

Bridges

Building relationships between Christians and Muslims



No. 109 December 2025

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Commemorating *Nostra Aetate*'s 60th Anniversary

From the Editor

28 October 1965 was a historic moment in the life of the Catholic Church. On that day, the bishops, gathered in St Peter's Basilica in Rome for the final session of the Second Vatican Council, overwhelmingly approved *Nostra Aetate: Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions*.

It was a pivotal moment in the church's relations with other religions. This visionary document overturned centuries of Christian prejudice against Jews, expressed positive appreciation for other religions, and set the Catholic Church on a new path of encounter, dialogue, and cooperation with the followers of the world's various faith traditions.

To celebrate the 60th anniversary of this occasion, talks, multi-faith conferences, and seminars have been held at the Vatican and around the world (pp. 2-4), including in the Diocese of Parramatta (p. 4). Statements and resources have been published (p. 5).

Interreligious dialogue, encounter, conversation, and cooperation with believers from other faith traditions are an ordinary, everyday part of work and life in multicultural towns and

cities around the world. However, *Nostra Aetate* and the subsequent church teaching on interreligious dialogue, which are fit-for-purpose for this interfaith situation, are rarely mentioned from the pulpit, too little known in the church, and deserve to be promulgated far and wide.

The need for interreligious dialogue 'in our time' (which is the English translation of the Latin title, *Nostra Aetate*) is self-evident. The last two years of the Israeli-Hamas war have seen a spike in antisemitism and Islamophobia. The violent conflicts in Nigeria (p. 13) and other parts of the world are fuelled in part by the use, misuse, and abuse of religious sentiment. By contrast, authentic religion, of any of the world's traditions, promotes peace, justice, mercy, and reconciliation. The litmus test for authentic religious devotion is love for others, for as the Apostle John states, whoever does not love their brother or sister whom they can see, cannot love God whom they cannot see (c.f. 1 Jn 4:20).

I hope the 60th anniversary of the publication of *Nostra Aetate* provides a new spark of interest and engagement in interfaith relations around the world.

REV DR PATRICK MCINERNEY

Pope Leo Calls for Peace and Dialogue

In an October 2025 general audience, Pope Leo XIV gave a catechesis on the 60th anniversary of the Vatican II declaration *Nostra aetate*, focusing on interreligious dialogue and condemning antisemitism.

The previous evening, at the Community of Sant'Egidio's annual Peace Meeting at the Colosseum, he condemned war and called for reconciliation. Here are the key quotes from his addresses on the themes of dialogue, war, peace and the urgent need for unity:

From the Catechesis on Nostra Aetate

"This moment [when Jesus encounters the Samaritan woman (Jn 4:24)] captures the very core of interreligious dialogue itself: the discovery of God's presence beyond all boundaries and the invitation to seek him together with reverence and humility."

"This luminous Document teaches us to meet the followers of other religions not as outsiders, but as travelling companions on the path of truth; to honour differences affirming our common humanity ..."

"The spirit of Nostra Aetate continues to illuminate the path of the Church. She recognises that all religions can reflect 'a ray of that Truth which enlightens all men' (NA, 2)..."

"Nostra Aetate reminds us that true dialogue is rooted in love, the only foundation of peace, justice and reconciliation, whereas it firmly rejects every form of discrimination or persecution, affirming the equal dignity of every human being."

"All my predecessors have condemned anti-Semitism with clear words. And so I too confirm that the Church does not tolerate anti-Semitism and fights against it, on the basis of the Gospel itself."

"Together, we must be vigilant against the abuse of the name of God, of religion, and of dialogue itself, as well as against the dangers posed by religious fundamentalism and extremism."

"We must restore hope to our personal lives, our families, our neighbourhoods, our schools, our villages, our countries and our world. This hope is based on our religious convictions, on the conviction that a new world is possible."



From the International Meeting on Peace

"We must 'dare peace'!"

"Peace is a constant journey of reconciliation."

"We recollect ourselves in order to go beyond ourselves. This is our witness: offering the immense treasures of ancient spiritualities to contemporary humanity."

"Conflicts are present in all parts of life, but war is no help in dealing with them or finding solutions."

"War is never holy; only peace is holy, because it is willed by God."

"And religions, as 'mothers', must encourage peoples to treat each other as family, not as enemies."

"We must keep religions from giving in to the temptation to become a means of fueling forms of nationalism, ethnocentrism and populism."

"To put an end to war is a solemn duty before God incumbent on all those holding political responsibilities."

"The culture of reconciliation will overcome the current globalisation of powerlessness."

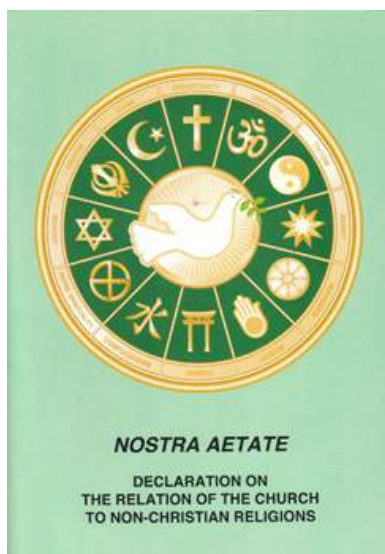
"For the Catholic Church, prayer in the 'spirit of Assisi' is based on the solid foundation of Nostra Aetate."

"We cannot truly pray to God as Father of all if we treat any people as other than sisters and brothers, for all are created in God's image."

For the pope's full addresses, see bit.ly/3LFalBZ and bit.ly/3WYxylz.

