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- 1**
Concept Note
- 2**
Dialogue between Cultures,
Understanding between Faiths
- 4**
Prologue
- 5**
Opening Ceremony
- 8**
Dialogue on Dialogue
- 10**
Closing Ceremony

CONCEPT NOTE

Annual G20 Summits are a critical time and place where priority global issues are considered. A feature of each annual G20 process is the work of “engagement groups” that draw on key global constituencies. The work of these groups parallels the official agenda of ministerial encounters culminating in the Summit centered on heads of state. The engagement groups aim to develop and present analyses, distilled schematics on priority issues, and specific proposals to capture the attention both of public opinion and decision-makers. These engagement groups have evolved over time and include the B20 (business), C20 (civil society), L20 (labor), S20 (science), T20 (think tanks), U20 (urban), W20 (women), and Y20 (youth).

The G20 Interfaith Forum (IF20), which has convened annually since 2014, brings important dimensions to the G20 process. The G20 Interfaith Forum offers a global platform to a network of religiously linked and academic research institutions engaging religious issues and political voices dealing with religious aspects of issues in the context of priority topics highlighted by the G20 host on global agendas and UN SDGs. The G20 Interfaith network includes interfaith and intercultural organizations, religious leaders and policymakers, universities and scholars, diplomats and representatives of multilateral organizations, development and humanitarian entities, and business and civil society actors. The IF20 builds on the vital roles religious institutions and beliefs play in world affairs, reflecting their rich diversity of institutions, ideas, and values.

The G20 Interfaith Forum shares some features with other engagement groups but has distinctive aspects that relate above all to the widely

diverse landscape of world religious communities. Especially since the German-led G20 process in 2017, the IF20 Forum has focused on responding to the G20 agenda, bringing specific insights from traditional and emerging networks that link religious institutions, operational bodies, public officials, and scholars. It serves as a place for high-level encounters and dialogue where institutions of the faith communities and associated organizations can interact with public officials and active scholars in law, theology, history, economics and international relations, both directly and through representatives.

The Italian Presidency of the G20 in 2021 has agreed to host the IF20 Forum and engage actively in its program, with an opening speech by the President of the Republic on 12 September. The Forum will involve three working days and preparatory meetings.

The G20 Interfaith Forum and Italian Presidency have entrusted the preparation of the 2021 Forum in Italy to the Fondazione per le scienze religiose (FSCIRE), a well-respected research institution in the historical-religious field. The G20 Interfaith Forum looks forward to collaborating with FSCIRE in planning Forum initiatives, developing Forum activities, and assuring inclusive engagement within G20 countries and other countries where religious issues, traditions, scholarship, and resources can be engaged in the Forum framework.

The IF20 will take place in Bologna, the seat of FSCIRE and Europe’s oldest University. Bologna is well suited to host an inclusive interreligious forum. Over the centuries, the city has known the shame of discrimination and the weight of war and terrorist violence, emerging as the vibrant and diverse city of today. Encounter and knowledge have forged the identity of the city, where now Card. Matteo M. Zuppi is one of the most visible witnesses of a long-lasting tradition of dialogue.

The IF20 Forum will try to build on these grounds, showcasing how the force of knowledge

can tackle the thorniest problems for individuals or entire societies.

Plans for the 2021 IF20 agenda center on two ideas: continuity in advancing priority action with a sharp focus on urgent matters and efforts to enrich the agenda through the host’s and the IF20 Association’s academic and cultural resources.

The Bologna Forum draws on active and diverse work on global agenda issues by religious entities and, above all, networks that engage in interfaith and intra-faith alliances. These are echoed in 10 working groups that reflect standing priority issues that align with the United Nations’ SDGs. They address the reduction of poverty and inequality; global health issues (including the COVID-19 emergency); education; gender equality and women’s engagement (with a specific focus on human trafficking); climate change and other environmental issues; religion and technology; peace and justice issues including sacred sites, freedom of religion or belief, and peace building; refugees, displacement, and migration; humanitarian aid; children and youth issues. The IF20 pursues other cross-cutting initiatives, the most significant of which currently focuses on racism. Various initiatives emerge from year-to-year depending on global needs or host country priorities. During the Bologna IF20 Forum itself, dedicated workshops will address these issues, engaging with international, intergovernmental, governmental, non-governmental, and research organizations.

Faith communities have a worldwide presence (well beyond G20 member countries), and discussions will be global, looking to how G20 agendas can engage concerns in all parts of the world. The Forum seeks to highlight ways in which religious actors can help G20 policymakers develop policies that will benefit the vulnerable and other victims of injustice worldwide. Religious leaders invited to Bologna will highlight the core responsibility to listen to the cries of communities that are too often unheard and forgotten. Dialogue on each topic will explore ideas and experiences that

unite, also highlighting what divides and sows enmity. The Forum aims to forge a robust concept of “we”, asserting that “we together will support each and every community in a spirit of equity”.

The central theme for the 2021 IF20 is “A Time to Heal” (inspired by a biblical verse from Ecclesiastes 3:3). Today, when the COVID-19 pandemic has left, already, close to two million dead, these words will be readily understood. However, the inescapable reality is that this time to heal follows a time of sickness and killing.

The IF20 puts the juxtapositions and questions that arise at the fore: Cardinal Zuppi, in his concluding comments at the 2020 Interfaith Forum in Riyadh, highlighted the need to recognize and reckon with the pandemics of war, hatred, and enmity (the “time to kill” of Eccl. 3:3) that devour more lives than the pandemic itself, absorb more resources than any vaccine, sow despair and fear, and feed new hatreds, new enmity, and new wars.

The IF20 invites authoritative figures in international relations and the intellectual scene to reflect on this central challenge. Communities of faith know well that they cannot simply blame each other for disobeying the “thou shall not kill” commandment. Their power and obligation are to commit to each other that “we shall not kill”, refusing such violence in the name of the commandment each has received. They will listen to a vital set of voices – victims of terrorism and war in places of prayer, who are among the many victims of human violence. Each person who enters a temple of any denomination needs to remember their fate.

We need a dialogue about dialogue. We thus invite representatives of organizations active in interreligious dialogue and leading figures in theological, legal, and philosophical debates. Dialogue, we are convinced, must represent more than moving exchanges of affection between religious leaders or a praiseworthy commitment to delegitimize violence perpetrated “in the name of God”. Rabbi Jonathan Sacks taught that “the crimes of religion have one thing in common: they involve making God in our image instead of letting him remake us in his”. Enriching abstractions, even worthy notions like fraternity, are insufficient (one should remember what Cain and Abel taught us about the perils of fraternity). Rather, we conceive dialogue as a process where no one is exempt from the duty to ask pardon, nor the hope that they may learn some truth in the exchange of forgiveness.

In order that this effort not be limited to the enunciation of important commitments, the IF20 will host activities to stimulate public discussion and provide the G20 with food for thought. These will include plenary and thematic sessions, roundtables, and workshops.

Each of these sessions will include representatives of organizations that are most active in interreligious dialogue and leading figures from the fields of theology, law, and philosophy. They will be chaired by authoritative figures from the Italian and international intellectual scene.

Senior representatives of Italian and international institutions and faith communities will also contribute to the Forum, including the President of the European Parliament, David Sassoli, the President of the World Jewish Congress, Ronald Lauder, the former President of the European Commission, Romano Prodi, the Vatican Secretary of State, Card. Pietro Parolin, the Chief Rabbi of Rome, Rabbi Riccardo Di Segni, the co-vice President of the Europe Muslim-Jewish Leadership Council and Chairman of the European Muslim Leaders’ Majlis, Yahya Sergio Yahe Pallavicini, the Prefect of the Congregation for Catholic Education, Card. Giuseppe Versaldi, and many others.

The 2021 IF20 will conclude with a document addressed to the G20 that centers on a short declaration of common commitments – a *Parva Charta* containing only three lines: We will not kill each other; we will rescue each other; we will forgive each other. Each religion or faith can root these commitments to its own theological heritage and hermeneutics of sacred texts. The *Parva Charta* does not simply constitute a disavowal of religious violence: it takes on the task of dismantling its underlying arguments and does not suggest immunity from the weight of recent or ancient history. All look to a responsibility for a future in which a time to heal has come.

Following up the IF20 meeting will be events during the Dubai Expo, on 16 November, the UN Day of Tolerance. The roundtable Connecting Souls, building on the Expo theme “Connecting minds”, will help to translate the spirit of issues raised at the IF20 in Bologna to political and cultural decision-makers.



Opening Ceremony at Palazzo Re Enzo, Bologna

DIALOGUE BETWEEN CULTURES, UNDERSTANDING BETWEEN FAITHS

Alberto Melloni

Premise

1. Intrinsic Uniqueness: A Forum of the Human Family

The G20 Interfaith Forum (IF20) has an intrinsic uniqueness that binds it to and separates it from other meetings and engagement groups. Insofar as it involves people who live, guide, express, or study the dimensions of faith, IF20 brings within the bounds of the “Greats” the expectations of all people and of all countries and, by its very nature, includes a familial dimension, as big as the human family and with families of faith at its very core. These are families whose hearts cry out with the disharmony inscribed in the G20: 20 countries that produce and enjoy 80% of the world’s wealth, which expresses an inequality that the COVID-19 plague has highlighted. Just outside the perimeter of the 20 lie intact, if not compounded, the three scourges that Jewish prayer and Christian supplication ask God to avert: *a peste, fame, et bello libera nos, Domine*; and these almost never travel alone.

2. The Need to Know

The 2021 G20 Interfaith Forum, however, also has an Italian particularity. Over the years, the IF20 has performed various functions: it has been a forum for promoting programs of solidarity sponsored by religious organizations, a place to show off the good done with one’s own or one’s national finances, a support for the voice of religious authorities in the sphere of power, *laudatio* for one’s self or one’s countries, a showcase in which to display the concern of being numbered, or at least featured, at the summit table. Under the presidency of Italy – a country united by culture centuries before there was a national sentiment (Giuliano Amato) – the IF20 does not allow itself to judge any of these formulas. But it applies a conviction that, for us at FSCIRE, is rooted in the experience of our founder, Giuseppe Dossetti; that is, in the face of the most dramatic and complex problems – which always have to do with an insufficiency of faith – what is needed is an increase

of knowledge and wisdom. If this is brought about with rigor and intellectual sobriety, it will allow us to understand both the mechanics of evil and the weakness of faith that generates them, and to resist becoming discouraged or tired of seeking the ways of peace.

3. Italian Uniqueness: A Three-Legged Table

It is because of this conviction that the Italian government and the donors have promoted in every way the presence in this city – *alma mater studiorum* – not only of the actors of great moments of dialogue and solidarity but also of experts in the theological, juridical, and hermeneutical aspects of different faith traditions, as well as scholars of law, economics, and politics. For three days, this auditorium of diligent intellects will find itself alongside both the political leaders of countries and international organizations as well as religious *authorities*. Upon these three pillars – religious authorities, political leaders, and scholars – we propose a dialogue that cannot be dismissed as some ineffectual glad-handing, but that asks how to increase the access of everyone to all the rights that believers and non-believers alike can trace to the same area of their soul, starting with the “right to peace” as defined by Pope Francis during his visit to Bologna. These are rights that demand respect for the dignity of every woman and every man, a human dignity that makes it impossible to give in when faced with falsity, a dignity that seeks truth and reconciliation where war or hatred have spread lies and death.

4. The European Uniqueness of the IF20 in Bologna

This is why we have invited leading figures from international agencies and multilateral bodies, but above all we have sought the significant presence of the European Union. The Union has responded by sending David Sassoli, President of the European Parliament, and Borut Pahor, President of the Republic of Slovenia during his term of presidency, whom I thank, along with the Special Envoys and other authorities who honor us with their presence. This emphasizes that Europe has three things to teach the entire human family:

- Europe, which in its division has known atrocious wars of religion over the last four centuries, has been able to keep idolatrous violence in check, not by forgetting God, but by ceasing to brandish him about, thus not by becoming less believing but more deeply believing. Even though religious violence has not been completely vanquished, we were unable to eliminate it in time when the need arose, but we have been able, for now, to silence it.
- Europe, which has divergent constitutions and laws regarding the relationship between countries and religions, shares the

same sensitivity about religious freedoms and the same alarm in the face of what violates them, because its common culture of rights is able to “better understand” the hermeneutical traditions previously used to create hatred. (“It is not that the Gospel has changed, it is that we have begun to understand it better”, John XXIII said in 1963).

- Europe, which was born of its founders (Konrad Adenauer, Alcide De Gasperi, Robert Schuman) who spoke in German and thought in a Catholic way in the wake of the war and guilt of the Shoah, immediately seeing the birth of a European Union as the premise for “carrying out one of its essential tasks: developing the African continent” (Robert Schuman, 9 May, 1950). This Europe, therefore, reminds the G20 that it cannot look with disgust on countries bestowed with systemic corruption and masses of people who ask to come to Europe and eat the crumbs that have fallen from the table (ἔσθιει ἀπὸ τῶν ψιχίων τῶν πιπτόντων ἀπὸ τῆς τραπέζης, Mt 15:27) of those who have sold their own brothers and sisters into slavery.

Contexts

5. Religions and Climate Change: A Paradigm

The G20 is taking place in a context where there is much discussion among leaders about the necessity and means of a new economic agenda that takes the needs of an “ecological transition” into account (this expression from the anthropologist John W. Bennett dates from 1976; in 2008, Rob Hopkins, who spent two and a half years at the Buddhist monastery in Pomaia, Tuscany, published *Transition Handbook: From Oil Dependency to Local Resilience*). The Ecumenical Patriarchate gave a theological foundation to the environmental emergency – which the political one comes from – when the 1989 European Ecumenical Assembly in Basel achieved a consensus on the “conciliatory process on justice, peace, and the *integrity of creation*”, linking eschatology and ecology in an original, radical, and prophetic way. Today it seems that only the third proposition of that triad is pressing. And instead of questioning the connections between the exploitation of things and persons, of the environment and peoples, an uncritical exaltation of a transition seems to be gaining strength, a transition understood as the passage from heavy carbon exploitation to a green exploitation supported by technologies that can re-establish the subordination of countries that are unable to bear the costs and whose younger generations, without political outlets, more easily engage in social rebellion and religious-based violence. This is the reason why the environmental emergency does

not demand “religious leaders, asking to be heard”, but influential figures capable of defending the theological complexity of the primacy of justice (צדק צדק צדק Dt 16:20). As demonstrated by the continual fertility of John Zizioulas’s thought, one of the leading theologians alive today, who was able to put the defense of creation in an eschatological perspective, the great religious traditions must search for a way of thinking that goes beyond mythologies and spiritualisms of “nature”, which wind up making greener, but leaving intact the gaps between those countries that have used their two hundred years of polluting development up until the last drop and those countries that have used very little.

6. Religious Climate Change

It is not only ongoing climate change that affects the natural environment today, however. There is a change at work in the internal environment of faiths and a change in the temperature of the religious atmosphere: metaphorically, it can be described as “religious climate change” and a “religious global warming”. The global temperature of religion is rising not only in countries where political cynicism has financed and continues to finance militias and armies that blasphemously fight in the name of God, killing, torturing, and destroying, but everywhere. Religious climate change has defeated the illusion of mid-20th century sociology that saw secularization as an inescapable event, a product (blessed or cursed) of “magnificent fortunes”. Religious climate change has shown that, without a new theological way of thinking, the post secular West (Charles Taylor) is unable to keep democratic cultures and rights in balance with the *revanche de Dieu* (Gilles Kepel) that began at the end of the 1970s with the almost simultaneous rise of Begin, Carter, Khomeini, and Wojtyła. Religious climate change has taught us that feeding the dragon of war, as was done against Iran in Mesopotamia and against the Soviets in Afghanistan in the 1980s, produces epochal damage. Religious climate change has accompanied the increase of religious “extreme events” that are multiplying across the planet and within families of faith, fueling the idolatry of those who worship violence and making the hunger for peace and the thirst for justice sharper.

7. Plorabunt: A Memory of the People Killed in Places of Prayer

An indicator of the violence that accompanies religious global warming is that seen in the case of war and terrorism, which kills the unarmed in places of prayer: assaults, bombs, suicide attacks, with which the murderers try to extort admiration. We have put together a list of these from the past forty years, starting with the murder of little Stefano Taché in front of the Synagogue of Rome in 1982, up to the massacres of this year. Thousands of deadly attacks have been perpetrated in front of or inside a place of worship. And thousands of people have been killed because they were there to pray, sing, or meditate. A theory of *castali* crimes (I am borrowing the definition from an essay by Dossetti on the Monte Sole Massacre that took place a few kilometers from here). Some have tried to divide up these crimes by noting the faith professed by the killers or the victims, as if that “was needed” to demonstrate that some ideologies are more abusive and some faiths more tortured than others. But this approach is not only repugnant, it is false. In the desecration of prayer lies a unique and archetypal intention that demands not only a cumulative execration but also a shared memory by all those who are brothers and sisters of Cain and Abel.

