COLUMBAN CENTRE FOR CHRISTIAN-MUSLIM RELATIONS

Bridges

Building relationships between Christians and Muslims

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From the Editor

The theme of "walking together" is coming at me from all directions! The Catholic Church and the Diocese of Parramatta, at international and local levels respectively, are currently engaging in a Synod, which is bishop, priests, and people "walking together" and listening to each other to discern how best to love God and neighbour by serving the common good.

During Ramadan, many of us "walked together" with our Muslim sisters and brothers, fasting with them, praying for them, and joining in the festivities of *Eid al-Fitr* (p. 2). The Ramadan-Eid message of the Vatican's Dicastery for Interreligious Dialogue urges Christians and Muslims to "walk together" in love and friendship (p. 6).

On the eve of Lent, Rabbi Dr Benjamin Elton "walked together" with the clergy of the Diocese of Parramatta, sharing a Jewish perspective on the Passover (p. 2). This historic event modelled the familial relations that the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference promote in their new guidelines, *Walking Together: Catholics with Jews* (p. 10).

In March, Bishop Vincent Long, members of the Interfaith Commission of the Diocese of Parramatta, and the staff of the Columban Centre for Christian-Muslim Relations, "walked together" in solidarity with the staff of the Turkish mosque, donating to the appeal for those affected by the devastating earthquakes in Türkiye and Syria (p. 3).

Pope Francis' "walking together" with Muslims provides 5 lessons for interreligious dialogue (p. 7).

A multi-faith alliance of religious leaders encouraged people to "walk together" with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in support of the Voice referendum (p. 8).

Pope Francis reflects on his "walking together" with Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani (p. 9).

António Guterres, Secretary-General of the United Nations, makes an urgent appeal that nations "walk together" the path of peace (p. 9).

May believers from all religions and worldviews "walk together" in peace. Amen.

REV DR PATRICK MCINERNEY

Ramadan and Eid al-Fitr

Fr Patrick McInerney and **Kim Chong** thank the Muslim organisations who hosted us for iftar dinners during Ramadan. Your welcome, hospitality, and friendship is heartening. While the fasting, prayers and almsgiving are obligatory for Muslims only, the socialising over evening meals makes Ramadan a truly interfaith season. With Bishop Vincent (left, with the Mufti of Australia, Dr Ibrahim Abu Mohammed) and the Diocese of Parramatta, we were pleased to co-host an interfaith iftar dinner. An extraordinary atmosphere of friendship prevailed. One possible explanation is that the MC invited the guests from other faiths to stand in solidarity behind the Muslims as they performed their evening prayer. The "spiritual communion" that this generated flowed over into the "social communion" over the shared meal. Our thanks to all who made this such a special night.

On *Eid* day, we posted greetings on Facebook, mailed, e-mailed, and handed out *Eid* cards along with the *Eid* Message from the Vatican's Dicastery for Interreligious Dialogue (see p. 6). We pray that God's blessing of the Muslims in reward for their Ramadan fasting, prayers and almsgiving may flow through the rest of the year. *For media report on the iftar see bit.ly/40Yk6gG. For* Eid *video message see bit.ly/3LMcARs.*

Rabbi Addresses Clergy Conference

On 21 February 2023, Rabbi Dr Benjamin Elton (right), Chief Minister at The Great Synagogue of Sydney, addressed the Parramatta Clergy Conference. This was an initiative of **Fr Patrick McInerney**. He suggested the idea, which was warmly received, and made the introduction. Rabbi Elton's topic was a Jewish perspective on Passover. His erudite talk explained how the celebration of the Passover evolved in different eras, elements of which are carried forward in the Christian Eucharist. The event was both historic and "familial", a Jewish Rabbi addressing the followers of another Jewish Rabbi, an "intra-faith" event, rather than an "interfaith event". In his vote of thanks, Fr Patrick quoted Pope Saint John Paul II's words in the Roman Synagogue on 13 April 1986: "The Jewish religion is not 'extrinsic' to us, but in a certain way is 'intrinsic' to our own religion. With Judaism, therefore, we have a relationship which we do not have with any other religion. You are our dearly beloved brothers, and in a certain way, it could be said that you are our elder brothers."

