The Holy See

MESSAGE OF POPE FRANCIS ON THE OCCASION OF THE 50th ANNIVERSARY OF THE FOUNDATION OF THE PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUE

To My Venerable Brother
Cardinal Jean-Louis Tauran
President of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue

On the occasion of this important commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the founding of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, I am pleased to convey my warm greeting to you, Venerable Brother, to the Superiors and Officials of the Dicastery, as well as to the illustrious guests who will speak at the commemoration.

The institution by the Secretariat for non-Christians, which came about with the Apostolic Letter *Progrediente Concilio* of 19 May 1964 represents one of the important decisions the Servant of God Paul VIenacted during the Second Ecumenical Vatican Council after deep reflection. Its purpose was to begin implementing the Council's guidelines and to orient the universal Church on the path of a much hoped for renewal.

At that stage, characterized by great openness, the Church, visibly manifest in the Conciliar Hall, felt inspired by a sincere desire for encounter and dialogue with humanity as a whole, in order to be able to present herself to a rapidly changing world in her deepest and most authentic identity: "The Church must enter into dialogue with the world in which it lives. It has something to say, a message to give, a communication to make", as Pope Paul VIwrote at that time in his first and programmatic Encyclical (*Ecclesiam Suam*, 6 August 1964, III, The Dialogue, n. 65).

From the beginning it was clear that such a dialogue was not meant to relativize the Christian faith, or to set aside the longing that resides in the heart of every disciple, to proclaim to all the joy of

encounter with Christ and his universal call. Moreover, dialogue is possible only by beginning with one's own identity. As the Holy Father Saint John Paulii would show frequently through words and gestures, dialogue and proclamation do not exclude one another, but are intimately connected, though their distinction must be maintained and the two should never be confused or instrumentalized or judged equivalent or interchangeable (cf. Encyclical Letter *Redemptoris Missio*, n. 55). In truth, "it is always the Spirit who is at work, both when he gives life to the Church and impels her to proclaim Christ, and when he implants and develops his gifts in all individuals and peoples, guiding the Church to discover these gifts, to foster them and to receive them through dialogue" (*ibid.*, n. 29).

As I had the chance to recall in the very first days of my ministry as the Bishop of Rome, "the Catholic Church is conscious of the importance of promoting friendship and respect between men and women of different religious traditions" (*Audience with Representatives of the Churches and Ecclesial Communities and of the Different Religions*, 20 March 2013).

Like Christ on the way to Emmaus, the Church wishes to be close to and to accompany every man and woman. Such a readiness to walk together is much more necessary in this day and age, marked by profound and never-before-known interactions between diverse peoples and cultures. In this context, the Church will be ever more committed to travel along the path of dialogue and to intensify the already fruitful cooperation with all those who, belonging to different religious traditions, share her intention to build relations of friendship and share in the many initiatives to do with dialogue.

Joining in thanksgiving to God for the work carried out over these 50 years, I wish that the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue may continue her mission with renewed vigour, which in turn will benefit the cause of peace and authentic progress among peoples. To all the participants in this Conference, I assure you of my remembrance and I send you a heartfelt blessing.

From the Vatican, 19 May 2014

FRANCIS

Copyright © Dicastero per la Comunicazione - Libreria Editrice Vaticana