

Together in Prayer for Peace

13 June 2013



A Word of Greeting

Welcome to Westminster Cathedral Hall and welcome to *Together in Prayer for Peace*.

This gathering takes place against the backcloth of the terrible events which took place in Woolwich a few weeks ago. Two weeks after that, I was one of a group of faith leaders who went to the mosque in Woolwich to reflect together on those events. We also laid a wreath at the Woolwich barracks that simply said "Peace." What struck me most forcibly on that occasion was the faith and the goodness of the worshippers and the leaders of the mosque. All of us came away convinced of the importance of deeper friendship and solidarity between the religions in our society.

It was that conviction that inspired Pope John Paul II to convene the first Day of Prayer for Peace in Assisi in 1986. He said that although religious leaders cannot make political decisions in favour of peace, they can, nonetheless, come together in search of the gift of peace.

Today's meeting takes its inspiration from the Assisi Day. It is taking place at the initiative of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue which is the body which advises Pope Francis on interreligious matters. The President of that Council, Cardinal Jean Louis Tauran, will address us and everyone who wishes to be part of this event is most welcome.



+Kevin McDonald
Archbishop Emeritus of Southwark
Chairman of the Office for Interreligious Relations
Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales

Please keep this programme with you at all times, especially for re-entry into the hall, as it serves as your admission ticket.

Please make sure that all mobiles and electronic devices are turned off or are on silent.

Do feel free to tweet about this event – you are invited to use the hashtag #togetherforpeace when doing so.

Please also feel free to take this programme with you as a memento when you leave.

Thank you.

Running order

Welcome by Archbishop Kevin McDonald

Prayers for peace in the different traditions. The names of the speakers, their religious affiliation, and reflections on the theme of peace can be found on the following pages

Shared silence

Pledge for Peace (see page 12)

Address by Cardinal Jean-Louis Tauran

Close of the event

Mrs Annabel Knight-Djalili (Bahá'í)

It is the firm conviction of Bahá'ís that a just and peaceful world is not only possible but inevitable. Humanity, the Bahá'í Writings explain, is experiencing an age of transition which can be described as a passage from collective childhood to collective maturity – a maturity which will be marked by the oneness of humanity becoming the organising principle of human affairs, ushering in an age of peace and prosperity. Much of the conflict currently afflicting the world is understood to be the result of humanity struggling to come of age. During this period, the barriers raised by widely accepted practices, thoughts, attitudes and habits acquired during humanity's collective childhood will gradually need to be abandoned.

Among the defining characteristics of this stage of human history is the unification of the human race. "The earth is but one country and mankind its citizens" Bahá'í Writings declare. The principle of the oneness of humankind is the pivotal spiritual and social principle around which revolve all of the teachings of the Bahá'í Faith. Bahá'ís do not see it as merely demanding cooperation among people and nations but rather see it calling for a complete rethinking of the relationships that sustain society and an organic change its very structure. It regards humanity as an organic whole where the members of the human family are fundamentally inseparable and interdependent parts of a larger creation. Bahá'í writings state that "the well-being of mankind, its peace and security, are unattainable unless and until its unity is firmly established."

In striving to realise this vision Bahá'ís are learning to work with their neighbours, friends and co-workers in cultivating environments where cooperation, reciprocity and fellowship can blossom. An environment where the higher reality of human nature can be developed and given practical expression in service to others.

Lama Gelongma Zangmo (Buddhist)

On behalf of Lama Yeshe Losal Rinpoche, the Abbott of Kagyu Samye Ling Tibetan Buddhist Monastery in Scotland, I would like to express my support for Together in Prayer for Peace. Promoting better interfaith understanding helps to build respect and tolerance in our 21st century multicultural society.

Peace and compassion is very much at the heart of the Buddha's teachings, showing us that we can develop and increase those qualities through understanding and training, with the emphasis on starting with ourselves wherever we are right now. The Buddha taught that aggression, selfish greed and ignorance are at the root of all conflict, and that inner peace is needed in order to be able to manifest outer peace in our actions. Inner peace and a well-trained mind results in genuine contentment, compassion, joy and impartiality

- qualities which are vital in any healthy society. Taming our own mind is also essential if we are to achieve any real, deeper spiritual awakening, regardless of which religious tradition we belong to.

Peace and harmony for the future depends on the relationships we forge in the present. Let us all work on ourselves and work together in harmony for the benefit of humanity and thus contribute to world peace."

Monsignor Peter Fleetwood (Christian)

Three months ago today, God gave the Catholic Church a new leader, who keeps surprising us, and many people in the Catholic community and beyond feel encouraged and inspired by this new style of papacy. By tradition, Popes take a new name, which often gives a clue to how they intend to approach their time in office. This Pope is the first to take the name Francis, and he explained why to the journalists who were in Rome to cover the Conclave.