Staff Professional Development Day

On 11 March 2023, CCCMR held a Professional Development Day. **Fr Patrick McInerney** and **Kim Chong** participate in this day annually. This year, the Centre invited Dr Emmanuel Nathan from ACU to lead us. We also invited the members of the Interfaith Commission of the Diocese of Parramatta to join in. We were about a dozen in all, which was a good-size group with which to work. Emmanuel led us in a scripture dramatisation of the Emmaus story and then shared comments on a couple of interfaith academic papers which we had read in advance. It was a dynamic session. It was a successful day, and we hope to replicate it in the future.

Solidarity Visit to Turkish Mosque

On 8 March 2023, the staff of the Columban Centre for Christian-Muslim Relations and representatives from the Diocese of Parramatta made a solidarity visit to the Gallipoli Mosque in Auburn. **Fr Patrick McInerney**, **Kim Chong**, Bishop Vincent Long (left), Sr Ailsa McKinnon and members of the Interfaith Commission all expressed condolences on the thousands of deaths in the devastating earthquakes in Türkiye and Syria, and on the destruction of homes, businesses, and livelihoods. The Christian speeches and Muslim responses all stressed our common humanity, that when one part suffers, we all suffer. The diocese and the Columbans each made donations to the Turkish earthquake relief appeal. Our contribution was a drop in the ocean of need, but the symbolic value of Catholic and Muslim working together to help those in desperate need was enormous. Our visit was very much appreciated by Imam Dr Abdurrahman Asaroglu (right) and the staff of the mosque.

Australian Religious Response to Climate Change (ARRCC) Multifaith Prayer Service

On 9 March 2023, **Fr Patrick McInerney** and **Kim Chong** attended a multifaith prayer service at St Patrick's Cathedral, Parramatta, as part of the Week of Action, organised by the Australian Religious Response to Climate Change (ARRCC). It was part of a worldwide fossil fuel Divestment Week of Action during the Christian season of Lent, initiated by the global Catholic Laudato Si' Movement. Leaders from several faiths participated in the event, including Most Rev Vincent Long OFM Conv, Ven Bhante Sujato, Rabbi George Mordecai, Ahmet Ozturk, Rev Meredith Williams and Rev Dr Shenouda Mansour. The event highlighted that people of faith and faith-based organisations should "repent" of unwittingly allowing their savings to finance coal, oil and gas mining. Thea Ormerod, president of ARRCC says, "It is not well known that the big banks and funds tend to invest heavily in coal, oil and gas mining and infrastructure, but certain banks, such as Bendigo Bank and Bank Australia, avoid this and instead engage in 'positive impact investing'." Faith-based organisations have been among the first to embrace fossil fuel divestment, both in Australia and globally.

'Bridge Day' Walk

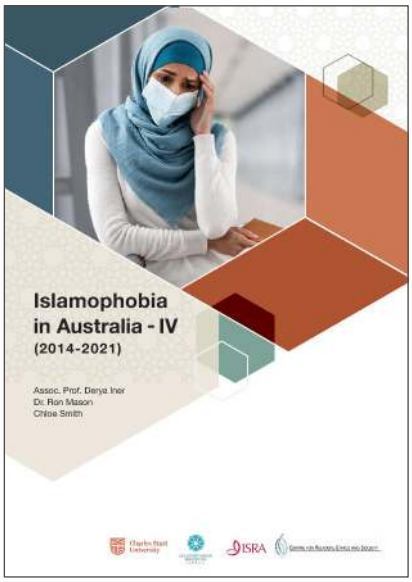
On 19 March 2023, **Fr Patrick McInerney** and **Kim Chong** participated in the Centre's annual "Bridge Day" multifaith walk. This walk upholds Commitment 21 of *The Sydney Statement*, which proposes 19 March, the day the Harbour Bridge opened to connect Sydney's north and south, as a day to connect believers from different religions in the name of solidarity, friendship and harmony**.** CCCMR invited the public to join them on "Bridge Day" for an interfaith walk along the pedestrian path of the Sydney Harbour Bridge. We also encouraged them to bring a friend from a faith different to their own in a gesture of interfaith solidarity. If they couldn't join us on the day for our walk, we suggested they do a walk in their own time and post photos to social media. It was a great walk for a great cause and we will continue to grow the Bridge Day event! We hope you can join us next year!