Nostra Aetate at 60

Annotated Media Reports



E Nathan, 'The Catholic Church and the Jewish people in Turbulent Times: Reflections on "Nostra Aetate" after 60 years', ABC, 10/02/25, bit.ly/3K7ySzc.

- An appreciative but critical, comparative reflection on the Church's relations with Jews and with followers of other faiths, pointing out some of the ambiguities of *Nostra Aetate*'s different treatment of different religions and the need to acknowledge the failures in the Church's history.

MC Aydin, 'Nostra Aetate at 60: A Vision Still Unfolding', Fountain Magazine, Issue 167, 01/09/25, bit.ly/3X4vGqZ.

- A Muslim scholar's account of the historical evolution of *Nostra Aetate* from the ashes of the Shoah, the invitation to respect and reconciliation with Islam, the cooperation between Christians and Muslims that followed, and its enduring relevance for promoting fraternity and peace.

A de Almeida Ribeiro, 'Sixty Years of Nostra Aetate: Interreligious Dialogue as a Path to Justice and Peace', KAICIID, 17/10/25, bit.ly/48dRLbS.

- Highlights Pope Saint John Paul II's calling religious leaders to Assisi to pray for peace in 1986, Pope Francis's and Sheikh Ahmad Al-Tayyeb's joint *Document on Human Fraternity*, and KAICIID as enduring legacies of *Nostra Aetate*, concluding: "*Nostra Aetate* remains not a relic of the past but a living call – to bridge divides, nurture empathy, and work together for a world where faith becomes a force for justice, compassion, and shared humanity."

Media Release, 'Catholic Religious Australia Recommits to Dialogue and Collaboration on the Anniversary of *Nostra Aetate*', Catholic Religious Australia, 27/10/25, bit.ly/3X15I7R.

- *Nostra Aetate* marks a watershed moment in the Catholic Church's attitude toward other religions. Catholic religious have been leaders in developing interfaith relations, combating antisemitism and Islamophobia, and promoting dialogue and friendship.

G Christian, "'Nostra Aetate' A Document that Revolutionised Catholic-Jewish Relations, Turns 60", The Catholic Weekly, 29/10/25, bit.ly/48ltiLY.

- *Nostra Aetate* began as a document on Catholic-Jewish relations, which remains one of its core themes and achievements. It marked a seismic shift, overturning centuries of "teaching of contempt". This article highlights some of the events that preceded the document and the consequences that flowed from it.

M Salafsky, 'Christianity for a Modern Age: "Nostra Aetate", An Interfaith Dialogue', The Los Angeles Loyolan, 30/10/25, bit.ly/482YxRr.

- Jews and Muslims together mark the 60th anniversary of *Nostra Aetate*, an example of the dialogue and friendship between people of different faiths that the document made possible.

P Rytel-Andrianik and W Rogacin, '60 Years of Nostra Aetate: The Future of Interreligious Dialogue', Vatican News, 31/10/25, bit.ly/446FZi8.

- A summary of the themes treated in an interfaith conference held at the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome, how would it be written today, how difficult moments draw us close, the hope for peace and friendship among religious believers.

M Aquilina, "'Nostra Aetate' at 60: Where it Came From, Where it's Going", Angelus, 31/10/25, bit.ly/4oRfVzY.

- A very accessible account of the revolutionary impact of *Nostra Aetate*, especially in Catholic-Jewish relations.

➡ Continued p. 4

⇒ Annotated Media Reports Continued

J Rivera, 'A Legacy Still Unfolding: Nostra Aetate and the Future of Interreligious Dialogue', ICJS, 01/11/25, bit.ly/4pj0j83.

- A Jewish, Christian, and Muslim scholarly panel on the transformative impact of *Nostra Aetate* and the work still to be done. Video available at bit.ly/43JY2ut.

K Millare, 'Walking Together in Hope: Vatican Marks 60 Years of Nostra Aetate', EWTN, 10/11/25, bit.ly/3KbSu5h.

- Text and video summary of the interfaith conferences, prayer services, and assemblies held in Rome for the 60th anniversary of *Nostra Aetate*.

M Stojowska and P Rytel-Andrianik, '60 years of Nostra Aetate: From a Seed of Hope a Great Tree has Grown', Vatican News, 21/11/25, bit.ly/4oVXuKD.

- An international interfaith symposium at the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross in Rome highlighted the key figures who contributed to *Nostra Aetate* and the crucial role of religions for peace.

Y Nagen, 'A Jewish-Muslim "Nostra Aetate" could Reshape the Middle East', The Jerusalem Post, 11/11/25, bit.ly/48qEOvj.

- A Jewish-Muslim version of *Nostra Aetate* could transform the Middle East, bringing healing.

Parramatta Diocese Marks Nostra Aetate at 60

Bringing Nostra Aetate to life: 'Human Library' event commemorates anniversary



To commemorate the 60th anniversary of *Nostra Aetate*, the Interfaith Commission of the Diocese of Parramatta hosted a special Interfaith 'Human Library' event on 30 October 2025. This meaningful gathering took place at the Columban Centre for Christian-Muslim Relations in Western Sydney.

The innovative 'Human Library' concept was created to facilitate genuine interreligious dialogue and foster deeper community connections with the faith traditions featured in the landmark 1965 document. The core idea involved participants, predominantly of the Catholic faith, engaging directly with the personal stories of life and faith of 'Human Books', representatives from the Jewish, Muslim, and Buddhist traditions.

This unique format provided an invaluable opportunity for attendees to engage in respectful, one-on-one conversations. These direct encounters served to challenge stereotypes, deepen interfaith understanding, and explore the commonalities and differences present in their respective spiritual journeys.