Tools of Dialogue

8. Looking for What Unites

Thoroughly analyzing the perverse mechanisms that lead to acts where religious delusions or political rage play a fundamental role in the killers’ motivations is the critical contribution that could entrust a place and a name (Is 56:5) to those who hold up everyone in prayer. Violence against those at prayer, and violence in general, is born from a “perversion” (Ivan Illich) that should be studied historically and theologically in order to understand the apparently innocuous inattention (as we have learned from Christian anti-Semitism) that hides an idolatry of the self, denying the other and preventing access to the Other par excellence. In fact, it is in response to the return of religious-based violence in recent decades that an unprecedented effort has been made to generate or regenerate the peaceful coexistence of different faiths. This shared living is not made possible through juridical systems regulating inequality (*dhimmitude*, “tolerance”) or through a monolithic kind of “religious liberty”, but by means of an “interreligious” or “interfaith” dialogue that have had or do have enormous merits – and two key tools.

9. The Tools of Dialogue

The prophetic tension of seeking what unites as opposed to what divides is one tool. This tendency, having ancient roots, has had important variations over the last century: the effort to think of our common descent from Abraham as a shared ground of encounter (Louis Massignon, 1948); the commitment to peace as the ground of all religious and non-religious spiritual traditions (*Pacem in Terris*, 1962); adherence to a global agenda of safeguarding the planet; or the shared militancy for justice that unmasks ideological opposition between transcendent and secular “values” (“values”, indeed). This intellectual and spiritual effort has gone from Kant’s attempt to trace a shared constitutional foundation (the republicanism of *Zum ewigen Frieden*) to the search for an “ethical” foundation of “shared values”. The

search in different religious traditions for common commandments upon which to build a fundamental consensus that, in the synthesis of the *Stiftung Weltethos*, prescind from the distinctions of identity (“basic consensus on values and norms that applies regardless of culture, religion, or nationality”). Another, less used and subtler, tool comes from the studies of those theologians and historians who have reflected on the plurality of paths (Pier Cesare Bori) as a pluralism of love (Raimon Panikkar), and who have grasped the *aporias* of “commonality”. For Bori, a fellow of our foundation, this conviction came from his study of the Oration on the Dignity of Man (*De dignitate hominum*), which Pico della Mirandola composed in 1486 on the premise of an imaginary dispute/council of Jews, Christians and Muslims. It is one of the pearls of humanism. Instead of linking religious traditions by a selection of common commandments to be observed – a selection that loses the dimension of the journey of time in religions and reduces them to “values” (Carl Schmitt) – or from the study of the Oration’s biblical and patristic patchwork, Bori came to the conviction that a person’s dignity does not constitute a “value” or the demonstration of an indistinct Entity, but the verifiable proof that each person who walks with love makes the same *via una*, even though they walk it in their own way. As Simone Weil says: “Each religion alone is true, that is to say, that at the moment we are thinking on it we must bring as much attention to bear on it as if there were nothing else; in the same way, each landscape, each picture, each poem, etc. is alone beautiful. A ‘synthesis’ of religions implies a lower quality of attention” (*Notebooks*). This is because in the path each person travels there is all the truth that others find by taking another route in the *via una* of truth.

10. The First Mile

From these two tools, which are not distinct or at times cannot be distinguished, a pragmatics of interfaith dialogue has developed that has borrowed some models from ecumenical dialogue and some tools from diplomatic negotiation. It is normally entrusted to professionals in dialogue who keep at the work for decades. Struggling with instruments that are overloaded with policies and too submissive in terms of politics, these players have always travelled and retraced the same first mile of dialogue, returning to the starting point after having achieved a platform in the media or in theology from which to exhibit the non-inevitability of conflict and the clash of civilizations (the expression that does not originate with Samuel Huntington but instead was the theme of the *Semaines Sociales de France* in Versailles of 1936). Forced to walk the same mile together over and over again, faith communities can do something more. And if we want to use the Gospel parable (Mt 5:41) they can ask themselves what is the second mile in which to find convergence, not on ethical principles, but on stances and engagement towards the “demanding commitment” constituted by otherness. (“The Other is not an object of knowledge nor of representation. The Other is neither a concept nor a substance, they are not defined by elusive properties, they are not a member of a species, be it humanity. They are not defined by their character, nor by their social position, nor by their place in history. The Other is a face, not like that of an ID photo or a family photograph whose memory can be fixed in a precise image, but an expressive presence, a demanding call, at the same time a word, a request, a supplication, a teaching, and even a commandment that demands an answer, help, solicitude, compassion”. Emmanuel Levinas, *Totalité et Infini*)

11. The Marketplace of Dialogue

A more intense intellectual and spiritual effort can also serve to reclaim what has become the “marketplace of dialogue”: a place of unregulated interests where the supply of dialogue may happen to slow, in the hopes that demand will either arise, or grow, or stay stable. In this marketplace of dialogue, there are more brands than thought, more organizations needing visibility than those in need, more nations in search of beneficiaries of delegations than moral passion. There are too many politicians seeking consensus, too many intellectuals seeking the spotlight, too many theologies in search of self. Thus, due to the lack of an intellectual and spiritual foundation (οὐκ ἔχει δὲ ῥίζαν ἐν ἑαυτῷ, Mt 13:21), the sacrosanct delegitimization of violence that appropriates religious grammar has slipped into a form of self-absolving trivialism that, instead of bringing a collective and objective co-responsibility with those who do evil, hides its nature. Disassociating oneself from one’s co-religionists who, under every heaven, kill in God’s name, is actually a just and legitimate act of defense in the face of the malice of those who demand this condemnation and then say that it is not enough. But, it is also a matrix of self-absolution with respect to the (un/bearable) weight of recognizing oneself as members of the same family as the murderer and, however hostile to their crime, immersed in an inadequacy that should be looked at in light of the supposition that it is an inadequacy of faith and not ethics that pushes one to emulate Cain.

12. The Voice of Religious “Leaders”

Religious and non-religious actors have thus positioned themselves with all their weight, including institutional power, but with conspicuous theological immaturity. This immaturity is revealed when attempts are made to draw from democratic political philosophy (as was the case with the World’s Parliament of Religion in 1893) or when religious authorities seek their “peers” in order to lend symmetry to dialogue, or when they accept the recognized “presence” that nations offer to actors who have such objectives. However, it winds up vouch-

ing for the idea that the religious voice has value if or when it sings in unison with good and just actions (defense of the environment, getting vaccinated, the universality of education). Instead, it is an intruder when it touches upon harsher topics (indifference for inequalities, death by starvation, drugs, educational policies) or takes a prophetic tone (for example, Pope Francis’s position on nuclear deterrence, which is the strongest aspect of his *Fratelli tutti*.)

13. The Alliance of Those Who “At Least Believe in God”

The marketplace of dialogue, in fact, requires the profiling of one’s “product” and one’s “client”, and this is where the images and imagery of the 20th century interwar period continue to operate. Already at the World’s Parliament of Religions of 1893, but more clearly in Pius XI’s magisterium and Card. Tisserant’s activities around 1931, the first attempt at what can only be roughly defined as “dialogue” with Islam was born, in the conviction that all those who “at least believe in God” were called to an alliance against Bolshevik atheism. It was a conceptual watermark that was not clear (amidst the flowering of anti-Semitism), and not neutral, but lasting. This approach was not extraneous to John Paul II’s decision to convene people of faith in Assisi in 1986, during the year of peace called by the UN, to pray together (or side by side, as some would have it) for peace and to give proof of their own prowess with that spiritual and visible instrument. At the time, and then in its continuation by Andrea Riccardi who saved the intuition from the withering away it was destined to, that way of inhabiting dialogue has returned with a very important function. Indeed, gradually within the religious universes, overheated by religious global warming, came the claims that some intolerance was proof of counter-cultural vigor and that some irreverence was a measure of authenticity, that the fabric woven of men and women of prayer served to delegitimize the perversion of faith, pitting an aspiration to “holy war” against the observation that “only peace is holy” (Riccardi).

14. Vegetarian Lions

However, the marketplace of dialogue has witnessed a trivialization of its own product, reduced to rosy rhetoric. These stereotypes call to mind, to use an irreverent image, a sermon in which an imaginary lion declares that “real lions are vegetarians”, that “non-vegetarian lions are not true lions”, and that “the Supreme Lion” will chase them from the herd or perhaps even eat them. Such discourse forgets that the divide is not between vegetarians and carnivores, but between cannibals and non-cannibals. It is a register that has inspired many speeches, quite a few of which have had a laudable function, good intention, and some effect. But that approach forgets (1) that history has always known the nexus between religion and violence – not only in René Girard’s old anthropologies of the origin of religion in mimetic violence, but starting with the biblical tale of Cain and Abel itself where, in front of the altar, fraternity and fratricide coincide – and (2) forgets that the problem is not adherence to John Lennon’s invitation to imagine a world where there is nothing for which to kill or be killed, because there is “no religion too”. History remembers that those who boasted of having eradicated religious sentiment have shed blood with the same fervor as those whose hands were taught, armed and bloodied by such sentiment.

15. Religious Illiteracy

The encounter between cultures and faiths, the devices of dialogue, and the theologies of pluralism also suffer from the religious illiteracy that runs through this post-post-secular time and that, above all, manifests itself in the approximation of languages. Think, for example, of the damage done by giving assassins and terrorists the license of “radicals” – a very noble expression in political and spiritual language – and reserves that grey term “moderation” (which Montesquieu considered the duty of governments and American journalism of the early 20th century, a form of self-regulation for inebriates) for spiritual persons. Of no less significance is the proliferation of the ambiguous expression “religious leaders”, which I have consciously replaced here with the expression “religious authorities”, to emphasize that it is not a bureaucratic-hierarchical that bestows a position within faith communities, but the inner stature of those who have authority. Religious illiteracy, then, allows and explains the reduction of religious experience to rudimentary dimensions and makes the vulnerability of crude and fragile souls a religious pornography produced via the web, which obsessively hammers on about details of identity, captures its consumers, addicts them, and compensates for their addiction by exaggerating the product supplied.

16. Dialogue between Cultures

This is why I qualify the category of interfaith with a subtitle that, distinguishing religions and cultures, would have pleased Nino Andreatta, our second president. Because, on reflection, what is brought into dialogue are not religions in an abstract sense, but cultures that believers bring with them into the concrete mix. “Religions” do not exist in the abstract, but only where and when individuals and communities bring them to life by giving their “free allegiance to a higher calling”. This does not happen in a vacuum, but in cultures that elaborate, interpret, and transform doctrines, spirituality, mysticism, customs, beliefs, attitudes, and mentalities. It is a variable geometric arrangement of texts, doctrines, norms, cults, and practice in a dynamic that feeds on hermeneutics that move “in history” (Giuseppe Alberigo) every time a person enters, wanders from, or leaves a “religion”. Di-

alogue, in all its meanings – from treaty to coexistence (Ivan Illich) – activates a path that is the comprehension and self-understanding of relationships with the other: dialogues between cultures. It is understanding one's own history as a path in which there is more evil (more hatred, more war, more fear, more violence, more passion) than each singular person can bring and more good (more love, more compassion, more mercy, more detachment) than each single person can produce. It means seeing oneself restored and imbued with different pasts, accessible to both believers and non-believers without membership being considered a bias or a requirement. Among these pasts, the dialogue of cultures allows for distance and choice.

17. *Havdalah*

In Jewish tradition, there is a rite that *separates* Shabbat from weekday time. The rite and its name (*havdalah*) evoke the first verses of Genesis in which the Eternal One separates (בדל) created light from uncreated darkness, the fresh from the salty waters, and in between separating the waters above from those below. Talmudic tradition and patristic exegesis have questioned the meaning of this verse, which does not serve to tell us about the origins of the world, but which etologically narrates that which governs and explains it. Hermeneutics has thus wondered what keeps the waters above from the waters below: inclination? “Natural” law? The intrinsic constraint that descends from God's command? This is not given in the text, which speaks neither of essences nor of obsequiousness. What keeps them distinct, according to one suggestive interpretation, is the *responsibility* each has assumed. What separates believers and non-believers, the faithful of one tradition from another, is an identical responsibility. The faith or religion of those who believe they are believers (as well as the faith or religion of those who distance themselves from what they believe to be religion or faith) thus imparts a responsibility. “Inter-faith” dialogue, therefore, is not a relationship between abstract and countable subjects: it is the search for harmonious coexistence (*hé*, for Confucius), those responsibilities expressed within cultures and hermeneutics, and that, proclaiming what accompanies and grows with them as binding (“Divina eloquia cum legente crescent”, Gregory the Great, Homilies on Ezekiel, I.VII.8), progresses in time.

Contents

18. For Everything There is a Time

IF20 has taken “A Time to Heal”, a verse from the book of Ecclesiastes, as its title. It was also used by Joe Biden to allude to the post-COVID-19 phase in the United States, and it is easy to see why. The pandemic, which has killed far fewer than hunger has in the same period, has exposed an ancient vulnerability and, in order to be conquered, requires vaccines that, like the care for HIV-positive pregnant women, is a right that is often denied. The biblical text, *Qohelet*, however, does not speak of sickness and is much more evocative. *Qohelet*, in distinguishing between various times, does not say that there is a time to get sick and a time to be healed; it says that there is a time to kill and a time to heal. And it is from killing that we must heal. Here in the land of Cesare Beccaria, this means healing from the cult of the death penalty. In the country that freed itself from fascism, it means being healed of the notion that there is an indissoluble marriage between government and war and it means that every country can “repudiate” war as an instrument for resolving international disputes, as the Italian constitution does. Having the presidency of the G20 means – as Cardinal Zuppi stated with prophetic resoluteness in the handover between Saudi Arabia and Italy – putting healing from the “pandemic of war” on the agenda. We are seeing the consequences of this.

19. The Fourth “P”

The pandemic of war has no vaccine. It does, however, have a cure. This is not pacifism but the cultivation of a stubborn desire for peace, to be wrought and rediscovered after the time to kill and the time of war. After the “20-year war” in Afghanistan, we see the inanity of war more clearly than ever before. This is why we put before the IF20, and from the IF20 before the Summit, a simple request. Alongside the three “P”s of the G20 – People, Planet, and Prosperity – there should be a fourth “P”: Peace. It is included in that complex architecture that, out of 17 Sustainable Development Goals and 169 indicators, was finally synthesized into five “P”s. It is not a declamatory peace (repeated in Jer 6:14) but peace as the ultimate aim of a human family that has become aware of the demands of the justice that the planet cries out for and feels that, in that very groan of creation demanding the disciplined safeguarding of a loving care, there is a *potentia obedientialis*.

20. The Specific Contribution of Theology

From my point of view, the IF20 – and this may also apply on a larger scale to the field of interreligious dialogue – cannot be the place in which religious leaders repeat standard opinions “in their own words”, or timidly diverge from an all-too-easy analysis of macroscopic critical issues (no faith is needed to perceive inequality, racism, or criminal economies: a newspaper is enough). Nor can dialogue be the place where religious leaders seek a place on the stage where power is artificially “represented” on screen. If we accept that the various faiths only serve to give motivational support to what is good for everyone, or that they are only valid for safeguarding “values” that are threatened and thus reduced to ideological relics by those who think they are defending them, we would be contradicting that constitutive dimension of every religious experience that is not found on a scale of “values” but determined from within existence

itself. If we want faith and belief to have a credibility that endures when accommodations are unmasked by the heritage of revelation or wisdom, then we must begin from the postulate that they “count” only when they are not assimilated by the vulgarity of power (such as Buddhism's eight worldly dharma or the Noble Eightfold Path) in order to persevere and restore the costly dimension of generosity, freedom, vigilance, and interiority. This is why I believe that, at this IF20, it is important for the powers that be, and especially the democratic powers like the one in the country now presiding over the G20, to perceive that communities of faith do not want to cower at the steps of the throne (not even the democratic throne) but want to address all powers, including religious ones, with a verse from the Italian poet Pier Paolo Pasolini: “You knew it, sinning doesn't mean to do evil: / not doing good, that is what it means to sin” (*A un papa*, 1958).

