



The Holy See

ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS TO THE KOREAN COUNCIL OF RELIGIOUS LEADERS

Saturday, 2 September 2017

[Multimedia]

Dear friends from the Korean Council of Religious Leaders, I am pleased to welcome you for this meeting. You have travelled a long way to come to Rome on your interreligious pilgrimage, and I thank you for your presence here. I am grateful to Archbishop Kim Hee-jong for proposing this visit and for his kind words. As I said in [Seoul](#): “Life is a journey, a long journey, but a journey which we cannot make by ourselves. We need to walk together with our brothers and sisters in the presence of God” (*Meeting with Religious Leaders*, 18 August 2014). Here we are today taking another step on this journey together!

As you know, particularly since [the Second Vatican Council](#), the Catholic Church has tirelessly embarked upon the often challenging path of dialogue. The Church, in a special way, has encouraged dialogue with followers of other religions. Today too she “urges her sons and daughters... with prudence and charity... to acknowledge, preserve and encourage the spiritual and moral values found among them, together with their social life and culture” (*Nostra Aetate*, 2). Because interreligious dialogue consists of contacts, encounters and cooperation, it is an endeavour that is precious and pleasing to God, a challenge directed towards the common good and peace.

Such dialogue must always be both *open* and *respectful* if it is to be fruitful. Open, that is to say warm and sincere, carried forward by persons willing to walk together with esteem and honesty. Respectful, because mutual respect is at once the condition and the goal of interreligious dialogue: indeed it is in respecting the right to life, physical integrity and fundamental freedoms, such as those of conscience, religion, thought and expression, that the foundations are laid for building peace, for which each of us is called to pray and work.

The world is looking to us; it asks us to work together and with all men and women of good will. It looks to us for answers and a shared commitment to various issues: the sacred dignity of the human person, the hunger and poverty which still afflict too many peoples, the rejection of violence, in particular that violence which profanes the name of God and desecrates religion, the corruption that gives rise to injustice, moral decay, and the crisis of the family, of the economy and, not least of all, the crisis of hope.

We have, therefore, a long journey ahead of us, which must be undertaken together with humility and perseverance, not just by raising our voices but by rolling up our sleeves, to sow the hope of a future in which humanity becomes more human, a future which heeds the cry of so many who reject war and implore greater harmony between individuals and communities, between peoples and states. Religious leaders are thus called upon to initiate, promote and accompany processes for the welfare and reconciliation of all people: we are called to be *heralds of peace*, proclaiming and embodying a nonviolent style, a style of peace, with words clearly different from the *narrative of fear*, and with gestures opposed to the *rhetoric of hatred*.

Dear friends, may this meeting strengthen us on our journey. Seeing you here as pilgrims reminds me of [my pilgrimage to the beautiful land of Korea](#), for which I remain grateful to God and to the beloved Korean people. I constantly pray that God will bestow upon them the gifts of peace and fraternal reconciliation. May our mindfulness of the friendship and the good things we have received from one another grant us the strength to move forward together, with the help of God. Thank you.