The successful gathering powerfully reinforced the core message of *Nostra Aetate*: that all people form one community and that the Church acknowledges the spiritual and moral goodness found within non-Christian religions. The event concluded on a high note of unity and hope, underscoring the collective mission of all faith communities to work together for justice and reconciliation in the contemporary world. The evening ended with attendees sharing food, transforming the Centre into a true space of encounter and solidarity.

New Resources on Nostra Aetate

Exploring the creation and impact of this significant document



To mark the 60th anniversary of *Nostra Aetate*, Vatican II's Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions, the Australian Catholic Bishops Commission for Christian Unity and Inter-Religious Dialogue (BCCUIRD) has released [*Nostra Aetate 60th-Anniversary Reflections*](#). This document underscores the Declaration's enduring relevance in Australia's diverse, multifaith context. The reflections emphasise that the journey of dialogue is not an optional extra, but an essential part of the Church's life, calling all Australian Catholics to move beyond mere tolerance toward active engagement. Crucially, the resource outlines the four recognised forms of dialogue developed in Catholic teaching since the Council:

- Dialogue of Life: Sharing everyday life with neighbours of different faiths.
- Dialogue of Action: Collaborating on social justice and common community concerns.
- Dialogue of Theological Exchange: Discussing beliefs to find common ground and understand differences.
- Dialogue of Religious Experience: Sharing the spiritual treasures of prayer and contemplation.

The BCCUIRD's reflections serve as a blueprint for contemporary practice, encouraging Catholics in Australia to live out the Declaration's spirit of mutual respect and understanding to build a more harmonious society.



[*Nostra Aetate: The Toil and Triumph of a Conciliar Journey*](#) by Teresa Pirola chronicles the difficult, years-long process of drafting and promulgating *Nostra Aetate*, detailing the numerous theological, political, and diplomatic challenges faced by Church leaders and scholars. Initially focused solely on the relationship between the Catholic Church and the Jewish people, the document was intensely contested and expanded to become a revolutionary declaration addressing several non-Christian religions. The resource chronicles the tensions, pushback, and revisions that characterised this “conciliar journey”, ultimately highlighting the document's triumph. *Nostra Aetate* successfully reversed centuries of negative teaching, setting the Church on an

irreversible path toward mutual respect and constructive dialogue with the world's diverse faith traditions. This resource is essential reading for understanding the document's historical weight and enduring theological significance.



This [online resource](#) features Jewish, Christian, and Muslim experts reflecting on the transformative impact of *Nostra Aetate*. Published by the Institute for Islamic, Christian & Jewish Studies (ICJS), the panel assesses the monumental shift the 1965 declaration initiated in Catholic relations with non-Christian faiths, especially Judaism and Islam. The discussion goes beyond historical reflection to focus on the work still to be done in interreligious dialogue.

It explores how the principles of mutual respect and understanding outlined in *Nostra Aetate* must be applied to contemporary global challenges and conflicts. As such, the resource offers valuable insights into the future trajectory of faith relations, emphasising continued collaboration and scholarly engagement across the Abrahamic traditions. This makes it a crucial resource for anyone seeking to understand the living legacy and ongoing application of the document's vision.

Fr Patrick Receives Inaugural UNDA Award

In September, **Fr Patrick McInerney** was honoured with the inaugural Interfaith Dialogue Award by the University of Notre Dame, Sydney. It was jointly presented by Abbas Raza Alvi (pictured with Patrick), President of the Indian Crescent Society of Australia (ICSOA), and Elder Philip Barton, of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, during the Eleventh Annual Religious Liberty Lecture. The award recognises Patrick's decades-long commitment to fostering understanding among diverse faiths, especially between Christians and Muslims. In his speech, Patrick honoured the collective work of interfaith partners and predecessors in promoting peace across religious boundaries in Australia. He also stressed the importance of authenticity, deep listening, and speaking up for shared human values. To read Fr Patrick's acceptance speech, see bit.ly/3Xq24XC. For more, see Columban e-Bulletin: bit.ly/3WdxCNh.



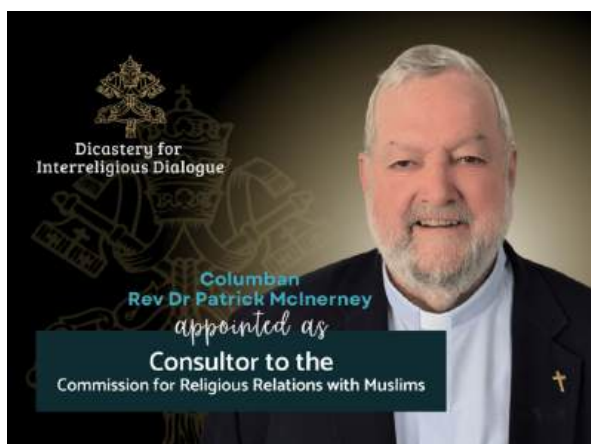
Window on the World's Religions

On 9 October 2025, our Centre launched *Window on the World's Religions*, a new program designed to foster understanding and friendship across neighbouring faiths in Western Sydney. The inaugural event featured Hindu and Sikh teams who shared their beliefs, practices, and values through presentations and personal stories, highlighting shared commitments to compassion, justice, and service. The teams multiplied the possibility of personal encounter. There was a great atmosphere of welcome, hospitality, friendship, and interest. Participants described the experience as transformative. The process is repeatable, transportable, and adaptable. The Centre plans to continue and expand *Window on the World's Religions*, featuring different faiths, across schools, parishes, and community groups in the Diocese.