21. *Parva Charta*

It is in this light that I thought to bring to the Forum's attention a *Parva Charta* noting the responsibility (not “values”) that each of us, religious or non-religious, can assume and ground in our deepest convictions. It is a responsibility that does not derive from the search for a distillation of ethical commonalities among religious traditions. It is not, in fact, a matter of reducing the number of the commandments of God or of conscience, nor of finding commonalities among them on the basis of what they share, but a search for what each of them has that is specific and irreplaceable. This is because (to quote Simone Weil again, from *Notebooks*, 225) “those who proclaim that such and such a faith alone is true and beautiful, although they are wrong, are in a certain sense more right than those who are right, for they have looked at it with their whole soul”. Faced with the mystery of evil (Jean-Pierre Jossua), which has its historical shape in the return of empires and tribes, faced with the reduction of the culture of rights to those that coincide with a certain skin color, faced with the difficulties that democracies have in channeling consensus and rebellion, the experience of faith teaches us to make a personal and communal commitment. Without illusions about an “us” that totalitarianisms have taught us to handle suspiciously, it is possible to make three commitments that are rooted not in a “shared ethic” but in what one holds with all of one's soul. These can be reduced to three propositions: “We will not kill one another, we will help one another, and we will forgive one another”. These are commitments that require conditions: there is no forgiveness without truth, no succor without generosity, and no disarmament without justice. However, they constitute an act of realism that reflects the structure of the G20, which seeks to be a place for “concrete” responses to the real problems of the human family.

PROLOGUE

W. Cole Durham, Jr.

President of the G20 Interfaith Forum Association

Film statistics say that there are 370 participants here. That's misleading: there are about double that, and we have to congratulate the organizers, particularly Professor Melloni and his remarkable staff, for their great work in bringing this about.

We hope for your understanding as we wrestle with greater numbers than expected, but we see this as a sign of success, and we're grateful to have everyone here.

I want to issue a special welcome to our Youth Forum, ACWAY (A Common Word Among Youth): they are currently meeting and will join us during the sessions later this afternoon and the coming days. They have been partners with us for the many years that we've been working on the G20 Interfaith, and we are delighted to have them with us.

Let me just say that the G20 Interfaith Forum Association has participated actively in the G20 process since 2014 in Australia, and its history actually goes back longer than that. Throughout this history, we have contributed to an understanding and recognition that religious institutions and leaders and actors have an extraordinary role to play in the formation and implementation of global policy. We are grateful, particularly to Italy, for their recognition of the role that this kind of body can play in feeding into ideas for concrete policy recommendations; but we, who are gathered here, can ourselves undertake efforts to make the world better as we become attuned to policy needs, to urgent questions and so forth.

I think all of us here are conscious of COVID-19; we have all had tests to get here. It's been harder to get here in person than before. We're happy to welcome here our colleagues from KAICIID and Saudi Arabia who helped organize this event last year when it had to be held entirely online. It is a tribute to the tenacity and the commitment of Professor Melloni that we've been able to have this meeting under difficult circumstances as we try to come out from under the COVID cloud. But we are very grateful to be here in person. As wonderful as Zoom is, we know that there are things that can happen when people meet face to face that cannot happen virtually.

Conclusion

The opportunity that the IF20 offers to its guests – political leaders, religious authorities, and diligent scholars – is this. We will know in three days' time whether we have simply added another event and another statement to the row of events and statements, or whether we have advanced a millimeter along the second mile. For those who do so, it is worth repeating an admonition from Luke 17:10: λέγετε ὅτι Δοῦλοι ἀχρεῖοί ἐσμεν, we must “say, ‘we are unworthy servants’”.



David Sassoli, President of the European Parliament

We want to mention that you should try to get the app for the conference, if you don't have it already because some of the sessions will be streamed to the app. And that may be important, because we have more here than we may, according to COVID rules. But we look forward to the days together. We know that people are creative and will find ways to meet up with each other, to connect, to network and in that sense, we want to welcome you to Bologna, and we hope you will follow our website (www.g20interfaith.org) and find out more there.

That of the Interfaith Forum is an ongoing process. We're thankful to the leaders who have helped organize the Forum this year, but also in other years. As we look forward, we understand that one of the challenges of our time is how to optimally generate the synergies between religious communities, institutions, actors and leaders, and the public sector. There is a growing recognition of the importance of that kind of synergy and an understanding that we need to be able to speak together and learn from each other about how to make that most effective.

We will learn things here, I hope, that will strengthen this public-private relationship, that will make it more fruitful and, as in the words of this year's theme, that will make this a time to heal.

David Sassoli

President of the European Parliament

Desidero salutare il sindaco della città, Virginio Merola, il presidente dell'Emilia-Romagna, Stefano Bonaccini, il presidente dell'Associazione Forum Interreligioso del G20, professor Cole Durham, e rivolgere un caloroso ringraziamento al professor Alberto Melloni, instancabile, ovviamente a tutti i relatori, al rabbino capo di Bologna, Alberto Sermoneta, a Sua Eminenza il cardinal Zuppi.

Per l'istituzione che rappresento e per me personalmente è un onore essere con voi oggi, un onore tutto particolare perché questo evento si svolge a Bologna, una città che è da sempre attenta alle dinamiche del mondo e alle avanguardie che in ogni ambito del sapere richiedono conoscenza, approfondimento e ricerca.

L'obiettivo di questo Forum non è solo quello di contribuire alla discussione globale sul dialogo interreligioso, ma quello di condividere idee, speranze, e soprattutto ribadire che l'incontro e la com-

preensione reciproca sono elementi essenziali che contribuiscono a migliorare la qualità delle nostre società. I drammi e i conflitti che in passato hanno insanguinato il nostro continente ci hanno insegnato che la convivenza tra culture e fedi religiose è qualcosa che non si dà una volta per sempre; non è un tesoro inesauribile, ma è una pianta, una pianta che deve essere annaffiata e custodita.

Cari amici, illustrissime autorità, siamo di fronte a una complessità che dobbiamo imparare a leggere. Viviamo un tempo caratterizzato da pericoli inediti ma anche da opportunità perché tutto quello che abbiamo costruito in Europa nella seconda parte del secolo scorso è chiamato a confrontarsi con una contemporaneità in cui noi non abbiamo ancora capito quale sarà il nostro ruolo. Abbiamo però imparato in questi mesi difficili per tutti che nessuno può bastare a se stesso, che nessuno è autosufficiente. Mai come oggi le diverse confessioni religiose vengono spesso associate all'idea di identità e di particolarismo. Possono bastare a loro stesse?

Si continua a teorizzare in modo più o meno raffinato che le religioni erano, sono e saranno sempre una causa di divisione e di conflitto, che solo una loro rimozione da ogni dimensione pubblica e il loro confinamento esclusivo in una sfera privata potrà costituire la garanzia di un miglioramento della società. Siamo convinti che non solo la scienza sia in grado di unificare il mondo, ma anche i valori e il sentimento religioso possano costituire la base per un'unità di cui oggi sentiamo particolarmente bisogno. In un periodo in cui si cerca riparo, consolazione nella riscoperta della piccola dimensione o delle piccole patrie è importante ribadire che oggi tutto si lega, tutto è connesso; che la risposta non è chiudersi in se stessi, ma agire insieme, prendersi cura l'uno dell'altro, affrontare con spirito di concordia, con fraterna collaborazione, le emergenze del nostro tempo che vanno dai cambiamenti climatici alle migrazioni, dalle sfide tecnologiche alle disuguaglianze economiche, al forte scarto fra ricchi e privilegiati.

Incoraggiare il dialogo interculturale e interreligioso è fondamentale perché può favorire la conoscenza reciproca come è stato detto molto bene dal rabbino capo, ma anche sostenere un processo di re-umanizzazione, innanzitutto delle nostre società, di cui abbiamo evidente bisogno. In fondo è il senso delle domande che ha posto papa Francesco in occasione dell'incontro di Abu Dhabi del febbraio del 2019: come le religioni possano essere i canali di fratellanza anziché barriere di separazione; come possiamo far prevalere nelle nostre comunità l'accoglienza dell'altro. Ad unirsi non possono essere solo gli Stati o le organizzazioni internazionali o le nostre istituzioni, ma devono esserlo anche le comunità, le persone. Ad unirsi deve essere la famiglia umana perché ogni persona con il suo comportamento e le sue azioni, con il suo esempio, può dare un contributo signifi-

cativo. È un pezzo della storia che dobbiamo costruire. Ogni persona è un pezzo della nostra storia.

Occorre un nuovo modo di abitare la casa comune. L'abbiamo capito. Abbiamo la necessità di essere presenti gli uni con gli altri, con le proprie diversità. Per questo c'è bisogno di ricostruire nuove connessioni tra le persone, tra le comunità, le istituzioni, ma anche di definire nuove regole per il mondo globale. Oggi noi tutti siamo chiamati a questa grande missione perché se è vero che tutto è interconnesso, abbiamo bisogno di regole per un mondo globale che oggi non ha regole; e la mancanza di regole crea naturalmente il privilegio del più forte. Ecco perché dobbiamo sentire tutti, credenti e non credenti, la responsabilità di lavorare per la nostra casa comune, di abbattere muri, di ridurre le disuguaglianze.

Le nostre generazioni hanno avuto il privilegio di vivere in Europa il più lungo periodo storico senza guerre e la nostra unità è stata il contesto nel quale hanno potuto fare esperienze di pace e di cooperazione diverse generazioni che si sono allontanate dalle esperienze dei loro genitori che combattevano spesso contro altri europei. Si è riusciti a costruire un modello ammirato nel mondo ma che non può bastare a se stesso. Un modello che ha favorito il progresso nei diritti civili e sociali, certo, ma l'assenza di guerra da sola non basta. Non è più sufficiente. L'Europa deve dimostrarsi capace di diventare un vero strumento di pace. Non basta accontentarsi di ciò che avviene nello spazio europeo: se così fosse, rinunceremmo ad una nostra missione, che è quella di riuscire a dare regole che difendano comunità e persone in un mondo globale che, come dicevamo, ha bisogno di nuove regole.

Siamo nati alla fine del secondo conflitto mondiale urlando "mai più la guerra" e la nostra azione sarà sempre alla ricerca del dialogo, della stabilizzazione, del potenziamento delle attività diplomatiche; anche in questo momento così difficile, vent'anni dopo le Torri Gemelle, a poche settimane dal ritiro dall'Afghanistan, il nostro impegno è alla ricerca di nuovi strumenti per favorire riconciliazione e il dialogo tra i popoli. Tutto questo perché l'Unione Europea è molto più di un'organizzazione economica: riguarda la vita delle persone e la loro dignità, la realizzazione del bene comune. Ecco perché è fondamentale tenere conto di tutte le dimensioni della persona: economica, certamente, ma anche sociale, quella spirituale, quella culturale.

Quando il professor Giorgio La Pira, da sempre fautore e sostenitore di un confronto aperto tra le religioni, osservava l'Europa guardava al Mediterraneo. Gli veniva naturale e aveva ragione, perché quel complesso di mari ha sempre rappresentato un crocevia di genti, ma anche un luogo di incontro e di scontro dove si sono afferma-

Si comprende, allora, perché un G20 delle religioni sia utile e forse anche necessario. È utile e necessario perché, al di là delle possibili differenze e delle opzioni più diverse, ivi compresa quella di non avere alcuna religione, l'esperienza del dialogo interreligioso intercetta un'aspirazione veramente comune a tutti gli uomini, un'aspirazione al futuro ed a un mondo migliore, in cui giustizia, libertà, pace, verità, possano essere non solo parole ma realtà che, sia pure con fatica e con difficoltà, si incarnano e prendono corpo nella vicenda delle persone e dei popoli.

Proprio perché è costitutiva dell'uomo e del suo rapporto con gli altri uomini, la dimensione religiosa vive, nel rispetto dei ruoli e delle differenze, anche nello spazio pubblico. Essa, inoltre, in qualche modo, ci aiuta a comprendere, modificare e indirizzare le stesse politiche pubbliche, perché queste politiche, nella laicità che deve caratterizzarle, mirano comunque alla promozione dell'uomo e della convivenza umana.

Nell'affermare queste cose non dobbiamo sfuggire alla realtà che è di fronte a noi. Sappiamo che molti ritengono che le religioni possano essere e siano state elementi di divisione e non di unione, che abbiano favorito il conflitto e l'incomprensione. Non viviamo in un mondo astratto, fuori dalla storia, ma in un mondo che testimonia sofferenze, difficoltà, sopraffazioni; un mondo che dobbiamo affrontare e di cui dobbiamo portare il peso. Tuttavia, sappiamo anche che le religioni – tutte le religioni – si incarnano e si esprimono nelle diverse culture e che queste culture contengono elementi di chiusura, di paura, di contrapposizione, di incomprensione. Non dobbiamo allora confondere il significato profondo della dimensione religiosa e del dialogo con le modalità secondo cui tale significato, in certi momenti storici ed in certe situazioni, si manifesta. Le cronache ci dicono, d'altra parte, che l'uso del conflitto, della forza al posto del dialogo, della pazienza, dell'ascolto, non ha condotto a risultati positivi ed a una crescita della dimensione umana. A fronte delle difficoltà che drammaticamente i nostri giorni ci mettono davanti occorre aver chiaro che, come è stato detto, la democrazia si difende risanandola, combattendo le ingiustizie, superando le spinte che dividono, rafforzando i processi di integrazione e divenendo propulsori, anche sul piano internazionale, del dialogo, considerata questa la strada che, per quanto difficile, è necessaria per trovare soluzione alle questioni che legano insieme le comunità politiche del pianeta (M. Magatti, *In un mondo infido e lacerato l'unica soluzione è il dialogo*, Corriere della sera, 5 settembre 2021).

È allora la difficile disciplina del dialogo, inteso come tentativo continuo di trovare un terreno comune fra posizioni apparentemente non conciliabili, che anche nella vita pubblica e nella dimensione internazionale, dobbiamo imparare a praticare. Su tutto questo,

ti con il tempo culture, lingue, espressioni che oggi sono la base della cittadinanza europea. Se ci pensiamo bene, anche il nostro continente per molti aspetti è quel pluriverso di popoli, perché continua a plasmarsi attorno alla relazione, all'incontro con l'altro.

L'Europa non è solo uno spazio fisico ma è anche e soprattutto qualcosa di più: sono le sue città, le sue genti, la sua bellezza. Non potrà mai essere messa in discussione la cittadinanza degli ebrei europei, dei musulmani europei, di tutti i fedeli delle tante religioni presenti nel nostro continente che sono cittadini europei.

Sono dunque le culture, l'idea della relazione, della conoscenza che costituiscono la nostra identità comune. Tutto questo dà delle grandi responsabilità a noi europei e alle comunità religiose europee, perché il privilegio di vivere in Europa deve essere messo al servizio dell'unità delle famiglie religiose, dell'incontro fra le famiglie religiose, e questo nel Mediterraneo impone ai fedeli europei delle nuove sfide e delle grandi responsabilità.

In effetti, se c'è una lezione che abbiamo potuto imparare – e, se volete, "riscoprire" – dal COVID-19 è proprio il senso della nostra interdipendenza. In questi mesi così dolorosi abbiamo capito che non possiamo agire in solitudine, ma che, al contrario, servono strategie e visioni comuni. Il mondo prima della pandemia non era poi così giusto e non era poi così equo. Anzi, era molto diseguale. Per certi aspetti, il virus è riuscito a mettere in evidenza quelle contraddizioni. Tutto ciò ci pone interrogativi come cittadini e come istituzioni e la risposta è che non possiamo tornare al mondo di prima. In questo senso, credo che l'Europa possa essere utile non solo ai nostri paesi e ai nostri cittadini, ma che possa aiutare il mondo intero ad avere regole per una convivenza civile e pacifica.

Tutto ciò implica il rispetto di un'alterità che deve essere percepita come arricchimento perché è il segno visibile di quanto il mondo sia una realtà sempre più complessa. Lo spirito religioso può consentirci di lavorare per l'unità, e in primo luogo per l'unità delle famiglie religiose che oggi non consentono di custodire, come ha scritto nella sua lettera a questa iniziativa proprio papa Francesco, la fraternità della Terra.

La pandemia non deve essere considerata una parentesi, ma un forte invito a proiettarsi nel futuro, a rimanere uniti, a riscoprire la potenza delle relazioni umane e guardare in profondità e con umanità il nostro tempo: è la sfida a cui siamo tutti chiamati. Questo serve per interpretare i cambiamenti, aprirsi alla complessità, lavorare per la pace, che in questo momento è minacciata.

