

## **Pope to Buddhists: Religions play crucial role in fostering fraternity**



*Pope meeting the United Association of Humanistic Buddhism (Taiwan) (VATICAN MEDIA Divisione Foto)*

Pope Francis receives a delegation of the United Association of Humanistic Buddhism of Taiwan and highlights the crucial role of religions in fostering fraternity by promoting a culture of encounter.

**Lisa Zengarini, *Vatican News*, 15 March 2023**

At a time marked by “a continued acceleration of changes affecting humanity and the planet”, religions are called more than ever to foster fraternity by promoting a “culture of encounter”, especially among the young. Pope Francis stressed this point on Thursday as he met in the Vatican with a delegation of the United Association of Humanistic Buddhism of Taiwan. The group is visiting Rome for an interreligious “educational pilgrimage”.

### **The culture of encounter builds bridges and breaks down walls of prejudices**

In his address to the monks, the Pope remarked that their visit is a “privileged occasion” for advancing the culture of encounter, “in which we take the risk of opening ourselves to others, trusting that we will discover in them friends and brothers and sisters, and in the process learn and discover more about ourselves”.

*“As we experience others in their diversity, we are encouraged to accept and embrace our differences.”*

“An interreligious educational pilgrimage – said the Pope - can be a source of great enrichment, offering multiple opportunities for us to encounter one another, to learn from one another and to appreciate our various experiences”.

*“The culture of encounter builds bridges and opens windows to the sacred values and convictions that inspire others. It tears down the walls that divide people and keep them prisoners of preconceptions, prejudices or indifference.”*

Pope Francis further noted that an educational pilgrimage to the sacred places of a religion like the one undertaken by the Buddhist delegation, “can also enrich our appreciation of the distinctiveness of its approach to the divine”. “The masterpieces of religious art that

surround us in the Vatican and throughout Rome reflect the conviction that, in Jesus Christ, God himself became a 'pilgrim' in this world out of love for our human family", he said.

### **Fostering human fraternity through education**

The Pope went on to remark that the "oases of encounter" that religious believers have created throughout history, contribute to "an integral education of the human person" and are even more necessary in today's divided world. In this regard, he highlighted the crucial role played by religions in educating the young, so as to "advance universal fraternity in our world".

Concluding Pope Francis expressed his hope that the pilgrimage to Rome may lead to to a deeper encounter with the Christian tradition, and with the beauty of the earth, offering new "precious opportunities for growth in knowledge, wisdom, dialogue and understanding".