Talks on Interreligious Dialogue

In August 2025, to mark the 60th anniversary of Vatican II, CTC, YTU, and Garratt Publishing held a series of four webinars. Scholars addressed the different documents of Vatican II. **Fr Patrick McInerney** gave a concise, informative, and punchy 14-minute presentation on interreligious dialogue (IRD). The series is available at bit.ly/3K33qSb. The session on IRD is available at: bit.ly/4hJab8G. Patrick expanded and developed the topic in a workshop at the SVD-Australian Association of Mission Studies conference on Missio Dei in Melbourne in early October, and again to an engaged audience at Plumptre Parish in the Diocese of Parramatta in late October. Church teaching on IRD often remains a "hidden treasure". Talks such as these dig it up and present it to an audience hungry and thirsting for this interfaith message.





Fr Patrick Appointed Consultor to Vatican

We are pleased to announce that **Fr Patrick McNerney** has been appointed by the Holy Father as a Consultor to the Commission for Religious Relations with Muslims for a five-year term. Patrick will continue in his roles as Regional Director of the Missionary Society of St Columban (Oceania) and Director of the Columban Centre for Christian-Muslim Relations, while contributing his extensive interfaith experience to this international commission. Congratulations, Patrick, on this significant appointment, which honours his long-standing commitment to dialogue, understanding and bridge-building between faith communities in Australia and beyond. *To read Fr Patrick's reflection on his appointment by the Holy Father, see bit.ly/3Xq24XC.*

AIMEP Webinar

On 26 August 2025, **Fr Patrick McNerney** joined Ustadz Miftah Rakhmat for a webinar on interreligious dialogue. It was one of a series of webinars organised by the Australia-Indonesia Muslim Exchange Program. AIMEP is an intensive program of intercultural and interreligious exchange that brings together Muslim changemakers, community activists and emerging leaders from across Indonesia and Australia. On 20 October 2025, Fr Patrick met the delegates face-to-face at a welcome dinner in Sydney, where they expressed appreciation for his input and insights. Indonesia has 242 million Muslims, the largest Muslim-population country in the world, and 29 million Christians, more than the total population of Australia. It is a privilege to assist in building relations between Australia and Indonesia, and between Christians and Muslims.



Interfaith Prayer Service

On 21 September 2025, **Fr Patrick McNerney** joined representatives of the world's religions for the UN International Day of Peace Interfaith Prayer Service at Knox Grammar School, Wahroonga. The Service featured the A to Z of religions, from Aboriginal to Zoroastrian. It was the 22nd such event organised by Rev Manas Ghosh of the Uniting Church and his team. The keynote address was given by Gawaine Powell-Davies of the Buddhist community. Fr Patrick offered Pope Francis's "Peace Prayer" from 8 June 2014, when the Israeli and Palestinian presidents met in the Vatican. Sadly, the prayer is as relevant now, if not more so, as it was then.

For the text see bit.ly/4n0IBoB.



Bridging Divides Through Music in Pakistan

The Christian Study Centre in Rawalpindi recently hosted a unique three-day workshop on interreligious dialogue through music, organised by the Center for Social Justice. Musicians, artists, and scholars from Christian, Muslim, Hindu, Sikh, and Kalasha communities gathered, sharing diverse sacred music and devotional songs. Participants affirmed that music is a powerful tool for overcoming stereotypes, fostering empathy, and building friendship across cultural and religious barriers. The workshop highlighted local traditions, such as the translation of the

Book of Psalms into Punjabi lyric poetry, offering a resource for Christian-Muslim exchange. The event, which included renowned Sufi singer Arieab Azhar, concluded with shared performances, promoting mutual understanding and peaceful coexistence. As organiser Peter Jacob quoted Rumi: "Singing is no longer an end, but a means of transport, a path to the divine." *Condensed and adapted from bit.ly/47cKz0i.*

Cultivating Pluralism: A Roadmap for Tertiary Educators

The challenge of polarisation and ideological division is a growing reality on many university campuses, making the need for cohesive, diverse societies paramount. A new resource by Interfaith America, [Fostering Pluralism in Higher Education: A Playbook for Senior Leaders](https://bit.ly/4hB0toX), offers a framework for academic leadership. It translates two decades of research into an actionable roadmap for building cooperative campus cultures. It focuses on four key areas: Institutional Leadership, Capacity Building, Curriculum, and Co-curricular Engagement. It equips tertiary educators with campus-tested strategies to reduce division, align pluralism with the institution's mission, and prepare students to be effective bridge-builders in our multifaith context. This valuable resource offers the clarity needed to make a lasting, inclusive impact. *Condensed and adapted from bit.ly/4hB0toX.*



Indonesian Religious Leaders Condemn Intolerance

Leaders from Indonesia's major religious councils, including the Indonesian Bishops' Conference (KWI) and the Nahdlatul Ulama Executive Board, gathered in Jakarta on 5 August 2025 to call for the urgent protection of freedom of worship. Expressing deep concern over a rise in intimidation, violence, and unilateral restrictions against worship activities, the leaders warned that these sporadic acts fundamentally damage the nation's spirit of tolerance and religious harmony. In a joint statement, the leaders urged the state not to remain silent and demanded firm action against perpetrators of intolerance, stressing that religious freedom is a constitutional right. Their five-point moral appeal calls for: recognising freedom of religion and worship as a constitutional right; that the state be present and act decisively to prevent future incidents; law and security forces to take firm action

against perpetrators of violence and destruction of places of worship; governments to cooperate with the Interfaith Harmony Forum and community to maintain tolerance and ensure places of worship remain peaceful; religious leaders to encourage congregations to maintain harmony and not be provoked by divisive incitement. *Condensed and adapted from bit.ly/43qN50P.*

