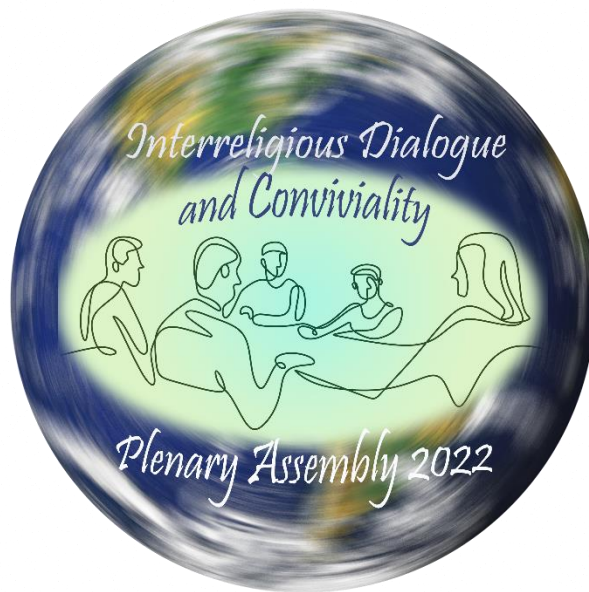


DICASTERY FOR INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUE



POST PLENARY REPORT 2022

Dicastery for Interreligious Dialogue
Report on the Post-Plenary Assembly 2022

In the Plenary Assembly, the theme of conviviality brought the concept and practice of dialogue closer to our lives. It caused us to reflect on concrete ways of “living together” with others, bringing to mind the image and the experience of eating together. The goal of conviviality causes us to unchain the practice of interreligious dialogue from formality, to free it for a broader application to the many places and contexts in which encountering “the religious other” is not only possible but life-giving (cf. Plenary Assembly Concept Paper).

1. Dialogue and Conviviality: Some Situations and Essential Principles

The world today

We live in a world surrounded by contradictory forces: excessive riches and abject poverty, war and peace; forces of dividing and uniting, forces of wounding and healing, forces to protect our nature and to destroy it; forces that demonize migrants and forces that welcome them; forces to promote the family and to undermine it; forces that elevate women and girls and forces that discriminate against them; forces that promote global citizenship and multilateralism and forces that build ethno-religious nationalism; forces that foster dialogue and collaboration among followers of different religious traditions and those that spread religious fundamentalism, extremism and terrorism.

We experience the globalization of disintegration and indifference, as well as hospitality, compassion and inclusion; we know those who work for peace education and those who promote violence through hate speech. Most disturbing, we see attempts to remove God from the world through materialistic philosophies and other means. Yet we also recognize persons and structures that remain open to the transcendent and to God.

Christian Response

The Church is called, both within herself and in the world, to address these evils. By her vocation, she is duty bound to proclaim Jesus Christ as the Saviour, and this is her joy. At the same time, living in a pluralistic world prompts her to realize that the Spirit of God is working in all human beings, in all cultures and religions. Therefore, the Church is invited to listen to the voice of the Spirit as well as to the cry of the poor and of the earth, and to work for greater justice in the world, as well as within herself.

To heal the wounded earth and humanity the Church needs to enter into dialogue and solidarity with all, believers and unbelievers alike. In this manner, the Church becomes missionary and more effective because she seeks to engage every context affecting the lives of Christians and of all human beings. In these testing times, the remedy for global maladies is dialogue: intra-Catholic dialogue, ecumenical dialogue, interreligious dialogue, inter-institutional and organisational dialogue, intra-

national dialogue and international dialogue. In this way, the Church seeks to anticipate, together with others, the coming kingdom of God.

Interreligious Response

Religion is a part of the solution, since religions can play a major role to repair the emotional, spiritual, and psychological wounds that persons suffer in conflicts of all types, resulting from the maladies described above. Based on universal human values that often become obscured in the climate of polarization, religions can contribute to uprooting the causes of conflict, building bridges of dialogue, raising up prophetic voices for the victims, and speaking healing words to wrongdoers as well as victims.

