



Keynote Address
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Secretary, Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue
6th Buddhist-Christian Colloquium
Ling Jiou Buddhist Monastery, Taipei
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Dharma Master Venerable Hsin Tao,
Your Eminence,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Buddhist and Christian leaders,
Ladies and Gentlemen.

1. GREETINGS

On behalf of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, and in the name of His Eminence Cardinal Jean-Louis Tauran, who will join us on the 16th for the closing ceremony, it gives me great pleasure to extend a very warm welcome to all the participants of the Sixth Buddhist-Christian Colloquium entitled “*Buddhists and Christians Walking Together on the Path of Nonviolence*”. I also greet H.E. Mr. François Chih-Chun Wu, Deputy Foreign Minister of the Republic of China (Taiwan) and the distinguished members of his Delegation, who honour us with their presence here today.

The Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue (PCID) was created in 1964 as the central office of the Catholic Church for the promotion of interreligious dialogue. Its task is to foster mutual understanding, respect, and collaboration between Catholics and the followers of other religions based on common values. *Nostra Aetate*, the Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions, has inspired the members of the Catholic Church for over half a century to promote relations of respect and dialogue with their religious neighbours. I would like to seize the occasion to thank you, dear Buddhist friends, for your long-lasting relationship with the Catholic Church. It is my fervent hope that this Colloquium may provide us with an opportunity to renew and expand our mutual respect, friendship, and cooperation.

2. BUDDHIST-CHRISTIAN COLLOQUIA

For more than fifty years, the PCID has been involved in dialogue and collaboration with Buddhists throughout the world. This Colloquium is the sixth in a series promoted by this Pontifical Council. The first formal Buddhist-Christian Colloquium was organised at the Fo Guang Shan Buddhist Monastery, Kaohsiung, Taiwan, in 1995; the general theme was *Buddhism and Christianity, Convergence and Divergence*. The second meeting was held in 1998 at the Catholic monastery of Asirvanam near Bangalore, India, under the theme “*Word and Silence in Buddhist and Christian*

Traditions". The third formal colloquium took place in Tokyo, Japan, in 2002 at the headquarters of Rissho Kosei-kai with the theme "*Sangha in Buddhism and Church in Christianity*". The fourth Buddhist-Christian Colloquium, entitled "*Inner Peace, Peace among Peoples*" was held in Rome, in 2013. The fifth Colloquium under the theme "*Buddhists and Christians Together Fostering Fraternity*" was held at Bodh Gaya, India, in 2015. Today, we hold the sixth Colloquium at Ling Jiou Buddhist Monastery, Taipei. It has been 22 years since we held the first Colloquium in 1995 at the Fo Guang Shan Buddhist Monastery. We are very happy to be back in Taiwan, and I warmly greet all Buddhists monks, nuns, and lay people of this Country, particularly the members of Ling Jiou Buddhist Monastery present here. I also wish to express my gratitude for your generous cooperation to make this event a reality.

3. OBJECTIVES

Dear friends, the general theme for our dialogue is drawn from the Vesakh Message that the PCID issued on April 22 of this year. It emphasizes the urgent need to promote a culture of peace and nonviolence. Allow me to read an excerpt from that message.

Religion is increasingly at the fore in our world today, though at times in opposing ways. While many religious believers are committed to promoting peace, there are those who exploit religion to justify their acts of violence and hatred. We see healing and reconciliation offered to victims of violence, but also attempts to erase every trace and memory of the "other"; there is the emergence of global religious cooperation, but also politicization of religion; and, there is an awareness of endemic poverty and world hunger, yet the deplorable arms race continues. This situation requires a call to nonviolence, a rejection of violence in all its forms" (n. 2).

Terrorism is on the rise, as is the number of people killed in terrorist attacks. It appears that most of the victims of the increasing number of terrorist attacks and violent conflicts throughout the world are women and children. These forms of violence affect civilians who are forcibly displaced or become Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs). In most cases today, conflicts cross borders, and prolonged conflicts keep countries poor. In addition to the harm caused by violent conflicts within and between nations, domestic violence, especially violence against women, remains a pressing concern. All these forms of violence take a tremendous toll—financial, human, physical, and emotional.