Illustrissime alte autorità, cari amici, non salveremo il pianeta con un mondo in conflitto e pieno di disuguaglianze. Abbiamo bisogno di lavorare perché conflitti e disuguaglianze vengano appianati.

molto, forse anche moltissimo, può dirci il dialogo interreligioso, aiutandoci a comprendere il valore dell'attenzione, della pazienza, della comprensione. Il dialogo interreligioso contiene già in se stesso un grande valore, quello appunto dello stare insieme. Esso ci dice, tra l'altro, per utilizzare un'espressione di papa Francesco, che "la morte e l'odio non sono le ultime parole pronunciate sulla parabola dell'esistenza umana" (Francesco, *Udienza generale del 23 agosto 2017: la speranza cristiana*). Di ciò tutti noi, credenti e non credenti, abbiamo profondamente bisogno. È questo servizio che, con umiltà, ma anche con concretezza, il G20 sulle religioni intende assicurare.

Sergio Mattarella

President of the Italian Republic

L'idea di riunire, in coincidenza con il G20, studiosi, rappresentanti delle diverse fedi ed esponenti della società civile in uno specifico momento dedicato alla dimensione spirituale, costituisce una scelta lungimirante, particolarmente in una congiuntura in cui si ripresentano tentazioni di utilizzare le espressioni religiose come elemento di scontro anziché di dialogo.

La consapevolezza di come il fattore religioso sia elemento importante nella costruzione di una società internazionale più giusta, rispettosa della dignità di ogni donna e di ogni uomo, si va sempre più radicando. Cresce, di conseguenza, anche il riconoscimento del costruttivo apporto che le diverse confessioni possono offrire alla causa della pace e alla cooperazione al raggiungimento di obiettivi che interpellano l'umanità intera, in un mosaico fecondo che attinge ai valori universali che testimoniano.

Dallo sviluppo, alla tutela dei diritti fondamentali, alla promozione di un'autentica parità tra donne e uomini, alla prevenzione e alla soluzione dei conflitti, alla cura dell'ambiente e alla protezione della salute, all'accesso all'istruzione, numerosi sono gli ambiti in cui trova espressione il loro contributo al consorzio umano.

L'attenzione per la dimensione spirituale suona anche come riconoscimento alla accentuata presenza di leader religiosi nel dibattito pubblico sui grandi temi globali. Si tratta di sfide di portata eccezionale, che richiedono una partecipata assunzione di responsabilità da parte delle istituzioni e della società civile, in uno sforzo congiunto – di cui tutti dobbiamo farci carico – particolarmente nei confronti dei giovani e delle generazioni future.

OPENING CEREMONY

Alessandro Pajno

President of the Fondazione per le scienze religiose (FSCIRE)

Desidero innanzitutto ringraziare tutti coloro che hanno reso possibile la realizzazione di questo evento, un evento che riguarda la storia e la cultura dei paesi partecipanti, ma anche la ricerca di libertà, di pace, di giustizia dei popoli, in una dimensione personale e sociale.

Quando si è di fronte ad eventi come questo, appare logico interrogarsi sul suo significato e sul suo valore. Attraverso il G20 i diversi paesi che vi partecipano si incontrano sulle questioni più rilevanti per la vita del pianeta e sulle responsabilità comuni, allo scopo di confrontare i propri punti di vista e rendere più efficace la cooperazione. Al di là delle grandi questioni sul tappeto – l'economia, la cultura, la sicurezza, la salute, per indicarne solo qualcuna – c'è, dietro il G20, una consapevolezza profonda: quella dell'esistenza di una comune dimensione umana e di un destino comune per tutti coloro che popolano il pianeta e che tutti hanno la responsabilità di proteggere e di rispettare.

Se questa è la pietra angolare su cui si fonda il G20, appare allora ragionevole l'utilità di un G20 delle religioni; la dimensione religiosa è infatti il luogo in cui si manifesta, al di là delle differenze, la consapevolezza di una comune dimensione umana e di un comune destino.

Le religioni testimoniano, nel pluralismo che le caratterizza, ciò che dà sapore all'esistenza umana. Nella ricerca del divino c'è una formidabile ricerca di senso, una capacità di interrogarsi sul comune destino, un'aspirazione al superamento di una condizione avvertita come precaria e problematica, un'appassionata ricerca di pace e di libertà, un'aspirazione vera alla realizzazione della giustizia, un desiderio di radicale novità che investe non solo l'uomo ma tutte le cose: quella creazione che, come dice Paolo, "geme e soffre fino ad oggi nelle doglie del parto" (Romani, 8, 25). Si manifesta, in tal modo, un desiderio di radicale novità ed una speranza di futuro: la speranza di tutti gli uomini in un Dio che, al di là di ogni differenza, con tenerezza "asciugnerà ogni lacrima dai loro occhi" (Apocalisse, 21, 4) e che "fa nuove tutte le cose", perché "le cose di prima sono passate".

Il titolo del Forum, “A Time to Heal” un tempo per sanare le ferite – invita a raccogliere valori e messaggi positivi, di cui le diverse fedi sono portatrici, per una comunanza di intenti, tanto più importante in un momento storico segnato dalla pandemia, con le sue drammatiche conseguenze.

Le religioni possono essere preziose, nel colloquio con le istituzioni, per aspirare a un mondo migliore.

Mentre mi è grato esprimere apprezzamento per l’impegno degli organizzatori del Forum Interreligioso di Bologna, rivolgo un saluto e un caloroso augurio di buon lavoro a tutti i partecipanti.

Michelle Bachelet United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

I welcome the focus of this Forum on promoting peace among cultures and understanding between religions. This is a profound and vital topic – one that is of the highest importance for the work of promoting and protecting human rights. Indeed, the continuity of your annual discussions since 2014 testifies to their relevance to the multilateral agenda, and the keen interest they elicit from interfaith networks.

Our experience in the human rights community is that thematic forums – such as our Forum on Minority Issues, our Social Forum and many others – can contribute to widening civic space, promoting mutual understanding and enriching governmental deliberations with grass-roots contributions.

You have clearly recognized the many linkages between our fields. The G20 Interfaith Forums in Buenos Aires and Tokyo recommended that “G20 countries should support the UN-based initiative to reduce incitement to hatred, by supporting religious leaders and faith-based actors in fulfilling their human rights responsibilities, as summarized in the Beirut Declaration and the 18 commitments of the Faith for Rights program”.

I am also pleased that in November, the European Union Gender Action Plan III emphasized that “the EU should support mobilization of religious actors for gender equality in line with the Faith for Rights framework”.

Our engagement with faith-based actors has accelerated in recent years, and during the pandemic we have greatly broadened our contacts through online exchanges. The latest experience consisted of a peer-to-peer learning program in follow-up to the Global Pledge for Action by Religious Actors and Faith-Based Organizations to Address the COVID-19 Pandemic in Collaboration with the United Nations. This was an initiative I took together with the UN Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide and the High Representative for the Alliance of Civilizations. And it taught us that we need to shift from discussion of generalities to specific, concrete actions.

I am also grateful that these encounters between faith-based actors and human rights experts have produced snapshots of peer-to-peer learning points, making their discussions accessible to others who could not participate in the live events.

Looking at this Forum’s program, I am struck by its breadth of topics and the diversity of participants. This inter-disciplinary approach can be very enriching and I look forward to your perspectives and thoughts on what multilateral institutions and human rights bodies can do better to uphold justice, equality and dignity for all.

I know that we share many, very deep concerns. I am convinced that tolerance and mutual respect among cultures, faiths and individuals are essential to justice and to peace. They also encourage the growth of more inclusive, and therefore more resilient, societies which are able to draw on the full contributions of all their members.

We also share our understanding that the continued pandemic crisis is creating cascading waves of harm, particularly for members of our society who are in the most vulnerable situations. The resemblance between Building Back Better as a UN priority, and the central theme of the Bologna G20 Interfaith Forum “A Time to Heal” is inspiring.

I, too, hope that we can soon turn to healing the physical, social and emotional wounds created by the pandemic – healing despair, violence, and hatred against our fellow human beings.

The Beirut Declaration on Faith for Rights notes that “war starts in the mind, and is cultivated by a reasoning fueled by often hidden advocacy of hatred. Positive speech is the healing tool of reconciliation and peacebuilding in hearts and minds”.

I hope that human rights will be the solid foundation that can further our time of healing.

Ignatius Aphrem II Patriarch of Antioch and All the East, Supreme Head of the Universal Syrian Orthodox Church

I am most grateful for your invitation to address the Interfaith Forum as it is convened in preparation for the G20 Summit.

Once again, religious and political leaders meet together to answer their duty to promote human life, freedom and dignity. It is the responsibility of religious leaders to encourage dialogue among members of the great human family who find themselves sometimes in disagreement or conflict. Equally important is the role of legislators and politicians in legislating laws that protect people and help in the advancement of societies.

Representing different cultures and societies, religious leaders participating in this Forum can convey the common desire of all people to live in peace and preserve their dignity. It is a God-given right for all people to enjoy their basic freedoms within the moral context of their religions and cultures. Religious leaders and politicians can work together for the common good leading to development and progress for all humanity.

Troubled by the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic, our world today is most vulnerable and needs our support to endure the various challenges that face us. The requirement for a bright future where peace, dignity and freedom are well sustained, remains love and cooperation which render the international community immune to radicalism and fanaticism – religious or otherwise. May we be able to motivate people of good will to encourage human solidarity by refusing violence and by promoting dialogue and justice. Thus, the spirit of fraternity may be strengthened and hope can flourish in the midst of our broken societies.

We pray for the success of the Interfaith Forum at the service of dialogue and solidarity for the promotion of peace, freedom and human dignity.

Kirill

Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia

I wholeheartedly greet all those who have assembled in Bologna to attend the G20 Interfaith Forum under the theme “A Time to Heal – Peace Among Cultures, Understanding Between Religions”.

This important event gives our contemporaries an opportunity to reflect on various pressing problems and deepen interreligious and intercultural dialogue, aimed at building up peace and accord among people.

Regrettably, in various parts of the world today, both in developed and developing countries, believers often become victims of discrimination. At times, people’s religious feelings are being taken advantage of in order to justify violence, hatred and enmity, which affects civilian population.

I call upon the participants in the Forum to devote particular attention to the plight of Christians in Africa, first of all, in Nigeria, where the Christian population is being subjected to genocide by extremist groups.

I believe that the religious leaders, diplomats, scholars and cultural professionals, who have gathered together in Bologna in the lead-up to the G20 Summit, are able to make a substantial contribution to the resolution of different crises, including violent conflicts. Hopefully, the statement due to be adopted at the conclusion of the Forum will receive an appropriate response from the G20 leaders and encourage them to take real steps in defending the vulnerable, ensuring the observance of the international law, and rendering aid to those in need.

I wish you fruitful discussions and success in the work ahead of you.

Francis I

Bishop of Rome

Rivolgo un cordiale saluto ai partecipanti al G20 Interfaith Forum, che quest’anno ha luogo a Bologna. Conservo un vivo ricordo della mia visita alla città, caratterizzata, tra le altre cose, dall’antica Università, “che l’ha sempre resa aperta, educando cittadini del mondo e ricordando che l’identità a cui si appartiene è quella della casa comune, dell’universitas” (*Incontro con gli studenti e il mondo accademico, 1° ottobre 2017*). È bello che vi siate riuniti proprio nell’intento di superare i particolarismi e condividere idee e speranze: insieme, autorità religiose, leader politici e rappresentanti del mondo della cultura dialogate per promuovere l’accesso a diritti fondamentali, anzitutto alla libertà religiosa, e per coltivare fermenti di unità e di riconciliazione laddove guerra e odi hanno seminato morte e menzogne.

In questo il ruolo delle religioni è davvero essenziale. Vorrei ribadire che, se vogliamo custodire la fraternità sulla Terra, “non possiamo perdere di vista il Cielo”. Dobbiamo però aiutarci a liberare l’orizzonte del sacro dalle nubi oscure della violenza e del fondamentalismo, rafforzandoci nella convinzione che “l’Oltre di Dio ci rimanda all’altro del fratello” (*Discorso in occasione dell’Incontro interreligioso, Ur, 6 marzo 2021*). Sì, la vera religiosità consiste nell’adorare Dio e nell’amare il prossimo. E noi credenti non possiamo esimerci da queste scelte religiose essenziali: più che a dimostrare qualcosa, siamo chiamati a mostrare la presenza paterna del Dio del cielo attraverso la nostra concordia in Terra.

Oggi, tuttavia, ciò pare purtroppo un sogno lontano. In ambito religioso sembra piuttosto in corso un deleterio “cambiamento climatico”: alle dannose alterazioni che colpiscono la salute della Terra, nostra casa comune, ve ne sono altre che “minacciano il Cielo”. È come se la “temperatura” della religiosità stia crescendo. Basti pensare al divampare della violenza che strumentalizza il sacro: negli ultimi 40 anni si sono registrati quasi 3.000 attentati e circa 5.000 uccisioni in vari luoghi di culto, in quegli spazi, cioè, che dovrebbero essere tutelati come oasi di sacralità e di fraternità. Troppo facilmente, poi, chi bestemmia il nome santo di Dio perseguitando i fratelli trova finanziamenti. Ancora, si diffonde in modo spesso incontrollato la predicazione incendiaria di chi, in nome di un falso dio, incita all’odio. Che cosa possiamo fare di fronte a tutto questo?

Come responsabili religiosi credo che anzitutto occorra servire la verità e dichiarare senza paure e infingimenti il male quando è male, anche e soprattutto quando viene commesso da chi si professa seguace del nostro stesso credo. Dobbiamo inoltre aiutarci, tutti insieme, a contrastare l’analfabetismo religioso che attraversa tutte le culture: è un’ignoranza diffusa, che riduce l’esperienza credente a dimensioni rudimentali dell’umano e seduce anime vulnerabili ad aderire a slogan fondamentalisti. Ma contrastare non basta: occorre soprattutto educare, promuovendo uno sviluppo equo, solido e integrale, che accresca le opportunità di scolarizzazione e di istruzione, perché laddove regnano incontrastate povertà e ignoranza attecchisce più facilmente la violenza fondamentalista.

È certamente da incoraggiare la proposta di istituire una memoria comune di coloro che sono stati uccisi in ogni luogo di preghiera. Nella Bibbia, in risposta all’odio di Caino, che credeva in Dio eppure uccise il fratello, facendo levare dalla terra la voce del suo sangue, dal



Mario Draghi, President of the Italian Council of Ministers

Cielo giunse la domanda: “Dov’è tuo fratello?” (Gen 4,9). L’autentica risposta religiosa al fratricidio è la ricerca del fratello. Custodiamo insieme la memoria comune dei fratelli e delle sorelle che hanno subito violenze, aiutiamoci con parole e gesti concreti a contrastare l’odio che vuole dividere la famiglia umana!

I credenti non possono combatterlo con la violenza delle armi, che genera solo altra violenza, in una spirale di ritorsioni e vendette senza fine. È proficuo, invece, quanto desiderate affermare in questi giorni: “Noi non ci uccideremo, noi ci soccorreremo, noi ci perdoneremo”. Sono impegni che richiedono condizioni non facili – non c’è disarmo senza coraggio, non c’è soccorso senza gratuità, non c’è perdono senza verità –, ma che costituiscono l’unica via possibile per la pace. Sì, perché la strada della pace non si trova nelle armi, ma nella giustizia. E noi leader religiosi siamo i primi a dover sostenere tali processi, testimoniando che la capacità di contrastare il male non sta nei proclami, ma nella preghiera; non nella vendetta, ma nella concordia; non nelle scorciatoie dettate dall’uso della forza, ma nella forza paziente e costruttiva della solidarietà. Perché solo questo è veramente degno dell’uomo. E perché Dio non è Dio della guerra, ma della pace.

Pace, una parola chiave nell’attuale scenario internazionale. Una parola di fronte alla quale “non possiamo essere indifferenti o neutrali”. Lo ribadisco: “Non neutrali, ma schierati per la pace! Perciò invochiamo *lo ius pacis*, come diritto di tutti a comporre i conflitti senza violenza. Per questo ripetiamo: mai più la guerra, mai più contro gli altri, mai più senza gli altri! Vengano alla luce gli interessi e le trame, spesso oscuri, di chi fabbrica violenza, alimentando la corsa alle armi e calpestando la pace con gli affari” (*Incontro*, cit.). Pace: una “quarta P” che si propone di aggiungere a People, Planet, Prosperity, nell’auspicio che l’agenda del prossimo G20 ne tenga conto in una prospettiva che sia la più ampia e condivisa possibile, perché solo insieme si possono affrontare problemi che, nell’interconnessione odierna, non riguardano più qualcuno, ma tutti. Penso anche al clima e alle migrazioni. Davvero non è più tempo per alleanze degli uni contro gli altri, ma per la ricerca comune di soluzioni ai problemi di tutti. I giovani e la storia ci giudicheranno su questo. E voi, cari amici, vi riunite per questo. Perciò vi ringrazio di cuore e vi incoraggio, accompagnandovi con la mia preghiera e invocando la benedizione dell’Altissimo su ciascuno di voi.