UAE Abrahamic Family House Opens its Doors

On 16 February 2023, the United Arab Emirates officially opened the Abrahamic Family House, consisting of a mosque, church and synagogue that face one another on the same square in Abu Dhabi. Beside each one stands a tall pillar illuminating an Islamic crescent, a Christian cross, and a Jewish *menorah*, shining a hopeful light for interfaith tolerance and understanding. The vision for the Abrahamic Family House originated after the signing of the *Document on Human Fraternity* by Pope Francis and Grand Imam Ahmed Al-Tayeb in February 2019, in the presence of more than 400 religious leaders. The complex will be a place of learning, dialogue and worship, open to all and a true reflection of the UAE's belief in tolerance and hospitality. In each prayer house, visitors will have the opportunity to learn about religious practices, listen to the scriptures and perform sacred rituals. The fourth space, unrelated to any particular religion, will become an educational centre where all can come together in a community dedicated to mutual understanding and peace. *Condensed and adapted from bit.ly/42dsD0m and bit.ly/3oTQAeA.*

SBS Series 'The Swap' Bold School Experiment

On 8 March 2023, SBS premiered a three-part documentary series called *The Swap*, a social experiment where six students from the Islamic College of Brisbane (ICB) swap places with six students from Catholic colleges and a secular state high school to bridge divides. Ali Kadri (right), the CEO of ICB, was keen to break down the insularity between different communities, and help his students prepare for the wider world. Taking part are six Muslim families, four Catholic families and two atheist families. Over a school term, Kadri accompanies the students as they experience the anxiety, excitement and wonder of spending time at each other's schools and with each other's families and communities. "This experiment is about acknowledging that we are all different, being proud of the fact that we are different, and respecting each other's differences," says Kadri. "That cannot be done unless we make the decision to move out of our comfort zones and engage with those who are different around us." Matching each participating student with a "buddy" from a different school proved a wise move. What began as an ice-breaker often culminated in close and enduring friendships. *View the documentary on* SBS On Demand *at bit.ly/3Nl94Po. Condensed and adapted from bit.ly/3oTKFGy.*



Islamophobia Register Launches Fourth Report

On 31 March 2023, on the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, The Islamophobia Register Australia launched its fourth report, *Islamophobia in Australia IV (2014-2021)*, at the Old Parliament House in Canberra. Of the updated research, the report's author, Dr Derya Iner, Associate Professor, Islamic Sciences and Research Academy (ISRA) and Charles Sturt University (CSU), said, "Alarmingly, despite the prevalence of Islamophobia in public places, comprising 'hotspots', bystanders witnessing incidents do not appear to be intervening to support victims." Also, the violence is increasingly gendered, with Dr Iner reporting that "Islamophobic incidents were mostly committed by men perceived to be from Anglo/European backgrounds and from older cohorts, and the victims were mostly younger hijab-wearing women from non-White ethnic backgrounds and from vulnerable cohorts, unaccompanied or with children". *View the report at bit.ly/3Vt0Re7. Report an incident at the Islamophobia Register at bit.ly/3AOluHW. Condensed and adapted from bit.ly/3NvTd0i.*

Love Jerusalem, Work for Peace

The 9 March 2023 meeting of the Joint Working Group for Dialogue between the Dicastery for Interreligious Dialogue and the Palestinian Commission for Interreligious Dialogue focussed on the spiritual significance of Jerusalem, the Holy City for Jews, Christians, and Muslims alike. Meeting with the members, Pope Francis reiterated his 2019 appeal, that Jerusalem be considered "the common patrimony of humanity and especially of the followers of the three monotheistic religions, as a place of encounter and as a symbol of peaceful coexistence". Reflecting on how Jesus wept for Jerusalem, he said, "At times, we too are moved to tears when we think of the Holy City, for she is like a mother whose heart cannot be at peace due to the sufferings of her children." He added, "God's compassion for Jerusalem must become our own, more powerful than any ideology or political alignment. Even greater must be our love for the Holy City, as for a mother who deserves respect and reverence on the part of all." *For the pope's speech: bit.ly/3oUm4Bt. Condensed and adapted from bit.ly/3HpDZ9r and bit.ly/3nhOTHu.*