It is gratifying to note that the programme of our Colloquium covers a wide range of topics directly related to the main theme under study:

- *Why do we have so much violence in our world?*
- How do we end violence? Violence has its source in the human heart;
- Violence in our society: Listening to voices from the margins;
- Redeeming the past: Going beyond the wounds; Healing historical, physical, psychological and spiritual wounds;
- The role of living stories of nonviolence;
- Walking together on the path of non-violence: Stories of Christian-Buddhist solidarity;
- Where do we go from here? Emerging orientations for future Buddhist-Christian engagement.

It is thus very clear that ours is not a mere academic exercise. It is a question of life and death. If the *future of humanity* is to be safeguarded, we need to walk and work together to eliminate and prevent the pressing *problem* of violence in its all forms. Some of us come from war-torn and *conflict*-ridden societies. **Still others** experience the *long*-term or short-term effects of past wars and conflicts. Some of us are victims or witnesses of unspeakable atrocities. In many of our own countries, we daily hear the cry of the victims of violence. Unfortunately, however, it is also possible that unbridled *nationalism*, sexism, racism, casteism, ethnicism, and religious fundamentalism could numb our hearts and blind our eyes to the suffering of so many people in our world.

In response to the Vesakh Message for 2017, we are embarking on a common journey for the next three days

to study the causes of violence; to teach our respective followers to combat evil within their hearts; to liberate both victims and perpetrators of violence from evil; to bring evil to light and challenge those who foment violence; to form the hearts and minds of all, especially of children, to love and live in peace with everyone and with the environment; to teach that there is no peace without justice, and no true justice without forgiveness; to invite all to work together in preventing conflicts and rebuilding broken societies; to urge the media to avoid and counter hate speech, and biased and provocative reporting; to encourage educational reforms to prevent the distortion and misinterpretation of history and of scriptural texts; and to pray for world peace while walking together on the path of nonviolence” (n. 6).

I fervently hope that this Colloquium will offer us an occasion to come to a deeper awareness of the burning problem of violence and to search together for ways to defeat and prevent it.

4. GRATITUDE

Finally, before we officially begin our dialogue, I want to extend my sincere appreciation to the co-organizers of the sixth Buddhist-Christian Colloquium, namely the Chinese Regional *Bishops' Conference* (CRBC) and Ling Jiou Buddhist Monastery, under the leadership of His Excellency Bishop John Hung Shan-Chuan and Dharma Master Venerable Hsin Tao respectively. They have done an outstanding job in offering us excellent organization and gracious hospitality. I also wish to extend our heartfelt gratitude to Monsignor Slađan Ćosić, Chargé d'Affaires a.i. of the Apostolic Nunciature, Taipei, and his staff for helping us in countless ways to organise this dialogue. My special thoughts go to His Excellency Bishop *Thomas* An-zu Chung, the President of the

Commission for Interreligious Dialogue and Ecumenical Cooperation and his staff for the yeoman service they rendered in organizing this event. It was a pleasure to work with all of you and we look forward to continuing our mutual collaboration with you in the future.

I also wish to express my deep sense of appreciation to all our participants, especially His Eminence Cardinal *John Tong* Hon, Bishop Emeritus of Hong Kong, His Excellency Bishop *Felix Machado*, Chairman, Office of Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs (OEIA) of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (FABC), His Excellency, Bishop Emmanuel Fernando from Sri Lanka, Rev. Father William Skudlarek OSB, Secretary General of Inter-monastic Dialogue and his delegation, and to all our speakers for having accepted our invitation to attend this meeting. Special thanks go to the Reverend Doctor Peniel Rajkumar, the World Council of Churches (WCC) programme executive for Interreligious Dialogue and Cooperation for participating in this dialogue. The PCID has an ongoing relationship with the corresponding office in the World Council of Churches, and we deeply appreciate your presence among us. My thanks also go to His Excellency Matthew S.M. Lee, Ambassador of the Republic of China (Taiwan) to the Holy See and the staff of the embassy for their friendly relationship and mutual collaboration with the PCID and also for their generous contribution to organise this event.

It is no exaggeration to say that the participants are the lifeblood of a conference. Thus, I express my sincere thanks to all of you who have come from over 18 countries to participate in this important dialogue. I thank you for your concern and interest in fostering a culture of peace. Your presentations and active participation will ensure the success of this event.

Once again, I want to thank all of you for responding to our invitation. I wish you a fruitful three days of prayer, listening, reflection, discussion, and dialogue and a very pleasant stay in the Ling Jiou Mountain area and Taipei.