Borut Pahor

President of the Republic of Slovenia

It is a great honor and a privilege for me to have been invited to give the opening speech at this year’s G20 Interfaith Forum.

This Forum has established itself as one of the key platforms for dialogue within and between religious communities, as well as between representatives of religious and political circles. It seems that this dialogue could not have come at a time more critical than now.

This year’s Forum is dedicated to healing the wounds of society. In my speech, I would like to highlight the importance of dialogue in this very process.

Ladies and gentlemen, one of the wounds of society that badly needs to be healed is its dividedness. Here I primarily have in mind political and ideological rifts. This phenomenon arises when the usual political and ideological differences evolve into structured divisions and when this dividedness prevents us from reaching a consensus or a good compromise.

One of the principal reasons for this is the deteriorating quality of dialogue. A dialogue – at least in my view – should have the following three dimensions: a presentation of one’s views; listening and respectful criticism of another’s views; a willingness to reconcile those two views.

Political and ideological differences are therefore not a problem. The problem is the dwindling sense of responsibility to confront and reconcile them in a tolerant and inclusive way.

Recently, the general understanding of dialogue has become restricted to the right to express one’s views. There is no sense of respect for different points of view, of considering them and making an effort to reconcile them. Such a deterioration and lack of understanding of dialogue only underlines growing political and ideological differences. This gives rise to a rift in society and makes it increasingly impossible to consider and reconcile different views.

Through hate speech, political and ideological differences cause a rift in society without recognising the responsibility for reconciliation. This increases the risk of serious social conflict. We need to breathe new life into dialogue as a way of confronting and reconciling different views. We need to raise the level of the culture of dialogue, which has dangerously deteriorated with widespread intolerant, offensive, even exclusionary, hate speech.

Without this, we risk making democratic decision-making less effective and dangerously losing people’s trust in democratic institutions. Therefore, we must do everything within our power to emphasise the value of dialogue, respect for and consideration of different opinions and their reconciliation. Constructive cooperation is possible only through such dialogue. Cooperation is the only way of reaching peaceful solutions to all problems.

Ladies and gentlemen, adherence to dialogue and cooperation has been and remains the guiding principle of consensual politics,

which has recently found itself in serious crisis, both in the Western world and globally.

It has its weaknesses and shortcomings: sensible compromises that have been its hallmark have been replaced by senseless ones. This has damaged its credibility. People have become aware of this and started rejecting it, along with its excessive political correctness. This has given rise to divisive politics, politics that makes no effort to overcome differences but rather exploits them. Such politics builds upon disunity and fractures. This creates a situation where it is no longer noble to try to appeal to, or even to cooperate with, those who think differently. Moreover, it increasingly seems to be enough to appeal to your own supporters while stigmatizing or even excluding your rivals.

Rifts in society can only be overcome through the persistent and consistent pursuit of a dialogue that takes into account all its dimensions, including a respectful attitude and efforts to reconcile different views.

Ladies and gentlemen, I would like to emphasize that social media is not to blame for hate speech. That is an erroneous simplification. The fact is that hate speech has existed before, and the sensitive relationship between freedom of speech and hate speech has been discussed before. However, hate speech is an enemy of the culture of dialogue, it is something unbecoming, dangerous and even forbidden. It is also a fact that hate speech has become much more widespread with the advent of social media. The prevalence of hate speech on social media has a major impact on lowering the level of dialogue culture.

The issue still lacks legal regulation. Until then, however, it will be necessary to resist the temptation to respond to intolerant, hostile and exclusionary speech in the same way, according to the eye for an eye principle. I firmly believe that, despite the spread of hate speech, most people remain moderate and tolerant of each other. They need to be won over to political views and beliefs with a high culture of dialogue. And not only that. It is the high culture of dialogue – with which we will spread our political and ideological beliefs – that will be a credible indicator of a true alternative to social division and hate speech as its agent.

Ladies and gentlemen, I am an advocate of an inclusive society. This means that no one is excluded from the dialogue on all relevant social issues. In the context of this conference, I find it particularly worth emphasising the benefit of dialogue between religions and between church and state.

The constitutional principle of the separation of church and state does not prohibit constructive dialogue between the State’s political institutions and ecclesiastical authorities. I believe that, particularly in the current situation, such a dialogue is of utmost importance.

Open dialogue and day-to-day constructive coexistence can only further strengthen social cohesion and inclusion. In this regard, let me present the idea of a meeting of high representatives of different churches in the Western Balkans. You may be familiar with the fact that I have been co-leader of the Brdo-Brijuni Process ever since its establishment 11 years ago. It is an initiative involving all heads of state on the territory of former Yugoslavia and Albania: Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia, Serbia, Montenegro, Kosovo, North Macedonia. The Brdo-Brijuni Process initiative is dedicated to accelerating the integration of the Western Balkans into the European Union, reconciliation and a peaceful solution to all open issues.

We are witnessing a situation in the region where it would be extremely beneficial for high-level church representatives in this part of Europe to meet and consult on issues of reconciliation and coexistence as part of this initiative. I am aware that this is a sensitive issue, and I have been discussing my idea with other countries’ leaders in the region with due sensitivity.

Finally, I would like to share with you the feeling that the organisation of such a conference, particularly its possible conciliatory conclusions, could significantly contribute to the dialogue in the Western Balkans and, consequently, to the peace, security, and prosperity of the region.

Ronald Steven Lauder

President of the World Jewish Congress

I am honored to address you today at the G20 Interfaith Forum. This conference comes at a critical time, especially in terms of religion. Yes, we face many other problems: the COVID-19 virus, violence and more, but faith and religion, one of the basic necessities of life, may be in the most critical crisis in the world today because, with all of the problems we face, it is religion that is most in danger.

It is religion and the great faiths that all of you represent that have given mankind strength, hope, and purpose for thousands of years. Religion has taught us forbearance. Religion has taught us charity. Religion has given us a focus on family. Religion has helped human beings find purpose in life. Thousands of years later, there are still no better rules to guide us than the Ten Commandments.

But today, people of all faiths have moved away from God and his teachings. Young people especially, have simply walked away from organized religion. In my country, the United States, attendance in churches and synagogues has fallen dramatically. In Europe, it’s even worse. A new generation has been raised with no connection to religion whatsoever.

What is the outcome of this mass shift in our society? Here is a hint: this Forum began with a prayer for people who were killed in places of prayer. In America, worshippers were killed in a synagogue in Pittsburgh, in a church in Charleston, in South Carolina, in a Sikh temple in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Think about that for a moment: people killed while praying to their God. Can you imagine anything more sacrilegious?

I believe these terrible crimes took place because church schools are closing and when young people are not learning the basic rules of decency, they gravitate towards the teachings of hate and intolerance.

This is something that must be stopped and all of us have the power to turn this around. Not just the power, we have the responsibility to turn it around.

As President of the World Jewish Congress, which represents 100 Jewish communities in 50 different countries on 5 continents, I have been advocating for a great renewal of Jewish education all throughout North and South America and Europe.

Now, all of us in the other religions represented here today must take this course.

We must make it an absolute priority to raise money for education. I have called on the wealthy people of the world, the donors and philanthropists to focus their money on good, solid, and decent religious schools. This is as important as climate change, hunger, clean water, and sanitation.

If we are worried about our children, we should worry about their education, their morality and who we are entrusting to teach them. Let me be even more specific.

In the last few weeks, the United States has left Afghanistan and allowed the Taliban to take over that country again. The Taliban brings the most extreme elements of religion into the world and they are drawing radical elements from all over. This is not at all what the world needs, especially when we face huge problems everywhere else.

The only way to counter this is by teaching our young people tolerance towards all. We must foster a dialogue of positive interfaith relations. We must help people in poor nations educate their young with the best parts of their religion. We must recruit the most thoughtful and decent teachers for this process. And we must use the internet because that is the only way to connect with young people today.

It makes zero sense to try to reach 21st century children with 19th century communication techniques. We must be smart about this. This will not be easy but it is absolutely vital for the future of children and our grandchildren. It is vital for the future of mankind.

Jewish people across the world just celebrated the New Year last week. We gathered together to reflect on the mistakes we made over the past year so we don’t repeat them. We seek forgiveness from God and we focus on being better human beings not for our sake, but for those around us.

I think this is a good time for all of us to think about what we have done correctly as a group and where we have failed. If I may be direct with you, I think we have failed the younger generation in teaching them about tolerance, decency and all the positive aspects of our religions. But we have the chance for redemption, that is what religion gives us all, the chance for redemption.

I believe with all my heart that our first steps should concentrate on religious education, new and better schools, better teachers, and the basic laws that human beings have followed for generations, laws that have made our world a better place for everyone to live in.

I ask you to join me in this vital cause.



Borut Pahor, President of the Republic of Slovenia

DIALOGUE ON DIALOGUE

Tanya Hernández

*Archibald R. Murray Professor of Law,
Fordham University*

It is my great pleasure to be with you here. I want to express my thanks for the invitation to be with you all here with this esteemed gathering of individuals.

I would like to introduce myself a little more informally.

I am a lawyer and a law professor from the United States, and first, I am from a world that professes a deep belief in the power of dialogue. In fact, the United States foundational commitment to free speech is based on the notion that the exchange of ideas facilitated by free speech is what builds and maintains just societies. Yet observing the United States' free speech in action raises some serious concerns about its healing potential when underlying power dynamics are not addressed.

Free speech dialogue, without considering imbalanced power dynamics across groups and people, is a license to talk without endangering the status quo. And if nothing changes, then nothing changes. That is not a path to healing. Let me provide more detail about the cautionary tale from the United States, where neo-Nazis, Ku Klux Klan members and others are legally permitted to spout their hatred against socially disfavored groups because of the US belief that the best answer to hate speech is simply more speech. In this way, my comments will dovetail with those of the President from Slovenia. This equivalency is characterized by the image of a free marketplace of ideas and the belief that the best ideas for society will win out in the marketplace, free of any regulation. What is missing in the free marketplace of ideas? Image is the recognition, but not all of us have the same power to speak and amplify our ideas.

Let me give you a concrete example from the current situation in the United States.

Between 2017 and 2019 alone, over 12.75 million dollars has been disseminated to US organizations to censor public discussion on racism. These institutions have organized their censorship campaign as an attack on something called critical race theory, with no concern for what the academic school of thought known as critical race theory is actually about. Instead, it is a shorthand rhetorical label to target the voices of the socially marginalized who are attempting to dialogue about the need to heal the harms of our racial past.

For instance, before leaving the presidency, Donald Trump ordered federal agencies in the United States to, quote, "begin to identify all contracts or other agency spending related to any training on critical race theory", which he described as un-American propaganda. US President Biden has since overturned that directive, but Congress has brought it back up for consideration. State politicians have picked up this Trump mantle. They have passed laws banning public schools from teaching anything regarding racism, with the perverse inversion of casting those who are against racism, anti-racist activists, as the racists whose own freedom of speech should be obliterated.

Today, anti-racism disinformation proponents in a growing number of states that include Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Idaho, Iowa, Montana, Oklahoma, Tennessee, and Texas have enacted racial and gender equity prohibitions that disallow our teachers from exposing students to our nation's full history of struggle to be a true egalitarian republic, along with prohibiting cultural awareness sessions in public sector workplaces and for government grant recipients and government contractors, and more copycat bills are being introduced across the country as we speak. We should eviscerate any unjoined, trumped-up banner that demonizes critical race theory like a boogeyman. What is important to note is that this well-funded conservative campaign to, as they have said, "wage relentless legal warfare against race theory in America's institutions" has been based on a mischaracterization of critical race theory.

What is it then? Critical race theory offers a way of seeing the world that helps people recognize the effects of historical racism. Legal scholars started the intellectual movement behind the idea as a way to examine how laws and systems uphold and perpetuate inequality for traditionally marginalized groups. Contrary to the traditional notion that racial subordination represents a deviation from the liberal legal ideal, this body of work recasts the role of law as historically central to and complicit in upholding racial hierarchy, as well as other hierarchies of gender, class, and alike. Critical race theory then dares to look beyond the popular belief that getting rid of racism means simply getting rid of ignorance or encouraging everyone to get along through dialogue alone. It comprises a collection of diverse activists and scholars interested in revealing and transforming the relationship between race, racism, and power.

Thus, contrary to the conservative mischaracterization, this theory is not a campaign to cancel free speech. It is the pursuit of meaningful racial equality. The conservative anger against critical race theory can be located in how it draws upon the voices of socially excluded racial group members to provide insights about how to use the law as an affirmative tool to ameliorate inequality, while simul-

taneously assessing its limits, that is, embedded racial biases within the legal system itself. In short, the opposition to critical race theory is rooted in the resistance to full social inclusion and equity that can change the status quo of centuries of racial hierarchy.

Censoring the language of anti-racism is an effort to limit what we are allowed to officially see and tell. And so, what we have today in the United States is a symbolic commitment to dialogue as an engine of justice, while on the ground, there is a growing movement to stamp out the voices and perspectives necessary for meaningful dialogue.

"Talking" without ensuring inclusion and amplification of the formerly excluded is dialogue as pure theatre. Yet words do have power. When hate speech is permitted to be propagated, it encourages a social climate in which particular groups are denigrated and their discriminatory treatment is accepted as normal: "that's just how it is"; "that's just how they are".

Racism is often based on, legitimated by or acquired by discourse, talking. Through this discourse, dominant group members learn the dominant ideologies of their group, as well as the norms, values, and attitudes that organize the daily social practices of everyday discrimination and exclusion. Daily discrimination has a logic, and these reasons are learned, reproduced and legitimated within dominant groups.

Prevalent social representations about marginalized groups do not only explain the reasons for unequal treatment but also why they are showing up in many elite discourses of dominant groups. The loss of life from priming individuals to hate through a verbal campaign of derogatory messaging was tragically evident not only with the Nazi Holocaust, whereby the murder of six million was preceded by virulent hate speech propaganda, but again with the 1994 Rwandan genocide of Tutsi, and the 1995 Bosnian genocide of Muslims and Croatsians.

Again, I state, words matter.

So, let me conclude by urging that we all consider how to facilitate the dialogue we desire for societal healing, and that we remain alert to the need to be intentional, not only about inclusion but with addressing power dynamics that diminish the ability for every voice to be heard and truly accorded value, in order to make change.

Ahmed bin Mohammed Al Jarwan

*President of the Global Council for
Tolerance and Peace (GCTP)*

Please allow me first to express my deepest gratitude and appreciation to the Italian leadership and people for hosting such an important international Forum, as well as to the organizers of the G20 Interfaith Forum for the kind invitation extended to the Global Council for Tolerance and Peace to participate in this crucial event that aims to foster the role of interfaith dialogue as a mean to encourage respect for freedom of belief and to raise awareness of promoting positive relations within societies and among all nations and to highlight best practices around the world in eliminating all forms of intolerance and ideological and religious fanaticism and in support of achieving peace, security and prosperity for all people all around the world.

It is really a great honor for me to be a keynote speaker at this vital event.

Our world is witnessing, nowadays, an escalation in discrimination, extremism, violence, terrorism, as well as high rates of corruption, inequality and moral regression, which make it imperative for us to unify our efforts and cherish peace and work for it; as the time has come to adopt new strategies and methods at the global level in order to promote a culture of respect for the other, encourage dialogue, protect beliefs, defend justice, and raise the values of tolerance and human fraternity, with the goal of achieving a safer and more peaceful world.

I cherish this Forum, as interfaith dialogue is one of the crucial issues that should be discussed nowadays, considering that it can unlock the power of religious traditions and provide inspiration and guidance, necessary for people all over the world to move toward peaceful means of conflict resolution.

The world is still recovering from the consequences of the Corona pandemic and its negative impact on our mind, spirit, and societies. This pandemic has proven the importance of joint work between different societies and countries, and the need to unify to face different challenges. It also pushed us to take into account the importance of being ready to face dangers that may face all humanity, harnessing resources to protect human beings and building peace instead of armament and war.

The Global Council for Tolerance and Peace has played a supportive role to its state members, through its COVID-19 Taskforce, that worked closely with its state members to propose and develop creative and supportive activities to fight the virus in their own countries.

The Council believes in the importance of protecting the environment, in order to preserve the peace and security of societies, and considers it as one of its main objectives that is tackled within its Sustainable Development Committee.