Honorary Doctorate Awarded to Cardinal Ayuso

On 13 February 2023, the Sunan Kalijaga State Islamic University based in Yogyakarta province conferred an honorary doctorate on Cardinal Miguel Ángel Ayuso Guixot (right), president of the Vatican's Dicastery for Interreligious Dialogue, in recognition of his contributions to promoting interfaith dialogue in the world. Expressing gratitude to the university community for this honour, His Eminence stated, "In a pluralistic society, religious traditions and communities have an essential and unconditional responsibility to build up societies together, rather than dominate each other, to stand together for the rights of each and every one without discrimination, and to protect the inviolability of human dignity, so that all may prosper, rather than waste energy competing with one another for particular interests." Honorary doctorates were also given to Dr Yahya Cholil Staquf (left), chairman of Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), and Dr Sudibyo Markus (centre), cormer chairman of Muhammadiyah. NU and Muhammadiyah are the two biggest Islamic Organisations in Indonesia. *Condensed and adapted from bit.ly/3Hlr5co and bit.ly/41QPoar.*

Antonianum Signs Energy Agreement with Islamic Centre

On 13 March 2023, the Pontifical Antonianum University (PUA) and the Islamic Cultural Centre of Italy – Grand Mosque of Rome signed Italy's first interreligious and energy agreement during the "Energy of peace. Making energy for peace" conference in Rome. The document expresses the desire to "implement a shared energy community project between the PUA and the Islamic Cultural Centre of Italy as the first example of profound collaboration and synergy between their communities". With this agreement, photovoltaic panels will be installed to produce 50 kilowatts at the General House of the Friars Minor, 120 at the Antonianum, and 250 at the Mosque. Signatories of the agreement for the PUA were Br Massimo Fusarelli, Minister General and Grand Chancellor, and Br Augustín Hernández Vidales, Rector; signatories for the Islamic Centre of Italy were Nader Akkad, Imam, and Dr Abdellah Reouane, Secretary General. Together, they emphasise "inviting all people with faith in God and faith in human brotherhood in their hearts to unite and work together". *Condensed and adapted from bit.ly/3HzewdB.*

Christians and Muslims: Love and Friendship

Vatican message for the month of Ramadan and Eid Al-Fitr 1444 H/2023 AD

Dear Muslim brothers and sisters,

The month of Ramadan is important for you, but also for your friends, neighbours and fellow believers of other religions, in particular Christians. Existing friendships are reinforced and others are built, paving the way for more peaceful, harmonious and joyful coexistence. This corresponds to the divine will for our communities, and indeed for all the members and communities of the one human family.

We are aware, dear friends, that peaceful and friendly coexistence faces many challenges and threats: extremism, radicalism, polemics, disputes, and religiously motivated violence. The threats are fuelled by a culture of hate. We need, then, to find the most appropriate ways of countering and overcoming such a culture, enhancing instead, love and friendship, in particular between Muslims and Christians, due to the bonds that unite us. This is why we deemed it opportune to share some thoughts with you in this regard, hoping to receive yours as well.

All begins with our attitude towards each other, in particular when there are differences between us in religion, ethnicity, culture, language, or politics.

Differences can be perceived as a threat, but everyone has the right to his or her specific identity with its diverse components, yet without ignoring or forgetting what we have in common: "One is the community of all peoples, one their origin, for God made the whole human race to live over the face of the earth. One also is their final goal, God. His providence, His manifestations of goodness, His saving design extend to all men, until that time when the elect will be united in the Holy City, the city ablaze with the glory of God, where the nations will walk in His light" (Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions, *Nostra Aetate*, 28 October 1965, n. 1).

Negative attitudes and behaviours towards those who are different from us are unfortunately numerous: suspicion, fear, rivalry, discrimination, exclusion, persecution, polemics, insults, and backbiting, to name a few.

Social media platforms are common spaces for such harmful behaviours, perverting their role from being means for communication and friendship to being instruments for enmity and fighting. In this regard, Pope Francis has said: "Even as individuals maintain their comfortable consumerist isolation, they can choose a form of constant and febrile bonding that encourages remarkable hostility, insults, abuse, defamation and verbal violence destructive of others, and this with a lack of restraint that could not exist in physical contact without tearing us all apart. Social aggression has found unparalleled room for expansion through computers and mobile devices" (*Fratelli Tutti*, 3 October 2020, n. 44).

The opposites of the above-mentioned negative behaviours, are respect, goodness, charity, friendship, mutual care for all, forgiveness, cooperation for the common good, help to all those who are in any kind of need and care for the environment, in order to keep our "common home" a safe and pleasant place where we can live together in peace and joy.

We cannot prevent and counter the culture of hatred and, instead promote a culture of love and friendship, without a sound education for future generations in all the spaces where they are formed: in the family, at school, in places of worship, and on social media.

