

CHRISTIANS AND BUDDHISTS: INNER PEACE, PEACE AMONG PEOPLES

Vatican City, 20 May 2013 (VIS) – “Inner Peace, Peace Among Peoples” was the theme of the fourth Buddhist-Christian Colloquium held at the Pontifical Urbaniana University, sponsored by the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue in collaboration with the Office of Ecumenical and Interreligious Dialogue of the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of Italy. The participants, coming from Italy, Japan, the Republic of China (Taiwan), Vietnam, South Korea, Thailand, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, and India, reaffirmed the need of mutual responsibility to maintain or to restore peace and to contribute to friendship and solidarity among persons and peoples.

“In both the Christian and Buddhist journeys,” a communique released today states, “inner freedom, purification of the heart, compassion, and the gift of self are the essential conditions for the inner peace of the individual as well as for social peace. In spite of differences, both Buddhist and Christian ethical teaching on respect for life is a search for common good based on loving kindness and compassion. The participants expressed that dialogue between Buddhists and Christians be strengthened to face new challenges such as threat to human life, poverty, hunger, endemic diseases, violence, war, etc., which belittle the sanctity of human life and poison peace in human society.”

Communiqué

1. The Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue in collaboration with the Office of Ecumenical and Interreligious Dialogue of the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of Italy held the fourth Buddhist-Christian Colloquium at the Pontifical Urbaniana University on 6th of May 2013 under the theme "Inner Peace, Peace among Peoples".
2. The participants were of the view that the different papers presented, formal discussions, friendly dialogues during free times contributed to deepen the mutual understanding of each other’s traditions, to know better the convergence and divergence and to be aware of the mutual responsibility to maintain or to restore peace.
3. The participants coming from Italy, Japan, the Republic of China (Taiwan), Vietnam, South Korea, Thailand, Myanmar, Sri Lanka and India noted that the religious landscape of the world today is undergoing rapid changes. In that context the followers of different religious traditions can contribute to friendship and solidarity among persons and peoples.
4. For Christians, sin in all its forms - selfishness and violence, greed and the inordinate desire for power and dominion, intolerance, hatred and unjust structure – ruptures the communion between God and us and among ourselves. The restoration of peace necessarily requires liberation from sin and its rejection. Jesus Christ restored the broken divine-human communion. Peace is therefore the state of those who live in harmony with God, with themselves, with others and with the whole of creation.
5. As regards Buddhists, Buddha Sakyamuni taught that the root of all evil is ignorance and false views based on greed or hatred and he discovered the Four Noble Truths as a path of liberation from suffering to Nirvana. Accordingly the ethics and mental purity are but two aspects of the same path of practice: the stillness of meditation and working for the liberation of all beings from their suffering sustained by the third aspect of the path: wisdom. In fact, the real Buddhist compassion flows from the awareness of the substantial identity and unity of all beings, a Wisdom that is deeply rooted in the contemplative practice.
6. In both the Christian and Buddhist journeys, therefore, inner freedom, purification of the heart, compassion and the gift of self are the essential conditions for the inner peace of the individual as well as for social peace.

7. In spite of differences, both Buddhist and Christian ethical teaching on respect for life is a search for common good based on loving kindness and compassion. The participants expressed that dialogue between Buddhists and Christians be strengthened to face new challenges such as threat to human life, poverty, hunger, endemic diseases, violence, war, etc., which belittle the sanctity of human life and poison peace in human society.

8. The participants recognized that they have a special responsibility in addressing these issues. The desire for cooperation for the well-being of humanity ought to spring from the depth of spiritual experiences. Only inner peace can transform the human heart and make one see in his/her neighbour another brother and sister. If we really want to build a world of peace, it is vitally important that we join forces to educate people, especially the young, to seek peace, to live in peace and to risk working for peace.

9 The colloquium concluded with the affirmation that it is love which brings or restores peace to human hearts and establishes it in our midst. The participants also observed that the path of peace is difficult; it demands courage, patience, perseverance, determination and sacrifice. They consider dialogue a priority and a sign of hope. It must continue!

[Original text: English]