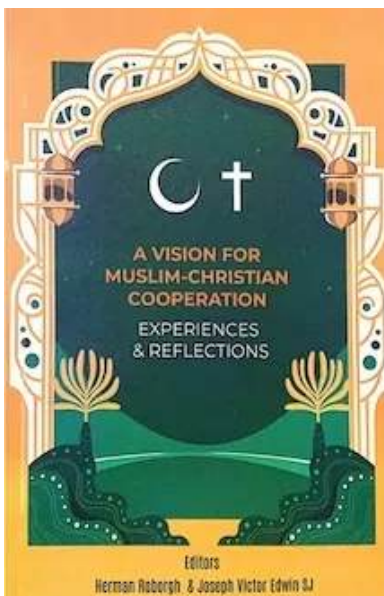


Minister Anne Aly Promotes Dialogue in Jakarta

Australian Minister for International Development and Multicultural Affairs, Anne Aly (pictured), recently visited Jakarta's Istiqlal Mosque to promote interfaith relations and cross-cultural understanding with Indonesia. As Australia's first female Muslim Cabinet Minister, Minister Aly highlighted the nation's successful multiculturalism, emphasising that birthplace is not a barrier to achieving the highest office. "We have put real effort into ensuring that there is respect for everybody," she stated. During her visit, Aly, accompanied by the Australian Ambassador, donated a collection of Australian books to the Australian Reading Corner at the mosque's library. She also visited the Silaturahmi Tunnel, which symbolises harmony by connecting the mosque and Jakarta Cathedral. The initiative aims to strengthen the deep friendship between the two neighbouring countries. *Condensed and adapted from bit.ly/43BE1WD and bit.ly/3WtQQhV.*

Anniversary Spurs Parish-Level Dialogue in LA

In Los Angeles, parishioner Sandra Bossi, bothered by a lack of interaction with neighboring churches, established the Ecumenical and Interfaith Ministry at her Catholic parish, Church of the Good Shepherd. Her inspiration came from a course on interreligious relations taught by Father Alexei Smith, the Archdiocese's longtime dialogue officer. The course, which includes field trips to temples, mosques, and synagogues, empowers Catholics to become certified parish representatives. The class was timely, coinciding with the 60th anniversary of *Nostra Aetate* and the 1,700th anniversary of the Council of Nicaea. Father Smith emphasises the late Pope Francis's call to "journey together", urging participants to respect differences and collaborate for the betterment of society, making dialogue a vital tool against divisiveness. *Condensed and adapted from bit.ly/49uH6eZ. Reprinted with permission from AngelusNews.com.*



Book Launch: A Vision for Christian-Muslim Cooperation

In August 2025, Professor Akhtarul Wasey, professor emeritus of Islamic Studies, released *A Vision for Muslim-Christian Cooperation*, edited by scholars Herman Roborgh and Joseph Victor Edwin SJ at the Indian Social Institute. In his remarks, Professor Wasey emphasised that the contributors to this collection are a dedicated group of both Muslims and Christians who are passionately committed to their faiths. They have put in considerable effort to understand one another's beliefs, asserting that collaboration is not merely a goal but a necessity as both communities navigate their shared journey. They encourage Muslims, Christians, and followers of other religions to come together as engaged citizens for the greater good. Importantly, the authors urge readers to strengthen their connections with those holding diverse beliefs, stressing that nurturing relationships founded on peace, harmony, and justice is crucial for fruitful dialogue. *A Vision for Muslim-Christian Cooperation* is published by ISPCK, see bit.ly/3Jiz3re. *Condensed and adapted from bit.ly/3LoqWKe.*

Patriarch Calls for Global Alliance of Conscience

Patriarch champions shared conscience, defends human sacredness



On 29 July 2025, Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew (pictured) delivered the keynote address at the World Council of Religions for Peace gathering in Istanbul.

Speaking in a city “whose stones still bear the echo of centuries where the *oecumene* was defined not as a

geographical expanse but as a spiritual horizon”, he highlighted the Ecumenical Patriarchate’s role as a witness to Orthodox Christianity’s universal calling. He identified the underlying crisis facing humanity as not merely economic instability or technological advancement but a “dominant, usually unavowed, worldview”, a reductive materialism that ignores the sacred dimension essential to human flourishing.

He cited Saint Gregory of Nyssa, saying: “It is impossible for anyone to ascend to that height where the light of truth is seen, unless the dead and earthly garment of skins is stripped away from the foundations of the soul [...] This is truly that which really exists, and the understanding of this is the knowledge of truth.”

Patriarch Bartholomew described the consequences of this worldview as deeply existential and social, fostering isolation, exploitation, and environmental destruction by severing humanity’s relationship with the Sacred. He asserted that interreligious dialogue is not a luxury but “an inexorable necessity, an act of collective resistance” against the fragmentation of meaning in the modern world.

He introduced the concept of the “Common Sacred Worldview”, a visionary framework designed not to replace individual faiths but to highlight common ground where diverse religious experiences of the Sacred converge to oppose materialistic reductionism. This worldview rests on four pillars:

1. The Sacred as the absolute reality uniting all through Love, Compassion, and Mercy.
2. Humans as inherently relational beings actualising their potential through virtues grounded in Sacred Love.

3. Society as a “whole of whole human beings”, emphasising reciprocity within institutions like family, education, and economy.
4. The Earth and its life network as sacred, demanding respect expressed through sustainable practices.