A world where justice, peace, fraternity and prosperity reign pleases the Almighty and brings joy, calling, therefore, our sincere and shared engagement.

Dear Muslim brothers and sisters, may you enjoy the Almighty's abundant blessings during Ramadan and celebrate *Eid al-Fitr* in the joy resulting from fidelity and love for the Almighty and all persons you live with or meet.

From the Vatican, 3 March 2023

Miguel Ángel Cardinal Ayuso Guixot, MCCJ
President

Msgr Indunil Kodithuwakku Jaakaratne Kankanamalage,
Secretary

Five lessons from Pope's Commitment to Dialogue

To establish true links with God, engage with believers from other faiths

The pope's engagement with Muslims has become one of the hallmarks of his papacy. Pope Francis has made dozens of visits to Muslim communities and Muslim-majority countries. He has drawn attention to the presence of God in the experiences of Muslims and in many of the riches of their faith tradition, and forged bonds with believers. From his encounters with Muslims, profound lessons emerge. Here are just five:

1. Worshiping together "the One, Merciful God"
In his own prayerful moments during visits to various mosques in Turkey, Bangladesh and the Central-African Republic, among others, Pope Francis has affirmed the Church's teaching that Muslims "together with us, adore the One, Merciful God". Though there are doctrinal differences between what Christians and Muslims profess about God, this does not preclude us from acknowledging our similarities or from coming together to praise and petition the one God.

2. "Doing theology together": Acknowledging the wisdom of the other
Toward the end of his encyclical *Laudato Si',* Pope Francis wrote about the importance of seeing God in nature and in our fellow human beings. In making this point, the first source that the pope cites is not a Christian mystic, but a Muslim one, poet Ali al-Khawas. Its inclusion in the encyclical is ground-breaking – this was the first time in the history of the Catholic Church that a non-Christian religious text was cited in an official teaching document. Muslims were also instrumental in the pope's 2020 encyclical on human fraternity, *Fratelli Tutti*, said to be "stimulated" by his friendship with Grand Imam Ahmed al-Tayeb of al-Azhar in Egypt.

3. Sitting with the "saints next door" or around the world
During his 2021 trip to Iraq, Pope Francis visited Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani, a globally revered leader of the Shia who is known for his humility. Pope Francis said of the meeting, "This […] did my soul good. He is a light. These wise men are everywhere because God's wisdom has been spread all over the world." Pope Francis went on to frame Ayatollah Ali as an "everyday saint", or one of the "saints next-door", people who live out their values with coherence. For Pope Francis, interfaith encounters are ultimately not about big theological ideas, but rather the real human individuals we encounter, "sharing our joys and sorrows" with another.

Pope Francis shakes hands with Sheik Ahmad al-Tayeb, Grand Imam, al-Azhar mosque and university, after signing the Document on Human Fraternity *in Abu Dhabi,* UAE*, 4 February 2019.*

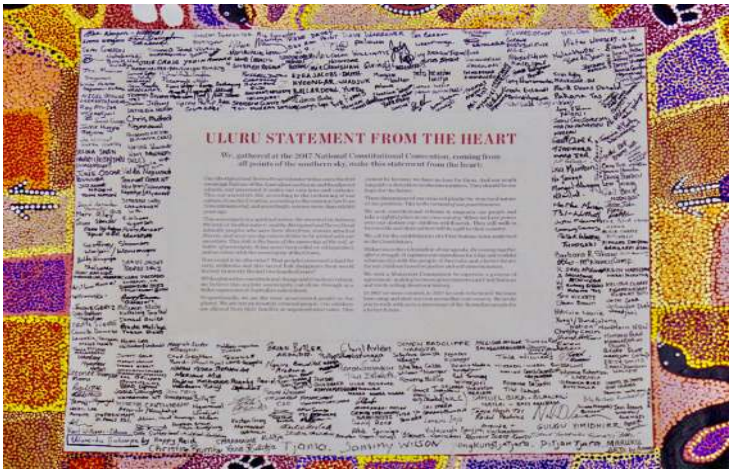
4. "The other could be you": Defending the dignity of all
Kneeling over a basin, Pope Francis poured cool water over a man's feet and wiped them dry with a white towel. He was performing a Holy Week ritual that is usually reserved for Catholics, but he chose to include people of other faiths, including Muslims, as a gesture of universal solidarity. For the pope, dialogue includes acts of service. During a decade marked by the mass migration of refugees, many of whom are Muslim, Pope Francis meets them in their suffering. His first international trip as Pope was to the Mediterranean island of Lampedusa, where many refugees had landed after harrowing voyages across the sea. In 2016, he personally helped resettle three Syrian Muslim refugee families in Vatican City.