To accomplish these goals, believers must remain alert to religious intolerance and avoid religious indifferentism, working for unity in diversity, a condition for genuine conviviality among them. This entails protecting societies from distorting their religions' concepts and politicizing them. Followers of all religions are called to a great responsibility: to preserve their religions' identities while engaging in the search for the universal aspects of the human religious quest, manifesting an inter-religious conviviality that is realised in the affirmation of the dignity of every human person and the unity of the human family.

2. Practical Considerations “From the Field”

The following modes of living conviviality were discussed at the Plenary Assembly; these expressions represent specific efforts that are being made in particular cultural contexts, as well as areas in which participants saw room for growth in new paths of dialogue.

Spirituality of Conviviality: Jesus shows that table fellowship is essential to the reign of God. It is the subject of many of his parables; he shared many meals with outcasts and sinners, as well as with the established elite. Trust-building happens at meals. Jesus announced that God is inviting everyone, *without exception*, to communion with him.

- For Catholics, the Eucharist is the crowning experience of conviviality. Participating in the Eucharist equips us to be persons of conviviality.
- Another locus of conviviality is the family. The family that prays and eats together stays together.

Conversion and Conviviality: We can practice an examination of conscience based on conviviality or its lack. We can imagine life itself as a feast: the food on the table could be technology, science, medicine, art, education, etc.

- Do we eat with some and exclude others for unjust reasons?
- Do we waste food while others are waiting for crumbs to fall?
- Do we make food (whether literal or analogical) available to all, or are we selective in our sharing?
- Are youth, laity, and women invited to the table, including the dialogue table?

Conviviality and Synodality: Becoming a listening as well as a speaking Church also means listening to religious others, recognizing the seeds of truth and presence of the Holy Spirit in their religious traditions. This also offers an occasion for us to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus.

- Synodality requires that all have a voice. We need to foster several dialogues: ethnic, political, socio-economic, cultural, regional/national/international, interreligious, ecumenical.
- Synodality involves listening to the cry of the poor and of the earth in collaboration with all, especially those of other religions.
- Even when other religions do not take the initiative to dialogue, we need to do it.

Education for conviviality: Let us begin at the source, with children and their families, and also involve schools, seminaries, and religious houses of formation in this work.

- While maintaining the Catholic identity of educational institutes in the Church, we welcome students from different backgrounds and religious affiliations. (cf. *The Identity of a Catholic school for a culture of dialogue*, Congregation for Catholic Education, 25 January 2022)
- Schools can be significant centres for dialogue, where pupils learn how to be with themselves, with others (especially people in need) and with mother earth. (cf. *Laudato Si'* 92)
- Tools for formation of educators include the recent documents from the former Congregation for Catholic Education and the document released by the Dicastery for Interreligious Dialogue and the World Council of Churches Office of Interreligious Cooperation, “Education for Peace in a Multi-Religious World.”¹
- The *Document on Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together* can be translated into local languages, given to universities, policy makers, ministers etc., for consideration and application on various levels, including in curricula.
- Textbooks on religions, if well researched and written, can improve religious literacy and decrease prejudice and discrimination based on ignorance.
- Organising Master Courses in interreligious dialogue attended by believers of different religions will support and increase mutual understanding among us.
- Forming future leaders equipped with qualities for dialogue to promote human fraternity, including a capacity for self-sacrifice, should be our priority. (cf. *Fratelli tutti* 140)

Conviviality, charity, and justice: Our schools, hospitals, food and shelter centres, and other services, can be places to manifest Christ’s love and restore human dignity.

- A chief challenge to the love of Christians today is the plight of migrants.
- Movements for social justice bring together persons of various religions who work for the common good.
- While offering our works of love and service to all, including followers of other religions, Christians must guard against tendencies to exploit situations of poverty to engage in proselytizing.²
- Promoting freedom of religion through constitutional amendments and other means is an on-going goal.

¹ <https://www.dicasteryinterreligious.va/education-for-peace-in-a-multi-religious-world/>

² Cf. “Christian Witness in a Multi-religious World,” <https://www.dicasteryinterreligious.va/christian-witness-in-a-multi-religious-world-recommendations-for-conduct-2/>

Narratives and models of conviviality: We can provide spaces for the telling of narratives and learn from models of conviviality.