The Patriarch stressed the importance of bridging faith and science, drawing on quantum mechanics and biology to challenge mechanistic views and invite a “new natural philosophy” harmonising scientific and spiritual quests.

Addressing two urgent global crises – the debt crisis and the rise of artificial intelligence – he highlighted their common root in materialistic abstraction and utility. The debt crisis enslaves nations and denies human dignity, while artificial intelligence risks reducing humanity to data, threatening freedom and creativity. He also emphasised the need for religious communities to offer positive alternatives: solidarity and justice against economic abstraction, and the defense of human dignity against technological reductionism. He called for an ethics of technology based on compassion, responsibility, and respect.

Concluding, he reflected on humanity’s historical linguistic diversity as an echo of the biblical Babel and framed the “Common Sacred Worldview” as a modern attempt to create a “meta-linguistic” spiritual unity – not by erasing difference, but by finding a common language of the sacred to face global challenges together. He reminded attendees that true unity comes not from theological consensus but from shared commitment: “We meet in essence not when our theologies coincide, but when our communities share bread with the hungry, care for the sick, defend the wronged. Unity is forged in the common resistance to the forces that attempt to efface the human face.”

The Patriarch concluded with a call to action: “We are not called to compose a new global religion of consensus. We are called, each from the standpoint of his faith, to constitute a global alliance of conscience, a prophetic testimony that will keep open the horizon of transcendence in a world threatened with asphyxiation within the confines of the material.”

He affirmed that true peace rests on shared love for humanity and reverence for the mystery of the one God. To read Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew’s address in full, see bit.ly/48TAmHo. Condensed and adapted from bit.ly/4hF7rcc.

Interfaith: Action for Dignity and for Earth

Scholar urges faiths to sacrifice for dignity and to save the planet

What does interfaith mean, why does it matter, and how can it make a difference in building peace? Under the theme Building Peace Together, keynote speaker Prof Azza Karam shared an in-depth reflection during an interfaith gathering at the Ecumenical Week in Stockholm in August.

Introducing herself as a “Muslim, North African, Arab woman”, Karam immediately set her own appearance in front of a predominantly Christian audience into an interfaith perspective. “Why interfaith?” she asked the audience, while at the same time pointing out that no interfaith gathering so far has prevented the deep injustices deliberately undertaken every day to kill thousands of people in different parts of the world.

“Ecumenism is important, but not sufficient enough. People of all faiths need each other and every single one of us must work together. We have an obligation to serve one another. It is incredibly valuable to celebrate our respective faith traditions, but our very Earth is screaming to us to do a great deal more. It is time for us to take action together to save lives and to save this planet, which is all we’ve got,” Karam explained.

Describing interfaith as “a promise of dignity”, she went on to elaborate on the sacrifices needed to fulfill that promise:

“Firstly, people of different faiths must see each other as God’s equal creatures. If we continue to see other’s faith traditions as somehow less deserving of our presence and engagement, we will continue to commit atrocities. If we persist to believe that there is one message of truth – and one only – we will let atrocities happen. If we fail to see the Divine, the Creator, the Lord in the eyes of the other, then we go to our graves having missed the very function for which we were brought to this earth. We are born diverse for a reason and we do have an obligation to show respect for one another, not only in words but in deeds.

“Dignity,” Karam continued, “will only be possible with human rights, which is the common value to all faiths.”



She underscored that violations of human rights continue to happen because we allow them to occur. Religion is used to justify wars. When we lose human rights, we lose dignity.

“Human rights will only be possible when faith traditions are respected. We have dishonored our religious traditions by cherry-picking and prioritising certain lives,” Karam said.

The second sacrifice to fulfill the promise of dignity is to realise that no one has the keys to the Kingdom; we hold them together. Again, Karam urged all peoples of faith to come together and walk the path together, in the spirit of Rev Dr Martin Luther King Jr.

“We have to save life in order to nurture life. Peace does not come on its own terms and not immediately. The promise of interfaith is a long journey that demands action and sacrifice,” Karam concluded.

Prof Dr Azza Karam is an Egyptian scholar and leader in the field of international development and interfaith dialogue. She has worked extensively with various international organisations, including the United Nations, focusing on issues such as human rights, gender equality, and sustainable development. Karam is known for her efforts to promote peace and understanding among different religious and cultural groups. Karam is also ambassador for the global campaign Thursdays in Black.

Listen to Azza Karam’s speech at bit.ly/4oTICqe.
Condensed and adapted from bit.ly/49zI8aM.

National Response to Islamophobia Released

National report calls for urgent action on Islamophobia in Australia

Australia's first Special Envoy to Combat Islamophobia, Aftab Malik, has delivered his *National Response to Islamophobia* report to the federal government, describing anti-Muslim sentiment as a "real and pervasive" and often "terrifying reality" that requires urgent national intervention. The document, a culmination of consultations with more than 100 Muslim leaders, lays out 54 recommendations aimed at combating this societal challenge.

The report found that Islamophobia has reached "unprecedented levels", particularly following the start of the Hamas-Israel war on 7 October 2023. Statistics from the Islamophobia Register Australia show a massive 537 per cent increase in reported incidents since that date.

Malik noted that while anti-Muslim sentiment has persisted over the past two decades, the recent surge demonstrates that Australian Muslims are often perceived more negatively than members of any other religious group.

The report also detailed the gendered nature of Islamophobia. Muslim women, who often wear visible markers of their faith like the hijab, comprise the majority of targets for everyday Islamophobia, facing physical and verbal assaults. In contrast, men were found to be disproportionately targeted by structural Islamophobia, particularly in relation to law enforcement.