What the world is witnessing recently, from the recurrence of natural disasters and fires to the negative effects of climate change,

might calls us all to work to protect the climate and the environment. We call for international parliamentary meetings in order to discuss solutions for climate change and propose laws to protect the environment – to be adhered to in order to protect the future of the planet where we all live.

The Global Council for Tolerance and Peace, through its different organs, invests in promoting dialogue and exchanging expertise between different actors and influencers around the world. The Council also works through its initiatives to create platforms for cooperation on different levels. The increasing number of members of the International Parliament for Tolerance and Peace might provide us with more strength and positive influence to achieve the aspirations of peoples for a more secure and peaceful life.

Based on our firm belief in the importance of education, the Council has launched academic programs through the General Assembly for Tolerance and Peace, such as the Master's Program in Tolerance Studies and Global Peace, the Doctoral Program in Tolerance and Peace, the Higher Diploma and the training programs, in addition to a series of academic books, which are all considered some of the most important deliverables of the Global Council for Tolerance and Peace. Therefore, we invite you all to participate in such unique academic projects and activities by sharing your expertise and references to enrich the academic work in the fields of tolerance and peace.

The Global Council for Tolerance and Peace also believes that people from all over the world have the right to achieve security, stability and development. We are watching with concern the evolution of the situation in Afghanistan. We hope that the Afghan people and the rest of the world will enjoy security, stability, and peace very soon.

One of the most important phenomena that threatens international peace and security might be the phenomenon of illegal immigration and the risks that it entails on societies. Therefore, we call for the development of radical solutions through joint international work in order to support and develop migrant-exporting regions.

In conclusion, I would like to express my gratitude and appreciation to all of you for your great belief in the importance of interfaith dialogue and support for tolerance and peace.

I also express my great appreciation for the noble mission undertaken by this international Forum and those in charge of it. I am confident that, with your expertise and ideas, we will be able make positive change that promotes tolerance, security and peace around the world.

Emmanuel of Chalcedon

Metropolitan Elder of Chalcedon

Orthodoxy has a long experience of cohabitation with other religions and Christian denominations. However, this experience has not always been a peaceful and easy one, especially following the rise of nationalism during the second half of the 19th century and the influence of global geopolitical forces throughout the 20th century. A series of historical events have shaped the Orthodox relationship to religious pluralism, redefining the religious landscape through the movement of populations and migrations. Thus, I would like to thank the organizers of today's conference for their invitation to discuss the question, or rather principles, of dialogue.

The Orthodox Church in general and the Ecumenical Patriarchate in particular have developed a deeper understanding of what dialogue is, not only as a means of survival, but also as a theological space for communion and deification. The recent document endorsed by the Ecumenical Patriarchate and prepared by a group of Orthodox scholars from various backgrounds, entitled *For the Life of the World: Towards a Social Ethos of the Orthodox Church*, explores, among other social issues, the centrality of dialogue as part of an Orthodox social ethos. This modest presentation intends to examine the challenges and opportunities of ecumenical and interfaith dialogues in and for the Orthodox Church, considering dialogue as a dimension of her ethos.

Taken in its most rudimentary definition, dialogue, in the sense of *διάλογος*, is a simple exchange of words. Immediately, the term takes on a theological dimension. For how can there be an exchange of words without participation in the very mystery of the Word, the Word of God, to echo the first verses of the Gospel according to Saint John the Theologian: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it".

Every dialogue has its roots in the life of the Divine Trinity, which is known through the incarnation of the Logos, the Word. For St. John Chrysostom, this feature of the divine dialogue must primarily be received as a gift granted to us by God himself. For God offers Himself first and foremost through the words of the prophets, the apostles, the saints, and through the natural environment. God speaks. From the very first hours of His revelation, He is a being of relationship, waiting for the consecration of his chosen people, giving them the Ten Commandments as a sign of His love. If we stick to a broader definition of dialogue as an exchange of words, the

words addressed by God to His people are varied in nature. While some are real conversations, others are vocations, calls, and elections. The conversion of hearts within the people of God becomes the preferred area of prophetic action. In fact, with its announcements of misfortune and the proclamation of God's judgment, the heart of the prophetic message is a call to conversion. From Amos to Hosea, from Isaiah to Micah, the curse and the imminence of divine judgment calls for a change in the life of humanity. As such, the Orthodox Church is dedicated to a sustained dialogue with other Christians because their unity is the only real expression of God's love for the world

In this sense, encounter and dialogue require risk at both the individual and the community level. All dialogue is personal, since it involves the interaction of unique, irreplaceable persons, Christian or not, whose personhood is intricately connected to their individual social, cultural and religious specificities. Opposition to ecumenical or interreligious dialogue usually comes from fear and a lack of knowledge or exposure to religious diversity. Interreligious dialogue, for example, recognizes the differences among religious traditions and promotes peaceful coexistence and cooperation between people and cultures. Interreligious dialogue does not mean denying one's own faith, but rather changing one's attitude towards the other. So it can also heal and disperse prejudices and contribute to a mutual comprehension and peaceful conflict resolution. Bias and prejudice are rooted in misrepresentation of the Other – that is why dialogue can chase away fear and suspicion. It is essential for peace, but is only effective if it is undertaken in a spirit of inclusion, mutual trust, and respect. Dialogue defines our relationship to the world in its difference from ourselves.

Dialogue exists in all our social encounters, from our own families to the political sphere, but it is also found in our encounters with those who are religiously different from us, whether they are Christian or not. For Orthodox Christians living in non-Orthodox countries, interreligious encounters and dialogue are and will continue to be important means through which to achieve respect for religious differences and proclaim the truth. Ecumenical dialogue isn't just about finding common ground; it is about the unity of all Christians in the communion of churches. Dialogue is ultimately a form of communion according to Orthodox theology, especially when it comes to the quest for Christian unity.

Therefore, dialogue is a divine mission from which humanity cannot be separated, for dialogue unites. It must thus be understood as something different from negotiation, debate, confrontation, invective, teaching, etc. To paraphrase a famous quote from Claude Lévi-Strauss when speaking of civilization, dialogue "implies the coexistence of cultures offering the maximum diversity among them, and even consists of this coexistence". Dialogue appears as a paradoxical tension between coexistence and exposure to the maximum level of diversity.

This lesson applies to us in the ecumenical as well as in the interfaith field, where dialogue is not only theoretical, but also a praxis of coexistence. By this I mean that dialogue cannot only be conceived as a means, but is also an end in itself, and this is because of its transformative capacity. Dialogue understood as a means of conversion loses its effectiveness. But when it becomes transformative, it takes on its full intensity. Dialogue makes it possible to combat prejudice. Even Plato wrote his texts in dialogue form, because the transmission of wisdom needs otherness. It decompartmentalizes. It connects. Dialogue builds bridges between churches and across religions.

What I have said previously does not exclude inter-Christian dialogue from acting for peace. A characteristic example of this is the meeting of Pope Francis and Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew in Jerusalem in 2014, on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the meeting of their predecessors Pope Paul VI and Ecumenical Patriarch Athenagoras. As a direct result of this meeting, a prayer for peace was held on 8 June 2014 in the Vatican Gardens, bringing together Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas and Israeli President Shimon Peres. This unprecedented gesture, with which Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew was associated, raised great hopes among all those involved in the dialogue. Unfortunately, a new war erupted, but a month later.

The so called return of religions was anticipated by the rise of a diplomatic ecumenism which developed in the context of the Cold War and which aimed to open communication with Christians caught on the other side of the Iron Curtain. The World Council of Churches, for example, had enabled real progress to be made by building bridges on both sides of Europe. Pope John Paul II's commitment to peace, especially during the first meeting in Assisi in 1986, is also remembered. It was the first interreligious meeting of this scale. That same year, the United Nations had proclaimed 1986 as the "International Year of Peace" at a time when East-West opposition was still polarizing the planet and the war in Lebanon was raging.

Dialogue becomes an inclusive principle to which our churches are called to contribute on the global scene. Interreligious dialogue in particular has emerged as an indispensable dimension of peace negotiations between states and within societies.

One can read in *For the Life of the World*: "The Church knows, moreover, that the full mystery of God's Logos transcends human comprehension, and communicates itself in ways too numerous and

wonderful to calculate or conceive. The Church thus seeks dialogue with other religious traditions not out of any desire to alter the deposit of her faith, much less out of any anxiety regarding that deposit's sufficiency, but out of a reverent love for all who seek God and his goodness, and in a firm certitude that God has left no people without a share in the knowledge of his glory and grace" (*For the Life of the World*, par. 55).

As the Encyclical of the Holy and Great Council of June 2016 reminds us, interfaith dialogue is today a central dimension of the search for peace. The conciliar text states, among other things:

"Honest interfaith dialogue contributes to the development of mutual trust and to the promotion of peace and reconciliation. The church strives to make 'the peace from on high' more tangibly felt on earth. True peace is not achieved by force of arms, but only through love that 'does not seek its own' (1 Cor 13,5). The oil of faith must be used to soothe and heal the wounds of others, not to rekindle new fires of hatred" (*Encyclical*, par. 17).

The Orthodox Church strongly supports the importance of interfaith dialogue. Even before its institutionalization and democratization in the early 2000s, the importance of this type of dialogue was rooted in the exposure of Orthodoxy to religious pluralism in its different geographical environments. Inter-religiosity is thus powerfully linked to its coexistence with religious actors and communities of diverse sensitivities and traditions, for inter-religiosity is lived above all in the daily life of the faithful.

The churches' engagement in both ecumenical and interfaith dialogues generates particularly strong reactions within our communities. The rise of fundamentalism as a phenomenon that cuts across all religious traditions with shared specificities such as the literal interpretation of sacred texts, moral rigorism, political instrumentalization and finally a powerful opposition to any form of dialogue, be it ecumenical or interfaith. Indeed, religions and Christian confessions, in finding themselves, quickly succumb to the isolationist temptations of the most radical fringes. Extremism and radicalization seek to privatize the truth by promoting confrontation. Dialogue then appears to be the only way to build bridges to work for peace and mutual understanding.

There are therefore points of convergence between ecumenism and interfaith issues which are not limited to social issues. It seems to me necessary to deepen a slightly more serious reflection on the possible synergies between these spheres, respectful of their specific goals, and to better understand the complexity of the world in which we live.

Dialogue is a theological paradigm in which conversion becomes not only the starting point of repentance, but also that of salvation as a union between God and humankind, in a process of reconciliation between the Creator and His creatures. In closing, allow me to remind you of this short but powerful sentence by His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew: "Truth does not fear dialogue".

Jos Douma *Special Envoy for Religion and Belief of the Kingdom of the Netherlands*

It's really an honor for me to be here. And also, the timing: just a few days ago, three leaders of three Christian churches together advised governments on how to act. The timing is wonderful and indeed, as you said, it was sort of a dialogue.

Please allow me a few observations as civil servant.

You introduced me as a Special Envoy on Religion and Belief, and that is what I am, but it might be, for most of you, quite a puzzle. What does such a guy do?

Well, in the past week, I was involved in positioning ourselves in the Human Rights Council. I lead an alliance for international religious freedom and belief and we decided on the statement on the situation in Afghanistan from the perspective of national religious minorities. I visited a mosque of the Ahmadiyya community in the Netherlands to discuss with them their plight in the *Ummah*. We had a training in our ministry on how we, as Western Dutch people, act in the Middle East, how we interact with Islam, and – I can tell you – that was quite an exercise.

I would like to discuss a few elements of dialogue. The first one is between governments and religions.

For governments of secular states with a constitutional segregation between state and religion, religious dialogue could be approached from a utilitarian perspective – "What brings it, especially for our objectives?" – but that should not be. Alberto Melloni is quoted as having said in a recent webinar hosted by Berkeley: "Either government or religion by itself can only simulate and pretend to engage in dialogue while asking for something. Governments typically sees religion as useful because it can be called on for low-cost services, especially in the humanitarian sphere. "Why fight religion when you can buy their help for a few pennies? On the religious side, leaders want to become more visible and to use the government to do that, especially when things are going wrong in governments, they have more to talk about".

Again, a wrong approach from both sides.

When governments recognize religious and faith communities as part and parcel of civil society, they can indeed profit from the capacities of these communities and their members. And we, as Dutch, have learnt so over centuries. For many years, religious communities cared for the fabric of society, and although I have to acknowledge that with secularization, this wonderful network of *caritas*, has become weaker, it's still alive in many respects, as it is in several other European countries.

But such division of labor is not without risks. First and foremost, there is the risk of favoritism, a partisan approach, the one religion favored over the other, and I fear you all know examples of that. But I should also refer to accountability on funding and respect for all and every human right, for freedom of religion or belief does not untie religious people and entities from their entitlement to basic respect.

Then, there is the dialogue between religions. As a young boy, born and raised in a Protestant family, I lived in a deeply segregated society. It was Christian in majority, but divided over many denominations.

We all lived peacefully, not together, but next to each other. We called it a pillarized society. These days, one calls it siloism, silos, with pacification only at the top of the pillars where the leaders regularly concluded on issues of general interest.

Parliament was made up of several Christian parties, plus liberals, socialists and a few others. Some of you might recognize their own country in this picture of my past. Since then, society has secularized and new religions like Islam and Hinduism have grown, thanks to immigration and natural growth.

New divides needed to be bridged, and thanks to our way of dealing with issues in the past, the religious communities, old and new, can still, amongst themselves and vis-a-vis the government, deal with general issues. And they do it together, like in the past months regarding COVID-19 and the issue of having or not having religious services.

We boast several initiatives where people with different religions and beliefs work together for society, both local and national. So, even after secularization, we still have a strong civil society, not as religious as before, but still social and, as a positive effect, the appreciation between the religions has grown. They don't take their position in society for granted anymore and have learnt to confront themselves with new challenges.

For a number of years, on the first Tuesday of September, when the new budget is presented by the King, a wide variety of religions and faith groups together stage a special interreligious service to start the new parliamentary year.

It is attended by the Prime Minister, members of government, diplomats and other dignitaries, and they truly do it together; so, even in a secular state, there can be mutual recognition, tolerance and cooperation. But the combination of secularization, which also means diminishing lack of understanding of what it means to be religious, and our traditional way of dealing with issues, makes it difficult for us, the Dutch, to understand why elsewhere, in other countries, there is still so much and often such a deep division between religions and also within religions.

We have learnt that the old Cold War concept of peaceful coexistence may have been effective and efficient in Cold War days, but since 1989, the Internet and the proliferation of social media, with all its negative and positive connotations, forced us to adapt, to respect diversity, to think and act inclusively and work together on improving our global open society, respecting universal human rights for everyone and everywhere.

We all are entitled to the same human rights and are confronted with the same challenges and have committed to the same Sustainable Development Goals. In the first decennium of this century, and even more so in the aftermath of the growth of jihadism, governments like the Dutch became more aware of a changing environment and we needed to adapt. Firstly, we needed to understand what it means to be religious. So, to learn, to re-learn, what we lost: what it means to be religious, that's right, we have to do it.

And second, we start promoting cooperation, civic engagement off and between faith-based organizations explicitly as part of a civic society.

We just started a new program with the promising title Joint Initiative on Strategic Religious Action (JISRA). This program is characterized by being multi-religious and thematically intersectional, addressing several rights and issues, some of them being sensitive from traditional perspectives. And against this backdrop, I am very pleased that you succeeded in presenting a series of recommendations to the G20 leaders and, more regularly, I'm impressed by initiatives, for example, in the framework of alliances like Religions for Peace and all those individual initiatives that we noticed in COVID-times and are weekly documented in the Berkeley highlights, although I also have to note that they also document examples of setback and pushback, negative forces from religious leaders.

The dialogue within the religious. When we talk about interreligious dialogue, we must also address intra-religious dialogue. The example of my youth taught me how important that is. Still, too often I witness exclusion in the name of "truth".

And thanks for your words on the value of truth, whereas love should be the driving factor of any religion or belief. All men are fallible and make mistakes; strong views later proved to be weak; new

and unacceptable insights for now turn out to be mainstream after a number of years.

Let us learn from each other and open to each other; and thank you for the explanation of the meaning of dialogue from that perspective. For governments, the intra-religious quarreling is difficult to appreciate and handle. Even with deep division between and within religions, all concerned are citizens belonging to a nation-state and are entitled to the same impartial governments of that same government.

Leaders or actors? Dialogue is so often between leaders. And thanks again, a lot of quotes, Alberto: “Interreligious dialogue since the 90’s has been re-traveling the first mile over and over. True” you apparently said. “It is important, but it’s easy. We all agree that there should be no legitimization of violence. Then we end with kisses and candles in front of the camera” and, apparently, that was it. “Now we have to walk the second and third mile”, apparently.