- Those who live in interreligious marriages with respect and dialogue are sources of wisdom for others.
- Schools, universities, and workplaces can be places of fraternal experience.
- There are martyrs, saints, and sages for peace and conviviality in all religions in recent history. Their stories can be the subjects of interreligious studies and inspiration for cooperation.
- The ideals we promote and strive for are embodied in grassroots initiatives of conviviality. Providing platforms for these stories to be told gives hope.

Conviviality and healing: Forgiving and being forgiven are not possible without justice, truth, and proximity, without conviviality.

- The tragic results of imperialism and present day wars will not be resolved unless we learn to respect differences, acknowledge wrongs, and root out injustice and discrimination by means of nonviolent tactics.
- Visits to other religious places can provide keys to understanding the experience of others, including their woundedness, provided visitors receive proper preparation.
- Economic issues are related to religious tensions and conflicts, and therefore they can't be considered apart from one another.
- Catholic social teaching, including the most recent social encyclical *Fratelli tutti*, offers roadmaps for peace, reconciliation, and unity.

Youth, media and conviviality: The “digital generations” bear both positive and negative effects of technology and social media.

- An attitude of conviviality on the part of parishes and Church institutions will draw youth to the human and spiritual opportunities for which they yearn.
- They suffer from onslaughts of aggressive secularism, dangers from conflicts and some disintegrating effects of media; the number of “nones”—people whose relationship with institutionalized religion can best be described as “none”—is growing. However, in today's digital world young people are also protagonists of faith and find consolation and meaning in religion. (cf. *Christus vivit* 104)
- Youth rely heavily on search engines and appearances, rather than reading deeply into texts, and often do not possess the critical and analytical skills to assess the information that they find on the internet. Youth encounter false and misleading material on other religions, as well as informative and inspiring information. The more we can provide good, accessible material, the better.

Conviviality and sharing: Both the joys and the griefs of religious others are worthy of our attention.

- We can attend celebrations of religious feasts and interreligious weddings or send good will messages.
- We can remain united in prayer and concrete help during their griefs and tragedies, such as deaths, natural disasters, conflicts, etc.

- Our common humanity is what unites us. Gentleness, honour, love, attentive care, humility and kindness (*humanitas*) must be shown to our religious guests. *Humanitas*, in particular, becomes synonymous with hospitality and sharing life: *cum vivere*.

Conviviality and hope: Pessimism and despair dominate today's world. We can instil hope for a better world based on our Christian belief in God's eternal love, while listening to others' reasons for hope and working together for the kingdom of God.

Prayer and conviviality: We pray "Your kingdom come," but we also need to plant the seeds for its ultimate realization. Dialogue is above all a spiritual journey.

- The Assisi meetings remain a perennial model of ecumenical and interreligious prayer.
- Avoiding syncretism, there is the possibility of developing a spirituality of dialogue. For example, one group organises an annual retreat for Sikh and Catholic young to reflect on fraternity; another group holds *lectio divina* sessions with Catholics, Muslims, and "nones."
- A significant part of building conviviality is sharing with one another our searches for God.
- Inter-monastic dialogue is a privileged place of interreligious spiritual sharing and prayer. Inter-monastic encounters involve eating, praying, working, and walking together, and this is a model that can be imitated in other interreligious settings as well.

In Conclusion

The foregoing gathering of insights from the 2022 Plenary Assembly of the Dicastery for Interreligious Dialogue reflect the earnest efforts of many men and women who are working for greater interreligious understanding leading to peaceful and just societies. They also represent the work that is yet unfinished, as the Church explores new ways of dialogue and conviviality in diverse contexts throughout the world. Pope Francis gave inspiration and direction for that work when he said at the Audience granted for the occasion of the Plenary Assembly: "Every man and every woman are like tesserae in an immense mosaic; they are already beautiful in their own right, but only together with other tesserae do they compose an image, in the conviviality of differences.... Conviviality echoes the desire for communion that resides in the heart of every human being, thanks to which all people can speak to each other, exchange projects and outline a future together." In light of "the desire for communion that resides in the heart of every human being," may we open to new and renewed connections as we each add our unique "piece" to the beautiful mosaic of humanity.



DICASTERY FOR INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUE
00120 Vatican City

Tel: +39.06.6988 4321

Fax: +39.06.6988 4494

E-mail: dialogo@interrel.va
<http://www.dicasteryinterreligious.va>