Recommendations for Whole-of-Society Response

The recommendations span three key areas – accountability and responsibility, protection and support, and education and awareness. Key proposals include:

- Treating Islamophobia with the same urgency and providing Muslims with the same legal protections as other forms of discrimination.
- Developing an overarching anti-racism framework for education, including teaching Muslim history and fostering understanding between major Abrahamic religions.
- Reviewing counter-terrorism laws and their application, including creating a Muslim advisory panel to assess community impact.

- Strengthening online safety laws to challenge online hate.

Prime Minister Anthony Albanese confirmed the government would "carefully consider" the report's findings, emphasising that targeting Australians based on their religious beliefs "is an attack on our core values".

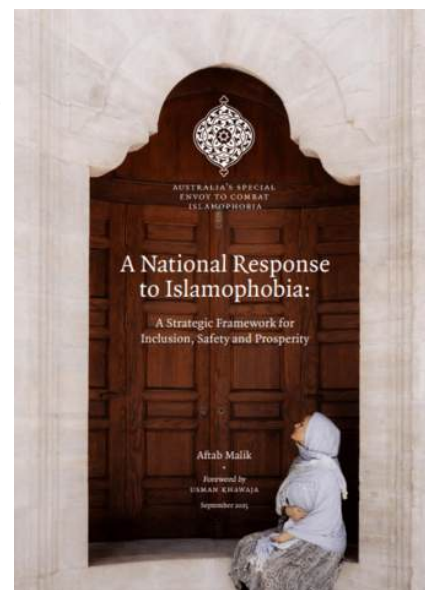
Critics argue the report stops short of addressing the underlying institutional driver: Australia's "hyper-securitisation" of Islam and Muslims.

Research suggests Islamophobia is an outcome of the vast expansion of counter-terrorism laws since 2002. Australia has enacted more than 90 separate pieces of counter-terrorism legislation – more than the US, UK, or Spain – despite never experiencing a major terrorist attack on home soil. This legal architecture is seen by some as institutionalising suspicion of Muslim communities.

This focus persists even though intelligence agencies now report that nationalist and racist violent extremism approaches, or even surpasses, religiously motivated violent extremism in their caseload. Critics argue that meaningful progress requires a fundamental reassessment of this legal framework that many feel creates the very climate of suspicion and fear that allows Islamophobia to flourish.

The report is a vital opportunity to acknowledge Islamophobia as a national problem, with its advocates urging the government to act decisively to strengthen the social fabric for all Australians.

Read the report at bit.ly/3WDtOp5. Condensed and adapted from bit.ly/47EKL7w, bit.ly/3JnaU2J, and bit.ly/3Lika8Z.



Contestation in Nigeria

by Patrick McNerney

In August 2025, the International Society for Civil Liberties and Rule of Law reported that radical Muslims had massacred more than 7,000 Christian Nigerians in the first seven months of this year, and a similar number had been kidnapped i.e on average, 32 are killed daily, and another 35 are kidnapped. These horrifying statistics reverberated around the world.

In September, Texas Republican Senator Ted Cruz, citing “massacres” and “mass murder” of Christians in Nigeria, introduced a bill seeking to sanction Nigerian officials.

In October, a member of the Interfaith Commission Parramatta expressed deep worry about a video report on Muslims killing Christians in Nigeria.

A week later, another member of the same Commission shared an e-mail from a Catholic urging the cancellation of a proposed interfaith pilgrimage that included a mosque because it was insensitive and inappropriate when Christians were being killed by Muslims in Nigeria.

In October, USA TV host Bill Maher derided the silence about the “persecution” of Christians in Nigeria.

In November, President Trump announced he had ordered the Pentagon to prepare for military intervention in Nigeria to prevent the persecution of Christians.

What is going on? Is it hyperbole? Is it inflammatory rhetoric? Or is there a basis in fact?

Nigeria is complex. It is multi-faceted, multi-ethnic, and multi-religious. The population is some 235 million, 56% Muslim, 43% Christian, many also holding traditional beliefs. Nearly 50% of the population lives in poverty. About 50% of the population is under 18 years of age. There are long-standing conflicts and economic disparities between the largely Muslim north and the largely Christian south. It is simplistic, misleading, and wrong to attribute the violence in Nigeria to a single cause. It is important to recognise the many interwoven factors involved.

Yes, Christians are being killed in Nigeria, but so are Muslims, sometimes in greater numbers. Both sides have narratives of suffering violent attacks from the other. The statistics of killings and kidnappings are contested.

Yes, there are conflicts, but they are economic, ethnic, or regional rather than strictly religious. In every part of Nigeria, Christians and Muslims live amicably side-by-side.

No, religion cannot be completely absolved. Radical Islamists such as Boko Haram, Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP), and other terrorist insurgencies affiliated with al-Qaida and ISIS, often target Christians. However, they violate key Qur’anic verses and established Islamic legal principles. They do not represent the authentic tradition of Islam but are a cancerous deformation of it. Besides, such groups are against the government and attack Christians and Muslims indiscriminately.

As the country dries due to climate change, the mostly Muslim Fulani herdsmen are driven south and encroach on the lands of the mostly Christian Hausa farmers. Poverty and unemployment drive people to join criminal gangs that thrive on ransoms from kidnapping.

There is no concerted campaign against Christians, but the government’s failure to protect citizens, the porous borders allowing the import of arms and insurgents, the lack of support for the security forces and their inability to tackle conflict, and the absence of prosecuting offenders fuel suspicion and animosity.

What can we do in this complex situation? Be wary of single narratives. Check your sources. Research widely. Do NOT fall victim to stereotypes. Do NOT distribute incendiary reports. Promote accurate information about Islam and Muslims. Be an agent of peace, encounter, dialogue, and reconciliation in your own environment.