During the election a Franciscan Cardinal from Brazil sat next to him and gave him great moral support as the votes were being counted. When it was clear how things were going he said to Cardinal Bergoglio, "Don't forget the poor!" Pope Francis told the journalists, "right away, thinking of the poor, I thought of Francis of Assisi. Then I thought of all the wars.... Francis is also the man of peace. That is how the name came into my heart: Francis of Assisi. For me, he is the man of poverty, the man of peace, the man who loves and protects creation; these days we do not have a very good relationship with creation, do we? He is the man who gives us this spirit of peace, the poor man.... How I would like a Church which is poor and for the poor!"

Pope Francis said this to people from all around the world, people of many religions, some of them of no religion, some of them people who find the idea of religion quite alien to their way of life. But I think they must all have been struck by such a bold, clear statement about the new Pope's vision of the Church: he spoke of a Church modelled on Saint Francis, the poor man, the man of peace, the man who cares for creation. He is asking Catholics to look at Saint Francis and imitate him, and this challenge will also be taken up by countless women and men who are not Christian, perhaps not even believers, because all can see that energy spent on the poor, on peace and on caring for the world God has given us is never wasted. Pope Francis is not asking us to seek positions of influence in society, but to influence the way the world is by reaching out and touching people who are easily ignored; he is asking us to speak words of peace and do actions of peace instead of speaking and acting aggressively or in ways which divide; he is asking us to recognise that the natural world is God's handiwork, and to treat it with care and respect.

Saint Francis challenged Christians, even the Pope of that time, to turn again to Christ, who had made Himself poor for our sake: his challenge was a blessing for the whole Church. I feel Pope Francis is renewing that challenge, which is a blessing for Christians and for everyone else who hears it.

His Holiness Nirliptananda Swami (Hindu)

Peace is the most precious thing in life

Since ancient times mankind everywhere valued peace and in the world there has been volumes of enlightened teachings to help posterity to understand how important it is to them to maintain harmony and peace. In spite of this we have seen increasing violence, destruction and killing of innocent people. Why is it?

In certain respects, it is lack of proper understanding and generally it is because of our nature, our natural instincts. Our nature is our second self – made up of the environment in which we live and grow. Actually, our whole thinking process, aptitude and behaviour are determined by our nature. But in ignorance we think that we are all free agents. We are all living in mental prisons and until we can free ourselves from this mental prison, the world cannot have peace.

If we can free ourselves from this mental prison, we would not need the soldiers, the police, the lawyers, the prisons with its huge walls and big doors and locks, the factories that produce weaponry for sales for slaughtering other human beings etc. Because everyone will feel free and live in peace. We will have more time for ourselves. Otherwise we are all slaves to our passions that drive us on and on in search of happiness. But without peace of mind is there anything like happiness?

We do prayer and worship but we do not practice self-culture. Without self-culture we cannot refine our nature. Only when the nature is pure then we are free agents and are able to make independent decisions. Otherwise we are all mostly controlled by our habits. They dictate to us all the time.

There are three instruments of action – the body, speech and mind. Our future depends on how we use them. If use them discreetly we can make this earth into a Paradise but by improper use of them we transform the peaceful earth into a hell.

The body should perform non-violent action, speech should be truthful and pleasant, and mind should be cheerful.

There is a LAW. This Law supersedes all other laws. It is the primary Law which co-existed with creation. It is the Law of coexistence. This law is interrelated to peace.

Violation of this Law is the basic cause for the disruption of peace in the world. This Law protects all of us. Therefore, we should all adhere to it and enjoy the bliss of life.

Om Shanti! Shanti!! Shanti!!!

Mr Bakul Mehta and Dr Harshad Sanghrajka (Jain)

Reflection on Ahimsa as a source of peace

Any reflection involving Jain philosophy has to have AHIMSA in it as this is the cardinal precept of Jain philosophy. It is generally translated as ‘non-violence’, but this does not do it justice.

Non-violence is generally understood as abstaining from physical aggression, AHIMSA takes the restraint to a much subtler level.

In Jain philosophy, violence is defined in three modes and through three means. Violence can be inflicted directly by a person; indirectly through an agent and to take it to its subtlest form, encouraging or supporting violence is also a mode. Violence in thought, in speech and in action is the three modes.

One cannot live a life with total non-violence as defined above. For, in Jainism, earth, water, fire, wind, and vegetation are all considered to be living beings. One cannot survive without the use of these elements. But in using these elements care must be exercised. All activities must be performed with due care not to misuse, waste, pollute, disturb or abuse the living environment in any form.

