



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI
TO THE MEMBERS OF THE FOUNDATION
FOR INTERRELIGIOUS AND INTERCULTURAL
RESEARCH AND DIALOGUE**

Thursday, 1 February 2007

Dear Friends,

It is a joy for me, having been one of the founding members of the Foundation for Interreligious and Intercultural Research and Dialogue, to meet you again and to welcome you today at the Vatican. I greet in particular His Royal Highness Prince Hassan of Jordan whom I have the pleasure to meet on this occasion.

I thank H.E. Metropolitan Damaskinos of Andrianoupolis, your President, who has presented to me the first result of your work: a joint edition of the three Sacred Books of the three monotheistic religions in their original language and in chronological order. Indeed, this was the very first project we conceived of in creating the Foundation together, so as to *"make a specific and positive contribution to the dialogue between cultures and religions"*.

As I have said on several occasions, in continuation with the Conciliar Declaration *Nostra Aetate* and with my beloved Predecessor, Pope John Paul II, we, Jews, Christians and Muslims are called to develop the bonds that unite us.

Indeed, it was this idea that led us to create this Foundation which aims to seek *"the most essential and authentic message that the three monotheistic religions, namely, Judaism, Christianity and Islam, can address to the world of the 21st century"*, to give a new impetus to interreligious and intercultural dialogue by means of our common research and by highlighting and disseminating everything in our respective spiritual heritages that helps to strengthen fraternal ties between our communities of believers.

Consequently, the Foundation had to work out an instrument of reference that would help us

overcome misunderstandings and prejudices and offer a common platform for future work. Thus, you have produced this beautiful edition of the three books which are the source of our religious beliefs, creators of culture, that have made a deep mark on peoples and to which we are indebted today.

The reinterpretation, and for some people, the discovery of the texts that so many people across the world venerate as sacred, demands mutual respect in trusting dialogue. Our contemporaries expect of us a message of harmony and peace and the practical expression of our common willingness to help them achieve their legitimate aspiration to live in justice and peace.

They are entitled to expect of us a strong sign of renewed understanding and reinforced cooperation in accordance with the actual objective of the Foundation, which proposes to offer "*to the world in this way a sign of hope and the promise of divine Blessings that always accompanies charitable action*".

The Foundation's work will contribute to a growing awareness of everything in the different cultures of our time which is in conformity with divine wisdom and serves human dignity, the better to discern and reject everything that usurps God's name and deforms man's humanity.

Thus, we are invited to engage in a common task of reflection. This is a labour of reason for which I wholeheartedly appeal, with you, to be able to examine God's mystery in the light of our respective religious traditions and wisdom so as to discern the values likely to illumine the men and women of all the peoples on earth, whatever their culture and religion.

For this reason it is henceforth invaluable to have at our disposal a common reference point, thanks to the work you have done. Thus, we will be able to make headway in interreligious and intercultural dialogue which today is more necessary than ever: a true dialogue, respectful of differences, courageous, patient and persevering, which finds its strength in prayer and is nourished by the hope that dwells in all who believe in God and put their trust in him.

Our respective religious traditions all insist on the sacred character of the life and dignity of the human person. We believe that God will bless our initiatives if they converge for the good of all his children and enable them to respect each other in brotherhood world-wide.

Together with all people of good will, we aspire to peace. That is why I insist once again: interreligious and intercultural research and dialogue are not an option but a vital need for our time.

May the Almighty bless your work and grant an abundance of his Blessings to you and to your loved ones!

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