Sources

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Green Islam

How Muslims are powering environmental action across the world

Religion influences people's worldviews, including how we think about nature and our roles within it. This is true of Islam, one of the world's biggest and fastest-growing religions. Islamic teachings on protecting nature can help inform how we respond to the ecological and climate crises. In particular, Australia can look to our neighbour, Indonesia, where the "Green Islam" movement is growing.

So let's take a closer look at how Islamic teachings promote care for nature, establishing common ground for environmental action across faiths and cultures.

In Islam, humans are described as *khalifah*, or caretakers of the Earth. Islamic teaching also states that Islam is *rahmatan lil'ālamīn*, a mercy to all creation.

This means Muslims are responsible for the wellbeing of everything on Earth – humans, animals, plants, land and water. Taking care of the environment is considered an act of worship.

The Qur'an, Islam's sacred scripture and the main source of Islamic teaching, frequently discusses nature. It describes the sky, trees, rivers and animals, and the beauty of the natural world. It also reminds people to live in *mīzān*, or balance, with the environment, in verses such as:

He has raised up the sky. He has set the balance, so that you may not exceed in the balance: weigh with justice and do not fall short in the balance. (55:7-9)

The *hadith*, another source of Islamic teaching, also promotes environmental care. One such *hadith* refers to care for nature as an act of giving:



There is none amongst the Muslims who plants a tree or sows seeds, and then a bird, or a person or an animal eats from it, but is regarded as a charitable gift from him.

While the Qur'an and *hadith* have long talked about nature, the Green Islam movement emerged much more recently.

Muslim scholar Seyyed Hossein Nasr was among the first to articulate the idea. In the late 1960s, he argued environmental problems were not only physical but also spiritual and moral. He believed people, regardless of their faith, should reconnect with spiritual values that teach care and balance.

In the following decades, as environmental problems worsened, more Muslim voices began calling for environmental responsibility based on Islamic principles. This was supported by a growing body of research exploring the relationship between Islam and environmental care.

Over the past 25 years or so, Green Islam has moved from theory to real-life action. Today, the ideas are practised in many Muslim nations and communities around the world.

Indonesia faces a number of pressing environmental problems, including deforestation, air pollution and marine pollution. It is also among the world's top 10 greenhouse gas emitters. Indonesia is also the world's largest Muslim-majority country and is at the forefront of the Green Islam movement. There, Green Islam is helping to mobilise leaders and communities to support environmental protection.

In 2022, Indonesia's national mosque, Istiqlal, became the world's first place of worship to be environmentally certified by the International Finance Corporation.

Morocco has a green mosques movement. In Egypt, the Islamic authority *Dar al-Ifta* has issued a *fatwa* (religious edict) prohibiting activities that harm nature.

And many countries support environmental initiatives through Green Sukuk, an instrument to fund eco-friendly projects that align with Islamic principles.

In a time of mounting ecological challenges, all sources of wisdom are vital. Islamic teachings, along with that of other faiths, offer guidance for living in harmony with nature. Together, they can inspire meaningful and practical action for the planet.

Condensed and adapted from bit.ly/4qBKHHU.

Coming Events

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31			

December 2025

- 08** Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary (Catholic Christian)
- 20** International Human Solidarity Day; bit.ly/4pEGliO
- 25** Christmas (Birth of Jesus Christ) (Western Christian)

January 2026

- 01** The Solemnity of Mary, Holy Mother of God (Catholic Christian)
- 04** Epiphany of the Lord (Christian)
- 07** Christmas (Birth of Jesus Christ) (Orthodox Christian)
- 16** *Al-Isra' w'al-Miraj* – The Night Journey and Ascent (of Prophet Muhammad) (Islam)

February 2026

- 01-07** World Interfaith Harmony Week; bit.ly/48vJgcd
- 02** *Lailat al-Bara'ah* (Night of Forgiveness) (Islam)
- 04** United International Day of Human Fraternity; bit.ly/49PwTtQ
- 16** Ramadan begins (tbc) (Islam)
- 18** Ash Wednesday, Lenten fast begins (Western Christian)
- 23** Great Lent Begins (Orthodox Christian)

March 2026

- 08** International Women's Day; bit.ly/4oveWEG
- 19** Bridge Day; bit.ly/4rvnKwV
- 19** *Eid al-Fitr* – The feast marking the end of Ramadan (tbc) (Islam)
- 21** Harmony Day; bit.ly/48rUX3w
- 25** Feast of the Annunciation (Christian)



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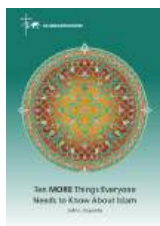
The screenshot shows the 'Lain' page on the 'Lain' website. The page has a blue header with the 'Lain' logo and navigation links. Below the header, there are several sections: 'Lain' (a brief description of the project), 'Lain' (a list of team members), 'Lain' (a list of sponsors), and 'Lain' (a list of partners). The page is designed with a clean, modern aesthetic and includes a footer with contact information.

The image shows two identical screenshots of the 'About Us' page from the website of the National Association of Manufacturers (NAM). The page features a blue header with the NAM logo and navigation links. The main content is divided into three columns: 'Who We Are', 'What We Do', and 'Where We Work'. The 'Who We Are' column describes NAM as a non-profit organization representing manufacturers. The 'What We Do' column lists various advocacy and policy efforts. The 'Where We Work' column lists member organizations. The page also includes a footer with contact information and social media links.

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Ten things everyone needs to know about Islam

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