“... .. all breathing, existing, living, sentient creatures should not be slain, nor treated with violence, nor abused, nor tormented, nor driven away.”

Lord Mahavir in Acharanga Sutra: I.4.1.(1)

Violence in any mode, through any means, to any form of life destroys peace in the world. The precept of AHIMSA protects the environment, flora, fauna and humanity and is the only definitive solution for peace in the contemporary world.

Dr Jonathan Gorsky (Jewish)

Judaism and Peace

Every Friday afternoon about half an hour before sunset, just before the onset of the weekly Sabbath, candles are lit in Jewish homes, usually by the woman of the house. If she has children they will stand with her as she performs the very simple ceremony of Hadlakat Nerot, the lighting of the candles.

Sabbath is a time of peace, and when the candles are alight some women have the custom to offer a private prayer. It is a very beautiful moment of intimacy with God. One such prayer, written somewhere in Eastern Europe, concludes as follows: "Almighty God, Grant me and all my loved ones a chance to truly rest on this Sabbath day. May the light of the candles drive out from among us the spirit of anger, the spirit of harm. Send Your blessings on my children that they may walk in the ways of Your Torah, Your Light. May you ever be their God and mine, O Lord, my Creator and my Redeemer, Amen."

The Hebrew word for peace is 'Shalom'. It is used as a daily greeting when people meet each other and it is especially associated with the Sabbath. At the end of synagogue services on the Sabbath, people go up to their neighbours, shake them by the hand and wish them Shabbat Shalom, a peaceful Sabbath.

Peace can simply refer to the absence of war and anger and harm, as in the prayer above, and that in itself is infinitely precious, but how are we to sustain it? Shalom literally refers to wholeness or perfection. One explanation of this is if we can step beyond the boundaries of our own concerns and see ourselves as part of the whole of creation we will realise that everything has its place, and all things are truly holy. Every person is created in the Divine Image and no two people are exactly alike, so each human person is irreplaceable and when someone of us is lost we are all equally bereft.

At its most exalted, Shalom is one of the sacred names of God, and when we utter it, even in the most humdrum of circumstances, our lives are touched by the Divine Presence. If we can learn to see all creation as it truly is and recognise the absolute sanctity of all peoples and all things, then and only then will we be able to overcome our fear and our anger and be a source of peace and blessing for all humanity and all the world. Peace is truly the gift of God, our Creator and our Redeemer, Amen.

Shaykh Ibrahim Mogra (Muslim)

The corner stone and foundation of every religion and faith is peace. The core of being human is to be peaceful. We can only be at peace when we ourselves are peaceful. Peace is not just outward peace but true peace is inner peace. A deep peace, when achieved, that can elevate us to lofty standards which can enable to be merciful, kind, caring, generous, compassionate and forgiving. Muhammad (peace be upon him), the Messenger of God, said: "The Most Merciful One shows mercy to those who are merciful. Therefore show mercy to those who are on the earth and the One in the Heaven will show mercy to you."

Linguists explain the meaning of Islam as peace. When one surrenders to the Will of God then it becomes a duty to submit to His every command. He

commands us to be merciful and therefore peaceful. The root letters which make up the word salam are the very words which Muslims use when greeting people, “*Al-salam ‘alaykum!*” - peace be upon you. The reply also is of peace, “*Wa ‘alaykum al-salam!*” - and peace be upon you.

A man was once introduced to the Messenger Muhammad. His name was Harb. In Arabic harb means war. Muhammad changed his name to Salam - peace! Muhammad also said that any person from whom others are not safe and therefore not at peace will never enter Paradise. He also said that a Muslim is that person from the harm of whose tongue and hands others are safe and at peace. May God grant us all, especially Muslims, the ability to follow these teachings, amin.

Lord Singh of Wimbledon (Sikh)

Peace and Reconciliation

Some years ago I was invited to make a brief Sikh contribution to an inter-faith service on the theme of 'peace'. I readily agreed and looked at Sikh scriptures to find an appropriate passage, but without success. It was then that I realised why a religion that has such positive guidance on the themes of justice and human rights is silent on the concept of 'peace' in its most widely accepted sense, namely, 'the absence of war'.

Peace without justice is no peace at all. Real and lasting peace can only emanate from social and political justice and it is the duty of all of us to work towards this goal. It is especially the duty of religions to make a - more positive input by focussing on our common underlying ethical teachings which in reality are much greater than the smaller areas of difference.

The Sikh Gurus emphasised this essential unity of faiths by including verses from Hindu and Muslim saints in our holy Scriptures, the Guru Granth Sahib to show no one faith has a monopoly of truth. In the same spirit Guru Arjan invited a Muslim saint to lay the foundation stone of the Sikh Golden Temple in Amritsar; a building that has a door at each of its four sides to signify a welcome to all, from any geographic or spiritual direction.