5. "It's not fair and it's not true": Resisting stereotypes
Pope Francis has repeatedly called on Western nations to set aside scapegoating Muslims. He has publicly urged people to resist reducing violence committed by Muslims as motivation of their religion. "It's not fair and it's not true," he said, highlighting that when those of other religions commit violence, it is not typically attributed to their religious identity. While acknowledging the exploitation of religion in violence among fringe groups such as Islamic State, Pope Francis has drawn attention to deeper root causes of violence, including a loss of identity among youth, the arms trade and those who benefit financially from conflict.

Condensed and adapted from bit.ly/44CdNlS.

Multi-Faith Alliance Supports Voice Referendum

Faith leaders send open letter to federal parliamentarians on the Voice



An alliance of nine national faith organisations, representing diverse Christian, Hindu, Sikh, Muslim, Buddhist and Jewish communities, has thrown its collective weight behind *The Uluru Statement from the Heart*. Their letter builds on the joint resolution released by the group in May last year, which urged bipartisan action on the Voice referendum.

Open Letter to Federal Parliamentarians on the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voice Referendum
As leaders of Australia's major religious and ethno-religious organisations, we call on Australia's political leaders and all federal parliamentarians to support the Voice, called for by First Nations Australians through the *Uluru Statement from the Heart*. Unlike Canada, the United States and New Zealand, Australia has no formal bilateral arrangements in place with First Nations people, a state of affairs that is incompatible with our vision of Australia as a place of fairness for all.

We call on parliamentarians to find ways to collaborate constructively across political divides to achieve the modest constitutional recognition First Nations people seek: a constitutionally guaranteed Voice in their own affairs.

The Voice is an invitation to move towards national healing, unity and reconciliation. It seeks to formalise in our Constitution a way by which First Nations' voices and concerns can be heard, and to establish a means for overcoming the devastating effects of social exclusion. This is an opportunity to unite Australians around a proposal that seeks to make life better for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.
Last year, we came together on the fifth anniversary of the *Uluru Statement from the Heart* to issue a Joint Resolution to encourage Australians to support this change:

Joint Resolution on the Uluru Statement from the Heart
On this day in 2017, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples came together at Uluru and asked Australians to walk with them towards a better future.

Through the Uluru Statement from the Heart*, Indigenous Australians asked for constitutional recognition through a constitutionally guaranteed voice in their own affairs.*

As leaders representing diverse religious communities, we declare our support of the Uluru Statement *and its call for a First Nations Voice guaranteed by the Constitution.*

We endorse this reform as necessary, right and reasonable.

Indigenous Australians must be now afforded their rightful place in the Australian Constitution. There have been many processes and much work completed. The one thing left to do is let the Australian people have their say.

We call on political leaders to take immediate bipartisan action to hold a referendum on a First Nations voice.

We draw upon our diverse traditions, beliefs and cultures to unite in support of this just cause. We respectfully ask our political representatives to do the same. We call on our fellow Australians to consider the Voice proposal on its merits, and for whatever information is needed to inform the community to be supplied promptly. Future generations of Australians will not forgive us if we fail to grasp the historical moment, and 'advance Australia' further along the path of justice.

Whatever our disagreements, let us work together to resolve them. The Voice referendum deserves cross-party co-operation. If we work together across political divides, the referendum will succeed, and we will have put Australia on both a moral and practical path to reconciliation.
Condensed and adapted from bit.ly/3Lj3D0C.

Pope recalls meeting with Ayatollah as milestone

Pope Francis writes to Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani of Iraqi Shi'ites

"Dear brother!" It is with these meaningful words that the Holy Father chose to start his letter addressed to Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani, signed on 28 February 2023 and delivered on 9 March by Cardinal Ayuso Guixot, prefect of the Dicastery for Interreligious Dialogue, on the occasion of the conference "Catholics and Shi'ites Facing the Future. Globalistion of love against the globalisation of indifference", organised by the Community of Sant'Egidio and the Al-Khoei Institute of Najaf in Iraq.