I couldn’t agree more. Today is a day to act, and therefore I again welcome your initiative for recommendations to get to G20 leaders, but never forget the actors that you represent as faith leaders. And please respect individual human rights also of those who never subscribed or no longer subscribe to how you see the truth.

And lastly, please do not let dialogue turn into a suffocating process, killing individual freedoms and views.

Faisal Abdulrahman bin Muaammar *Secretary General of the International Dialogue Centre (KAICIID)*

I like to believe that dialogue is the heart of understanding one another. It is the willingness to learn more from ourselves and others and appreciate our differences and commonalities. It starts with respecting differences and an abundance of the heart and the mind.

KAICIID is not only a center for dialogue: it is a safe space where ideas, beliefs, and opinions can be expressed and appreciated, whereby a process of learning and engaging the world flourishes. Among our many activities through our roles as conveners and capacity builders, we bring together and train young minds from all over the world to facilitate religious and cultural acceptance and understanding in their respective local communities. These in-

teractions can significantly contribute to peacebuilding by clearing misunderstandings, assumptions, and negative perceptions and strengthening the idea of common citizenship through which a person’s religious and cultural identities are understood to have no bearing on his or her fundamental dignity and rights as a human being.

I attended the KAICIID’s Word Conference for youth in Cordoba. A young girl from Saudi Arabia, now part of our KAICIID fellows program, approached me and shared her experience with KAICIID as: “Meeting other people, knowing about their ideas and opinions, as well as approaching those people and starting new conversations and looking out another window, though different than your window”. I found this feedback very powerful, as it perfectly exemplifies KAICIID’s mission: using dialogue to enhance individual and institutional capacity to bring together religious and cultural communities and policymakers to address our local and global challenges.

Through dialogue, we learned that the wider field of effort toward sustainable human development is currently largely confined to the so-called secular policymaking arena. In addition, the views of religious leaders, believers, and faith-based organizations need to be heard, as they are now more relevant than ever before.

Nearly 85 % of humanity lives life through the prism of religious traditions. This puts a premium on understanding and working with religious perspectives in our effort to address the global challenges. Apart from moral and religious authority, faith-based organizations globally have significant resources in terms of properties, land, schools, buildings, and minds; they have influence in the field of education. Thus, no truly comprehensive or sustained effort can be envisaged at the grassroots without input by religious leaders and institutions.

Also, in many parts of the world, it is often the local religious leaders who move beyond pastoral care and worship to take on duties pertaining to community well-being and priorities, be that addressing conflict and injustice or contributing to social services.

Then, it stands to reason that there is a natural alliance between faith leaders and institutions and policymakers in learning about opportunities for sustaining human development and collaborating and analyzing these opportunities.

It stands to reason that dialogue between the two is essential. What is missing, then? In KAICIID’s opinion, what is missing is more opportunities for these two worlds to meet together in their differences. Too often, the religious world is willing to approach policymakers, but without the technically sound and evidence-based nar-

rative necessary for sound dialogue. Conversely, I hear from many from the world of faith that policymakers need to learn the language of religion. Both sides have much to offer each other. Still, before they learn to speak each other’s languages in a safe and welcoming environment, the tradition and moral authority of religious leaders will invariably collide with the world of facts, figures, data, and evidence-based examples of policymaking. Dialogue is needed before these two worlds can come together to address the multiple challenges facing humanity, as partners.

It is my pleasure and honor to share with you that KAICIID has taken the first step towards reconciling these differences. A key roadmap of tracking global challenges is the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Although the global scourge of COVID-19 has impacted these, they stand as our best and most comprehensive call to arms. KAICIID’s commitment to multilateral efforts to support this vital component of the UN Agenda 2030 is reflected in its programs and partnerships, not least with partnerships with agencies such as the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations – and I know my dear friend, Miguel-Angel Moratinos, is around us – UNDB and others. Multi-stakeholder partnerships that commit knowledge and resources toward attaining the SDGs are encouraged in SDGs 17; the center also contributes to SDGs 4, 5, 11, and 16, through its positioning with and between religious actors and policymakers.

Dialogue starts with differences. When I look around this room, I see a multitude of languages, cultures, and religions. I see diversity, but I also see the willingness to come together and explore the benefits of these diversities.

The G20 is bigger than the nations that compose it. The synergy between religious actors and policymakers is far more overreaching than what the two groups could achieve alone. Accepting that it is our diversity that makes us stronger, it remains for me to ask the G20 nations to consider carefully the deliberation and recommendations of this Forum over the nature and the spirit of dialogue.

And finally, I would like to congratulate you, Professor Melloni.

You remember we worked from Argentina to Germany to Japan to, last year, Saudi Arabia. We worked as brothers and sisters; we united our work together. We did the largest Forum virtually in Saudi Arabia, and we are grateful for the contribution of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. This year, I congratulate you for bringing policymakers. We have never done that before. I see policymakers around us. They are listening to us. So please keep this effort going on. We would like to do more and more, hopefully, in Jakarta next year.

CLOSING CEREMONY

Katherine Marshall

*Vice president of the G20 Interfaith Forum
Association*

We have met here in Bologna at a singularly troubled time. The COVID-19 crisis is still raging. It has shown starkly the world’s inequalities and fractures, but also its interconnections and common concerns. This interreligious and cross sectoral gathering has asked in countless ways: what will it take to heal? And, in an environment far removed from indifference, underscored how and why religious communities, working purposefully together, and with governments, parliaments, transnational organizations, women and men, young and old, can and will engage. We close this meeting this evening with the strong conviction that we must make this a *Kairos* moment, a time of grace, opportunity, and movement where we act together to bring change and justice, dignity and care. We look with great hope to the Summit of G20 leaders and their partners in October, because they have unique responsibilities and means to act.

The work of the Interfaith Forum’s many partners were reflected in the Bologna discussions in myriad ideas and proposals discussed, both on foundations for actions and specific proposals to G20 leaders and to religious communities. They reflect the work of religious networks and leaders over months and years – work that continues – enriched by interreligious discussions here in Bologna and the untiring work of FSCIRE and its partners. The list is long: truly tackle racism, care for refugees and migrants, use technology well, build peace, respect human rights including religious freedom, bring new vigor and meaning to education, and many more.

I highlight four calls to action that we heard so often here in Bologna, two with immediate force and two continuing as we look ahead. The most urgent are first, appeals for concerted, bold measures, with religious communities, to vaccinate all priority communities against COVID-19, by the end of 2021, and second, to address the staggering hunger crisis, that is here and now. Looking not far ahead, the calls of Patriarch Bartholomew, here, Pope Francis, voiced in *Laudato Si!*,

and many other prophetic voices, to act on climate and the environment resound powerfully. And finally, the G20 can and must lead in mobilizing and directing the resources so urgently needed towards an equitable, fair society whose first obligation and concern is towards those who are most vulnerable and in greatest need.

Mohamed Abdelsalam

*Secretary-General of the Higher
Committee of Human Fraternity*

Let me express my own appreciation and the appreciation of the Higher Committee of Human Fraternity for this significant Forum which is a genuine chance for convergence, mutual knowledge, and cultural, religious, and intellectual dialogue. This Forum shares the same message as the Document on Human Fraternity, the exceptional historical document which was introduced to the world by His Eminence the Grand Imam of Al Azhar Al Sharif, Prof. Ahmed Al-Tayyeb, and His Holiness Pope Francis, in Abu Dhabi on 4 February 2019, under sincere patronage from His Highness Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, the Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi.

In the footsteps of these two great symbols, the Higher Committee of Human Fraternity was established to undertake ambitious initiatives aimed to achieve the noble goals of the document. Examples of such initiatives include the Zayed Award for Human Fraternity, the initiative of the Abrahamic Family House, the initiative including the principles and values of the Document on Human Fraternity into the curricula of education and scientific research at various stages, and the World Summit for Youth 2023. We have also established partnerships with international institutions to set up common human projects that benefit all people regardless of their race, color, religion, or gender.

But the change we are pursuing must be as great and influential as the tragedies and pains from which humanity suffers, as much as the cries of the millions of refugees, displaced and subjugated people around the world, and as much as the hopes and ambitions which they pin on what human initiatives can achieve, especially after the world overcomes the COVID-19 pandemic; and this change will not be made unless we work together and consolidate our efforts.

Therefore, the committee gives priority to documenting and deepening cooperation with organizations and individuals on initiatives

that serve humanity in any field because of its deep faith that human fraternity is a shared responsibility and a collective dream and that no single individual or institution – regardless of their efforts or potential – can achieve the goals of human fraternity without sharing bread with others as Pope Francis rightly did with his brother, the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar Al-Tayyeb during their first encounter at the luncheon table that brought them together, in a meeting that was the first of its kind in the history of Islamic-Christian relationship.

Concerning this great symbolism, I can say that we are in dire need to globalize the culture of sharing bread with others, and this is the positive side of globalization, as it should be, not the negative side that some try to pass over to us.

We all share our fears and worries about the destructive effects of climate change and its bad effects on the environment and the future of the coming generations, so raising the awareness of sound behavior and how we deal with the climate and the environment has become an indispensable necessity. The Vatican has nicely done this by hosting the climate summit to consult with the leaders of different faiths next October in cooperation with Italy and Britain to pave the way for the approaching COP26.

Our common path for the sake of change should traverse the closed rooms, TV screens and digital means, and search for personal interests in a united practical strategy that boosts intended coordination among us to integrate our efforts. Everyone from their position and fields, including religious institutions, can guide their communities towards the religious values of mercy and peace. Artists and creative people are also invited to reveal the beauty of these lofty human values for their followers. Intellectuals are required to focus their cultural visions on advancing the common human responsibility. Media figures, too, for sure have a major role in creating a public opinion aware of the importance of promoting coexistence and fraternity within our greater societies.

The significant project of the Higher Committee of Human Fraternity, the Abrahamic Family House, which is being constructed in Abu Dhabi, has become a global cultural symbol epitomizing those efforts and visions of the lovers of goodness and peace. The project maintains the unique character of each religion and, at the same time, embraces the common human interests of all faiths.

The G20 Interfaith Forum – through these distinguished elites and men of religion, thought, and culture – represents an important chance to exchange views and thoughts, which I have no doubts, will inspire us in our plans and initiatives. At the Higher Committee of Human Fraternity, we will start studying all visions and ideas intro-

duced at this Forum to benefit from them, as our path is one: the path of human fraternity, peace, coexistence, and tolerance. All these synonyms are inseparable as our goal is a world where all people believe in peace, goodness, justice, and equality.

I cannot end my speech without reiterating my appeal to the international community and the countries of G20 to join hands and work together to find an urgent and serious solution to send vaccines to poor people that do not have the ability to buy or store the vaccines.

Yaqu Cholil Qoumas Minister of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia

It is an honor to speak with you today in the heart of a city whose artistic, intellectual and economic achievements epitomize the greatness of European civilization. In other words: from the heart of a city built upon shared civilizational values, whose dynamic nature has enabled its inhabitants to build upon ancient traditions while continuously adapting to change.

Next year the G20 and its Interfaith Forum will be held on the far side of the Earth, in the world's largest Muslim-majority nation and democracy, Indonesia. The following year, in 2023, the world's largest democracy, India, will host the G20.

Indonesia lies astride the maritime crossroads that historically linked the Indian Ocean and the Sinosphere, becoming the crucible of a unique civilization of its own. Our ancient links to Europe may also be seen in the discovery of gold coins from Rome, which travelled along these sea routes to purchase spices from our ancestors nearly 2,000 years ago.

During the long course of history, innumerable kingdoms, empires, cultures and civilizations have risen to wealth and prominence, only to decline and eventually vanish. Their collapse was often heralded by a period of acute crisis and widespread human suffering prior to a new order emerging from the ruins of the old.

For example, the immense horrors of the First and Second World Wars ultimately led to the establishment of the United Nations and a rules-based post-war order, whose benefits we continue to enjoy today. Yet, I am confident that few of us would wish to experience the cataclysmic events that preceded the emergence of this order.

Viewed from a historical perspective, our current rules-based order is an anomaly. It remains fragile and is threatened by numerous forces, including authoritarian states and transnational ideologies that reject its basic tenets, in whole or in part. Among these core tenets are human rights, the rule of law, democracy, the existence of nation-states, respect for international borders and the sovereignty of other nations.

The chaos on display in many parts of the world— including discrimination, persecution and outright violence perpetrated against ethnic and religious minorities — remains a profound threat not only to those directly affected but also to the future of humanity and civilization itself.

Disdain for the rule of law and denial of the inherent value and dignity of human life threatens the entire framework of our current world order, which has produced the greatest expansion of economic well-being in the history of humanity and unprecedented technological achievements. Yet, these very achievements render us vulnerable on multiple fronts.

Our interconnected, global economy, combined with massive urbanization, could produce starvation on a vast scale in the event of a global economic collapse. Similarly, the nexus of political and economic power and technology threatens to create a dystopian future in which multinational corporations and governments surveil and control individuals to a degree previously unimaginable. The proliferation of nuclear weapons and other military technologies poses a correspondingly grave threat.

In contemplating the agenda of next year's G20 Interfaith Forum, which Indonesia will host, we believe it is essential to acknowledge and address these and other threats to our current world order. We also believe it is essential to reflect upon the fragility of our current world order and abstain from placing further stress upon its intricate and highly complex social, economic and political infrastructure.

Religion has a vital role to play in this regard, for it has the potential to help block the political weaponization of identity; curtail the spread of communal hatred; promote solidarity and respect among the diverse people, cultures and nations of the world; and foster the emergence of a truly just and harmonious world order, founded upon respect for the equal rights and dignity of every human being.

Yet to realize this potential, we must wisely manage the inevitable struggle between competing values, as globalization brings highly diverse peoples, cultures and traditions into ever closer contact.

It will also require establishing a global platform for religious, political and intellectual leaders to gather and jointly address the challenges that lie before us.

And, of course, it will require that religious leaders act decisively to ensure that religion is no longer “part of the problem” and instead becomes “part of the solution” to the multitude of crises that threaten to unravel our current world order.

One major task that lies before us is to identify and conscientiously observe those universal values that a majority of the world's inhabitants already acknowledge, such as the virtues of honesty, truth-seeking, compassion and justice. Another parallel task is to develop a global consensus regarding shared values that the world's diverse cultures will need to embrace if we are to co-exist peacefully.

It is also necessary for us to acknowledge that many traditional communities continue to embrace certain values that may prevent peaceful coexistence with others.

These considerations explain why in February of 2019 - at a gathering of over 20,000 Muslim religious scholars - Indonesia's Nahdlatul Ulama adopted an official ruling that the legal category of the infidel is neither relevant nor applicable within the context of a modern nation-state.

In addition, our religious scholars ruled that the nation-state and laws derived from modern political processes are legitimate. They also affirmed that it is a religious obligation for Muslims to foster peace rather than wage war on behalf of our co-religionists whenever conflict erupts between Muslim and non-Muslim populations anywhere in the world.

As Kyai Haji Mustofa Bisri, a prominent Nahdlatul Ulama spiritual leader, wrote in a poem titled *Religion*:

Religion
is a golden carriage
prepared by God
to convey you along the path
to His Divine Presence.
Don't become mesmerized by its beauty,
much less enchanted to the point
that you come to blows with your own brothers and sisters
over who occupies the front seat.
Depart!
He has been waiting for you
ever so long.

Mario Draghi President of the Italian Council of Ministers

It is undoubtedly a great pleasure for me to be here, at this event that is so full of understanding and spirituality. Peace and tolerance are universal values: they transcend cultural and religious differences, representing the starting point to deal with the political, social and humanitarian crises of our times. Today's event follows a long and distinguished tradition of interfaith dialogue, and I am very pleased it is being held as part of the Italian G20 Presidency. I am referring, for example, to the *Nostra Aetate* declaration of the Second Vatican Council and the World Day of Prayer for Peace held in Assisi in 1986. Over recent years, messages of brotherhood and solidarity have come from all religions and from all continents. Addressing Christian leaders back in 2007, Muslim leaders identified “love of neighbors” as being the foundation for “peace and mutual understanding”.

These reflections should not only be a matter of discussion among theologians, but must also have an influence on people's attitudes and behaviour. Celebrating diversity and open dialogue between different cultures and religions is essential for respectful coexistence. All too often, this is only understood when it is too late: when clashes and violence become inevitable. This is the case today, just like in the centuries before us.

During its history, Europe has been torn apart by religious conflicts. There have been many examples of political leaders ordering such massacres, or turning a blind eye, mistakenly thinking that this would be enough to escape their responsibilities. At certain moments in history, however, it is immoral not to take action, not to take sides.