Religious leaders have a particular responsibility to work together for true peace based on social and political justice. We have in the United Nation Organisation a framework for a more just world order. Sadly it is often bypassed in the pursuit of narrow national interests. We all have a common responsibility to work to ensure that we and those who lead us work positively to ensure that our children and their children live in true peace based on justice.

Ervad Shahyan Dastur, Ervad Rustom K Bhedwar (Zoroastrian)

Only Good Thoughts Good Words and Good Deeds will bring about paradise and everlasting peace

Prophet Zarathushtra was born into a hereditary priestly family circa 1500 BCE. He served his polytheistic community as a priest – poet, but felt deeply uncomfortable about the destructive and violent practices of polytheistic worship. This led him to leave his community and contemplate in the mountains. One spring day, after ten years of isolation, Zarathushtra was taken to the court of Heavenly Light where the One God – *Ahura Mazda* revealed to him the purpose of creation, which is for humanity to bring about *Frashō kērēti* – “Making Wonderful”. Zarathushtra proclaimed to the world that there is only the One Creator *Ahura Mazda* – Truth, Wisdom and Light.

Zoroastrians view the world as a battlefield between good and evil. *Ahura Mazda* created the world including humans to assist in the good battle against evil. Zoroastrians believe that evil, which is finite, will only be defeated only by humans through good thoughts, good words and good deeds. The cumulative goodness will eventually overwhelm evil, thus ushering the Saviour – last human being, who will make evil inert. Thus will commence the physical resurrection, when all the immortal souls in heaven and hell will be reunited with their perfect physical body and chronologically undergo the last judgement. Afterwards everything will be made wonderful – paradise and everlasting peace.

It is for this reason Zoroastrians pray for peace when they recite the *Fravarānē* prayer five times a day after they have retied their *kusti* – the sacred cord. They ask *Ahura Mazda* to come to their aid. They reemphasise their worship of *Ahura Mazda*. They reemphasise their belief in truth, wisdom and light. They declare their praise in *Ahura Mazda*, the Zoroastrian religion, good thoughts, good words and good deeds, because it curtails disputes and quarrels, which brings about peace and harmony.

Pledge for Peace

Gathered here in London, we have reflected together on peace, a gift of God and a common good of all mankind. Although we belong to different religious traditions, we affirm that building peace requires loving one's neighbour in obedience to the Golden Rule: Do to others what you would have them do to you. With this conviction we will work tirelessly in the great enterprise of building peace.

Therefore:

We commit ourselves to proclaiming our firm conviction that violence and terrorism are incompatible with the authentic spirit of religion, and, as we condemn every recourse to violence and war in the name of God or of religion, we commit ourselves to doing everything possible to eliminate the root causes of terrorism.

We commit ourselves to educating people to mutual respect and esteem, in order to help bring about a peaceful and fraternal coexistence between people of different ethnic groups, cultures and religions.

We commit ourselves to fostering the culture of dialogue, so that there will be an increase of understanding and mutual trust between individuals and among peoples, for these are the premises of authentic peace.

We commit ourselves to defending the right of everyone to live a decent life in accordance with their own cultural identity, and to form freely a family of their own.

We commit ourselves to frank and patient dialogue, refusing to consider our differences as an insurmountable barrier, but recognizing instead that to encounter the diversity of others can become an opportunity for greater reciprocal understanding.

We commit ourselves to forgiving one another for past and present errors and prejudices, and to supporting one another in a common effort both to overcome selfishness and arrogance, hatred and violence, and to learn from the past that peace without justice is no true peace.

We commit ourselves to taking the side of the poor and the helpless, to speaking out for those who have no voice and to working effectively to change these situations, out of the conviction that no one can be happy alone.

We commit ourselves to taking up the cry of those who refuse to be resigned to violence and evil, and we desire to make every effort possible to offer the men and women of our time real hope for justice and peace.

We commit ourselves to encouraging all efforts to promote friendship between peoples, for we are convinced that, in the absence of solidarity and understanding between peoples, technological progress exposes the world to a growing risk of destruction and death.

We commit ourselves to urging leaders of nations to make every effort to create and consolidate, on the national and international levels, a world of solidarity and peace based on justice.

We will tirelessly proclaim that peace and justice are inseparable, and that peace in justice is the only path which humanity can take towards a future of hope. In a world with ever more open borders, shrinking distances and better relations as a result of a broad network of communications, we are convinced that security, freedom and peace will never be guaranteed by force but by mutual trust.