In the letter the Pope recalled their meeting two years ago in Najaf (pictured), writing, "As I said on my return from Iraq 'it did me good'." He described it as "a milestone on the path of interreligious dialogue and understanding among people".

"Collaboration and friendship among believers of different religions are indispensable," the Pope wrote. Our communities can and must be "a privileged place of communion and a symbol of peaceful coexistence", he emphasised, in the conviction "that respect for the dignity and rights of every person and every community, in particular freedom of religion, thought and expression", is a source of personal and social serenity and harmony among peoples. Therefore, "it is also up to us, religious leaders, to encourage those who have responsibilities in civil society to work to affirm a culture based on justice and peace, promoting political actions that protect the fundamental rights of every person".

Referring also to the *Document on Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together*, the Pope concluded by expressing the hope "that together, Christians and Muslims" may "be witnesses of truth, love and hope, in a world marked by numerous conflicts and therefore in need of compassion and healing".

Condensed and adapted from bit.ly/44HTiL.

The letter (in Italian and Arabic) is available at bit.ly/41jHWUn.

Lifting Hearts and Voices for Peace

UN Secretary-General's Remarks at Interfaith Moment of Prayer for Peace

United Nations

Distinguished faith leaders and friends,

Dear brothers and sisters,

At a time of terrible divisions, we are here today in common cause.

We gather at a unique moment, on the last Friday of Ramadan, as Christians celebrate Easter, Jews mark the end of Passover, and Sikhs enjoy the festival of Vaisakhi.

Even the calendar is sending a message of unity.

To unite for people. Unite for our planet. And unite for peace.

Peace is needed today more than ever.

War and conflict are unleashing devastation, poverty and hunger, and driving tens of millions of people from their homes.

Climate chaos is all around.

And even peaceful countries are gripped by gaping inequalities and political polarisation.

Today, at this blessed moment of renewal across faiths, let us lift our hearts and voices for peace – our guiding star and our most precious goal.

Let us hold firm to the common faith that unites the human family.

Let us come together as communities and countries.

Let us pray for peace.

António Guterres, United Nations Secretary-General, 14 April 2023

The statement is available at bit.ly/42yWP67.

Walking Together: Catholics with Jews

Representatives from Australia's Catholic and Jewish communities gather in Sydney to launch document on Christian-Jewish relations

The Australian Catholic Bishops Conference has launched a new document to highlight Christianity's unique relationship with Judaism and to celebrate the positive relationship the two faiths enjoy in Australia.

Walking Together: Catholics and Jews in the Australian Context comes 30 years after the Bishops Conference published a set of guidelines and recommendations to enhance Catholic-Jewish relations.

That document had built on the foundations of *Nostra Aetate*, the Second Vatican Council's *Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions*.

Bishop Michael McKenna, chair of the Bishops Commission for Christian Unity and Inter-Religious Dialogue, said *Walking Together* "aims to help Catholics understand more deeply the uniqueness of our relationship with Judaism, our elder sisters and brothers in faith".

Jillian Segal, president of the Executive Council of Australian Jewry, said *Walking Together* "bears eloquent testimony to the intimacy of the connection between Judaism and Christianity".

She said it affirms "the essential Jewishness of Jesus and the fact that he prayed and worshipped as a Jew; the ongoing, irrevocable nature of the covenant between God and the Jewish people; and the fact that Jesus and the Pharisees were in alignment, not in opposition, to one another".