Religion must never be exploited. In the worst cases, religion has been used to justify violence, to deprive people of basic rights or to mobilise popular support for purely political ends. We must always oppose terror and even only subtle abuses of power aimed at depriving us of our values in the name of religion.

For me, religion means love; its principles should be defended in a firm yet tolerant way, and not with irreconcilable aversion or, worse, with war and terror. As Pope Francis said: “Hostility, extremism and violence are not born of a religious heart: they are betrayals of religion”. Protecting religious freedom, together with freedom of opinion and expression, is just as crucial, as is the right to profess one's faith and to worship freely, both in private and in public, the right to convert to a religion or leave a religion without being persecuted, and the right to build one's own identity, based on respect and not on hate.

Today, however, we are seeing a concerning number of instances of religious extremism and conflicts between different faiths: awful attacks claimed by organisations such as ISIS; terrorist acts carried out in the name of white or Christian supremacism; episodes of anti-Semitism, which are worryingly on the rise. In some particularly despicable cases, such occurrences have happened in places of worship, where people go for comfort, hope and protection from hate. Such brutal events are often used to portray a divided world, torn between opposing communities. However, we should remember that

the victims of terrorism are often of the same faith as their killers. Fanaticism affects everyone, indiscriminately.

Respect for freedoms and peacekeeping must be the key objectives of the international community and of the G20, under the Italian Presidency this year. The crisis in Afghanistan has once again made these priorities terribly pressing. In recent days, we have been seeing images that recall the darkest days of the country's history. This is particularly the case for women, who had gained back basic rights over the last two decades, such as their right to education. Today, these women risk being banned from even practising sport, as well as being denied representation in the country's government. As the international community, we have a moral duty towards this country, where we were present for the last twenty years. We have a duty to provide humanitarian aid, to prevent terrorism and to support the protection of human rights.

In the Western world, and in Europe in particular, we also have another duty and that is to protect those who decide to leave Afghanistan. Italy has helped around 5,000 Afghan citizens to escape the huge risks to which they were exposed. This took significant efforts, which is something we should be proud of, but these efforts now need to continue. The European Union must not ignore the tragedy being faced by these people, nor the historic nature of these events. For years, the EU has been unable to build a common approach to migration, with particular regard to the relocation of those who arrive and seek asylum. We must prove that we can meet the demands of this crisis, living up to the values that we say we represent. The progress of the European integration process is to be assessed in terms of not only economic factors but also our capacity for reception.

After the pandemic and the resulting economic crisis, today we have a unique opportunity to rebuild. We are quite well aware of what went wrong, and I am particularly referring to social, economic and environmental imbalances. We also know what our policies must aim for.

The Italian Presidency of the G20 has put the pandemic, climate change and the global recovery at the heart of its agenda. We want to overcome the disparities in Covid-19 vaccine supplies. We also want to reach an ambitious agreement to reduce emissions, as well as strengthening economic safety nets for the world's poorest countries. The G20 brings together the most important economies on the planet. There is no doubt: achieving these objectives is our moral responsibility.

If we wish to beat the pandemic, the vaccination campaign must push ahead quickly, everywhere. This is the only way to save lives, curb the contagion and prevent the emergence of dangerous variants. However, in the poorest countries, only 2% of the population have received at least one dose of the vaccine to date, compared with 42% of the world population. At the Global Health Summit in Rome, pharmaceutical companies pledged to supply 1.3 billion doses at controlled prices to low- and medium-income countries by the end of this year. Another 2 billion will be distributed in 2022. The European Union will be donating at least 100 million doses by the end of 2021. Thanks to increased vaccine production over recent months, it has been possible to guarantee enough supplies to cover a significant percentage of the population in developing countries. Vaccine doses must now reach those who need them. In other words, there is a logistical problem that is equally as important as the issue of vaccine production capacity.

Altogether, G20 countries are responsible for approximately four fifths of global emissions. However, the effects of climate change are particularly damaging for the world's poorest nations. In fact, between 1999 and 2018, nine out of the ten countries worst hit by extreme weather events were not advanced economies. These countries have benefited less from our development model than others, yet they are its main victims. During the Environment, Climate and Energy Meeting in Naples, the G20 reaffirmed its commitment to keep global warming below 1.5 degrees and to reach zero net emissions by 2050. We also intend to raise at least USD 100 billion in financing per year to support the ecological transition in developing countries. Pope Francis, the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew and the Archbishop of Canterbury recently appealed to the international community to “choose life”, also to protect the future generations. At the conference to be held in Glasgow in November, we must provide a positive response to this invitation, by making courageous decisions that involve all countries.

Following the traumatic pandemic, the global economy has started to grow again. This recovery, however, is not the same for everyone. According to the most recent forecasts, by the end of 2022, most G20 countries will have made up for the ground lost during the health crisis. This will not be the case for two thirds of the most fragile nations. For the poorest, the consequences risk being tragic. According to the FAO, over 150 million more people are now undernourished as a result of the pandemic.

The G20 has proposed a package of measures to support developing economies, involving the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. We have reached an agreement to facilitate debt restructuring for countries with high levels of debt. Much more work needs to be done to boost resources and to involve private creditors who are not party to this agreement, which until now has only benefited a small number of countries. We must ensure the commitments already undertaken are fulfilled and be prepared to make even more courageous ones.

Politics is duty-bound to take action, and that action must be preceded and guided by analysis and reflection. As religious authorities, your role in this is of fundamental importance. You raise awareness otherwise numbed by indifference or self-interest. You call upon politics to take action in line with your message. During the most tragic times in recent history, you have built bridges where terrorism and war, or, as mentioned earlier, indifference, had erected barriers. You have urged us to respect differences and reject discrimination, as well as courageously defending the rights of communities who have fallen victim to persecution. The proposals you have submitted at this Forum are further confirmation of your deep commitment, and the G20 intends to examine them carefully. Your proposals also reaffirm the importance of understanding and listening, without which there can be no real culture of diversity, to achieve full recognition of the values that underpin our very humanity.

Matteo Maria Zuppi Cardinal Archbishop of Bologna

C'è un tempo per guarire. È la nostra responsabilità e una grande speranza! È questo il tempo per guarire. Si può guarire! Non farlo significa lasciare il mondo malato. Bisogna scegliere il tempo e in tempo, vivere questo tempo, non subire che sia questo a scegliere tanto che alla fine arriviamo solo “per contrarietà”. Il tempo è davvero superiore allo spazio. Ecco una delle ricchezze di questi giorni di dialogo. C'è un tempo per guarire. La *Parva Charta* ci ha guidato: “Noi non ci uccideremo, noi ci soccorreremo, noi ci perdoneremo”. Certo, dovremo lottare sempre contro i temibili e insidiosi virus: lo abbiamo capito tutti in questa pandemia, anche chi, tradito dal benessere, pensava di potere restare sano in un mondo malato. Siamo vulnerabili e tutti i virus, il vero virus, che è il male, si trasformano per colpire la vita, per renderla inutile, tanto che gli uomini stessi la scartano e quindi si scartano. Non accettiamo come ineluttabile nessuna “grande divergenza”, tra paesi e anche all'interno dei paesi, tra i giovani, le persone con basse qualifiche, le donne e i lavoratori informali colpiti in modo sproporzionato dalla perdita del lavoro. In campo economico un rinato multilateralismo degli stati come delle istituzioni internazionali, è forse un inizio di una rinnovata coscienza decisiva per tutte le pandemie: “staremo al sicuro solo quando tutti staranno al sicuro”. E questo vale per tutto, dal contrasto dei cambiamenti climatici alla scelta di investimenti negli obiettivi di sviluppo sostenibile. Come persone animate da diverse fedi religiose sappiamo che amare Dio significa anche amare il prossimo. A chi decide che alcuni restino indietro o addirittura fuori della “stessa barca”, (si tratta sempre dei più fragili), come presunto prezzo da pagare per risolvere i problemi, noi diciamo che la sofferenza di tutti ci riguarda, che siamo custodi di Abele e che questo orienta le nostre scelte, personali e collettive. Solo se sono garantiti i più fragili lo siamo tutti.

L'esperienza, dolorosissima, di questi lunghi mesi ci ha fatto capire, almeno per un attimo, che siamo sulla stessa barca. Lo capiamo, però senza la rivoluzione copernicana per cui l'io trova se stesso non perché sta al centro ma perché entra in relazione con il prossimo, possiamo facilmente dimenticare questa consapevolezza, tanto da riprendere la logica del “salva te stesso” o del “prima io”, che poi diventa anche un “io” collettivo. Noi, dopo questi giorni, diciamo con ancora maggiore convinzione: “prima noi!”, perché solo insieme ne usciamo, a cominciare dai più indifesi. La pandemia ci ha ricordato che tutto è legato, che la casa è davvero comune e che quindi sfruttarla dissennatamente pensando che il pezzo della casa è mio, mette in discussione la stabilità di tutta la casa e il futuro di coloro che hanno diritto, come noi, di poterla abitare. Se proprio non riusciamo a lasciare la Terra migliore di come l'abbiamo trovata, almeno non sia peggiore! Combattiamo l'inquinamento che minaccia e in realtà già colpisce drammaticamente la salute della Terra così come l'inquinamento che avvelena le relazioni tra le persone. Se tutto è globale anche la soluzione dei problemi richiede il coinvolgimento di tutti e il rafforzamento dei luoghi dove si decide insieme. Soprattutto renderli efficaci, proprio perché forti di questa consapevolezza: non c'è futuro senza l'altro. Non si può deludere questa speranza! Provocherebbe rabbia e depressione, aggressività e chiusura. Non possiamo rassegnarci a non raggiungere gli obiettivi indicati come necessari: il nostro impegno etico è di fare di tutto perché si traducano almeno in cantieri di lavoro! La presenza questa sera del primo ministro Draghi dimostra l'attenzione che ha per preparare il prossimo G20 usando questa riserva di saggezza e di etica che viene dalle fedi religiose.

Peraltro, quando si sceglie la collaborazione per il raggiungimento di un obiettivo comune si vedono i risultati, come è avvenuto nel mondo scientifico per individuare il vaccino. Non deve essere questo il metodo da continuare, nella consapevolezza che da soli si perde e solo insieme se ne esce? Non deve esserlo per tutti? Solo se i paesi poveri saranno vaccinati, potremo sentirci sicuri. Le fedi cercano le cose alte, dentro e fuori di sé, e possono per questo permettere di guardare lontano e quindi di scegliere la direzione del bene per tutti.

È scritto nel libro del profeta Isaia: “Aprirò anche nel deserto una strada, immetterò fiumi nella steppa” (Is 48,9) E poco dopo aggiunge: “Il digiuno che voglio è sciogliere le catene inique, togliere i legami del giogo, rimandare liberi gli oppressi e spezzare ogni giogo? Allora la tua luce sorgerà come l'aurora, la tua ferita si rimarginerà pre-

sto” (Is 58,6-8). È la strada che abbiamo percorso, quella del dialogo. Le pandemie si diffondono e colpiscono con ancora maggiore forza proprio se i muri sono tanti e alti mentre i ponti pochi e fragili. Così si contrastano i semi di intolleranza, come proclamò solennemente quasi sessanta anni or sono il Concilio Vaticano II per quello antisemita, da ripudiare e deplorare “da chiunque e in qualunque tempo” (*Nostra Aetate* 4). Ed è la stessa preoccupazione che dobbiamo avere per guarire da ogni seme (sempre inquietantemente fertili) di ignoranza, intolleranza, di vecchi e nuovi razzismi, scegliendo la via dell'incontro, dell'educazione per combattere l'analfabetismo religioso. La ferita dell'uno si rimargina se si cura quella dell'altro. Dobbiamo essere insieme, anche per proteggere la convivenza e fare rispettare ovunque le minoranze. La strada è quella coraggiosa tracciata ad Assisi, incontro profetico voluto da San Giovanni Paolo II per combattere la pandemia della guerra e per conseguire quello che solo insieme si può raggiungere e godere: la pace. Quanto c'è, però da fare perché questa diventi cultura e incontro tra popoli e persone! Il contrario della pandemia, male universale, è la fraternità universale. E questa è affidata a ciascuno: come nel COVID ognuno ha capito che è responsabile con il suo atteggiamento dell'altro. Martin Buber diceva che l'unica cosa che conta è cominciare da se stessi perché “il punto di Archimede a partire dal quale posso da parte mia sollevare il mondo è la trasformazione di me stesso. ‘Cerca la pace nel tuo luogo’. Quando l'uomo ha trovato la pace in se stesso, può mettersi a cercarla nel mondo intero”. E in questi giorni ci siamo aiutati, tra fedi religiose, a farlo! Abbiamo misurato i problemi, le resistenze, gli interessi economici enormi, spesso oscuri e temibili e proprio per questo, in questo clima, umilmente, ma fermamente desideriamo offrire queste riflessioni a quanti devono e possono decidere per soluzioni comuni a vantaggio di tutti.

Non possiamo accontentarci di curare le ferite senza rimuovere le cause. Il sangue di tutti gli Abele domanda di essere ricordato. Questo è stato il grido che abbiamo tutti ascoltato dalle diverse religioni. Alle tre “P” degli obiettivi globali dell'Onu – People, Planet, Prosperity – papa Francesco ha voluto aggiungere quella di pace, che non è solo la risoluzione dei conflitti esistenti ma anche il diritto alla pace, che significa controllare il commercio delle armi e cercare il disarmo atomico, perché non valutiamo la capacità distruttrice, minaccia terribile considerando l'istinto di Caino sempre accovacciato alla porta. Attenzione a non negligenza questa realtà, che non è mai inerte, come abbiamo fatto con le epidemie. E poi i tanti pezzi della guerra mondiale continuano a versare nel mare del mondo l'inquinamento della violenza, dell'odio, del pregiudizio, seme che in maniera inquietante è sempre fertile. Il terrorismo, tradimento dell'umanità e bestemmia della fede, è frutto e causa proprio di questo inquinamento, anche perché esso stesso anche aiutato da interessi economici. Non vogliamo che la fraternità sia tutt'al più un'espressione romantica, ma una convinta prassi di impegno comune.

Su questa strada, come ci ricorda il professore Melloni (desidero ringraziare lui e tutti i tanti indispensabili collaboratori della Fondazione che hanno permesso la realizzazione di questo incontro) abbiamo percorso il primo decisivo e affatto scontato miglio: quello che ha sconfessato la violenza. Era impensabile quaranta anni or sono. Dobbiamo però continuare in una strada che si apre proprio camminando. Il ricordo delle persone uccise nei luoghi di preghiera – che studieremo come continuare – ci ha unito intimamente, facendoci scegliere di stare tutti dalla parte delle vittime. Sono tutte nostre. L'autentica risposta religiosa al fratricidio è la ricerca del fratello. Noi siamo il custode di Abele ma per certi versi anche di Caino, perché la violenza non vince la violenza e Dio lo protegge, perché non si vince la violenza con la violenza e perché il sogno di Dio è che finalmente Caino impari a dominare l'istinto riconoscendo suo quello che ha il fratello. Questa staffetta del G20 Interfaith ha raccolto il testimone qui a Bologna, città da sempre del dialogo, che ospitò tre anni or sono l'incontro interreligioso organizzato dalla diocesi e dalla Comunità di Sant'Egidio e che ad iniziare dai suoi accoglienti portici e dall'Università è un deposito di tanta sapienza a riguardo. Desidero oggi ricordare il primo presidente della Fondazione, Nino Andreatta, maestro di lucidità morale, che ha sempre cercato l'economia per la persona e non viceversa, contro l'interesse e il profitto della speculazione. Lucidità morale e etica richiedono affinamento interiore, unica via per resistere ai virus divisivi.

Davanti alle tante difficili domande il poeta si interrogava su “quante strade deve percorrere un uomo prima di essere chiamato uomo, per quanto tempo dovranno volare le palle di cannone prima che vengano bandite per sempre, quante orecchie deve avere un uomo prima che ascolti la gente piangere e quanti morti ci dovranno essere affinché lui sappia che troppa gente è morta?”. Oggi le fedi religiose trovano insieme una risposta e la affidano perché cresca, a partire dal prossimo G20 la strada nel deserto. Le lacrime di tanti, e le lacrime sono tutte uguali e importanti per Dio, ci spingono a questo, consapevoli, certo, che “dopo una collina ce ne sarà un'altra” ma anche che solo scegliendo di salirla assieme potremo superarle. Perché siamo e vogliamo essere *Fratelli tutti*. Dio ci benedica e benedica il prossimo G20.

FORTHCOMING

In the forthcoming supplements, the following speeches will be published:

A Ahmed Abbadi
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Pshtivan Sadq Abdullah
Adel Abdulrahman Al Asoomi
Mohammed Abu-Nimer
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