divine Providence. People naturally look to various religions to answer profound human questions:

- What does it mean to be human?
- What is goodness? What is sin?
- What makes us sad?
- What is the path to happiness?
- What does death mean?
- What is beyond the grave?
- What, in short, is the mystery of life?

2. People have long sensed the presence of the divine, however that is understood or defined. It seems to hover near us, mysteriously present in the events of life. We have variously known this as a supreme being — a divinity or heavenly sort of parent — and this has given people a religious sense.

In Hinduism for example, people contemplate this divine mystery and speak of it through myths and penetrating enquiry, seeking relief of human struggle through aesthetical practice, meditation, or movement toward God.

In various forms of Buddhism, too, people understand that the current situation is not

sufficient and that there is a path for life on which people can reach greater freedom or enlightenment.

In many other religions around the world as well, people strive to relieve the restless hearts through religious practices and lifestyles that consist of teachings, rules of life, and sacred rights.

The Catholic Church does not reject anything that is true and holy in any of these religions and, in fact, looks upon them with sincere respect. Even though they differ from us, their way of life and doctrines often reflect the truth that we all seek.

The church of course, continues to proclaim Christ as “the way, the truth, and the life,”but we all exhort all our members to be prudent and loving and open to dialogue with others.

We urge Christians to defend and promote the spiritual and moral benefits found among other world religions, including the values found in their cultures.

3. We also appreciate the Muslims, who adore one God who, they believe, acts with mercy and power, who is our creator and sustainer. They seek to obey God in the spirit of Abraham and Sarah, even when the divine decrees seem inscrutable. Even though they do not believe in the divinity of Jesus, nonetheless they revere him as a prophet, and they honor Mary, his mother. They wait with us for the judgment day, when God will give all their due, and therefore, they value a moral life and practice prayer, fasting, and almsgiving. Even though we have had many hostilities between Christians and Muslims, we now urge all to forget the past and work for mutual understanding and peace.

4. This council also recalls the spiritual bonds that unite Christians and Jews: our common heritage in Sarah and Abraham. We are the Church of Christ, but we acknowledge that the roots of our faith are in the spiritual ancestors, Moses, and the prophets whom we hold in common.

The very story of Christianity — that God is leading us to freedom — was foreshadowed by the

journey of the Jews from bondage to freedom through the desert.

We cannot forget, therefore, that we receive divine revelation through the Jews....

As Christians, we are rooted in Judaism, and we even believe that in Christ, Jew and Gentile were reconciled once and for all.

Mary herself was a Jew, of course, as we're all the apostles, not to mention Christ himself — a faithful Jew. ...

5. It is really not possible to call upon God, the creator and sustainer of all, if we treat anyone less than lovingly. The scriptures themselves say as much when they remind us that whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love.

Hence, one's relationship to God is intimately linked to one's relationship to those around him or her. There is absolutely no ground, then, to offer anyone less than full dignity and respect.

Therefore, we outrightly reject and abhor any discrimination against anyone based on race, color, condition of life, or religion.

We beg all Christians to be at peace and to maintain good relations with all peoples.

The Word of the Church