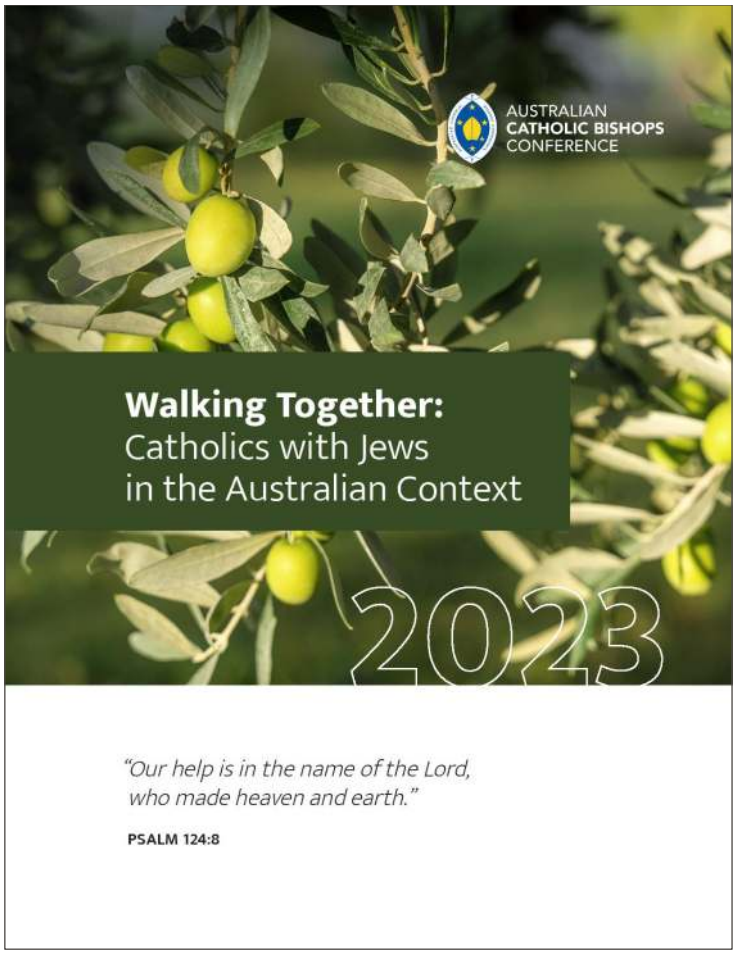
Bishop McKenna said the document's launch, followed by a kosher lunch, allowed for a deepening of the Catholic-Jewish relationship, which he says has "a long and good history". "Since Vatican II, which renewed and clarified the Catholic understanding of our relationship, our friendship and mutual help has grown," he said.

Jeremy Jones, co-chair and foundation member of the Annual Conversations between the Bishops Commission and the Executive Council of Australian Jewry, underlined that friendship in a vote of thanks at the launch event. "It is not often that we witness seismic changes in relations between two communities, but it is no exaggeration to describe the present era of Catholic-Jewish relations as a Golden Age, after a history of too many Dark Ages," Mr Jones said.

"The positive, meaningful contact and mutual respect is unprecedented." Mr Jones called *Walking Together* "a cry from the heart and a call for action".

The document acknowledges some of the challenges in Catholic-Jewish relations in the past, but also proposes ways to continue to heal the wounds that were created.

ACBC Media Release: bit.ly/3HnTXAN.
For Jewish and Christian responses see: bit.ly/3LA6OT8 and bit.ly/3LzwTlc.
Download Walking Together *at bit.ly/ACBCWalkingTogether.*



Coming Events

June 2023

04 The Most Holy Trinity (Christian)
05 World Environment Day, worldenvironmentday.global
12 Queen's Birthday Public Holiday (NSW)
16 The Most Sacred Heart of Jesus (Catholic Christian)
17 The Immaculate Heart of Mary (Catholic Christian)
18 International Day for Countering Hate Speech, un.org/en/observances/countering-hate-speech
19 1st *Dhul Hijja*h – the month of Hajj to Mecca (Islam)
20 UN World Refugee Day, unhcr.org/en-au/world-refugee-day
24 The Birth of John the Baptist (Catholic Christian)
29 *Eid al-Adha* (The Feast of Sacrifice) (Islam) (tbc)

July 2023

02 Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Sunday (Catholic Christian)
07 *Youm Ghadeer* – The Day of Ghadeer (Shi'ite Islam)
18 *Al-Hijra* (The Migration) 1st of *Muharram* = Islamic New Year (Islam) (tbc)
29 *Ashura* (The 10th Day of *Muharram* – Martyrdom of Imam Hussain) (Shi'ite Islam) (tbc)

August 2023

06 Feast of the Transfiguration of the Lord (Catholic Christian and Orthodox Christian) AND Hiroshima Day
08 Feast of St Mary of the Cross MacKillop (Catholic Christian)
15 The Dormition/Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary (Orthodox/Catholic Christian)

September 2023

01 World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation (Catholic Christian)
21 UN International Day of Peace un.org/en/observances/international-day-peace
27 *Mawlid al-Nabi* – The birth of the Prophet Muhhamad (Islam)

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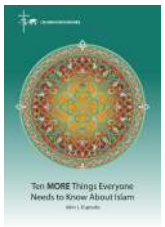

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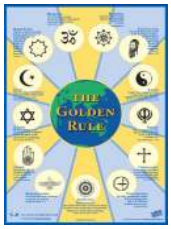

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June 2023