

CATHOLICS AND OTHER FAITHS

“Christian charity truly extends to all without distinction of race, social condition or religion” (Vatican II ‘Ad Gentes’ n 12)

In Britain today matters concerning religion are being given a higher profile than in the past. Issues in the fields of education, politics, social justice and broadcasting, for example, have a faith dimension and very often a multi-faith dimension.

In many of our cities a large number of our neighbours, colleagues and friends are faithful adherents of religions we know very little about. They may be Jews, Muslims, Sikhs, Buddhists, Hindus, Jains, or Baha’is for example.

When faced with the racial and religious mix in our society, many of us may ask about:

- the faith and practice of other religions
- dialogue, and what it means for Catholics
- terms like “evangelisation” and “mission”
- the Church’s teaching on other religions
- ecumenical involvement in inter-faith matters
- salvation outside the Church.

The Bishops’ Conference of England and Wales Committee for Catholic/Jewish Relations and the Committee for Other Faiths offer reflection and guidance on the Church’s experience pointing to a way forward to begin to understand the mystery of God’s love for the whole human family. The aim is to help Catholics deepen their own faith by promoting a greater awareness and understanding of other Faiths, through dialogue, prayer and action in the light of the Church’s teaching.

RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Within the fabric of society people have the right to religious freedom and the duty to respect the freedom of others. The Second Vatican Council’s Declaration on Religious Liberty emphasises these points .

“Provided the just requirements of public order are met, religious communities have a right to ... organise their lives in their own way. They are entitled to honour the supreme Godhead with public worship, help their members in the observance of a religious life and give them the support of religious teaching, and to make provision for the co-operation of members in the organisation of their own lives according to their religious principles.” (n.4)

Nonetheless:

“Wherever there is any kind of freedom the moral principle of personal and social

responsibility must be respected; when they exercise their rights individuals and social groups are morally bound to take into account the rights of others, their own duties towards others and the common good of all. Every person should be treated with justice and humanity.” (n.7)

SALVATION OUTSIDE THE CHURCH

As Catholics we believe that Christ lived, died and rose from the dead for all people and that God’s plan of love embraces the whole of creation. We can joyfully accept, as was recognised by the Fathers of the Church, that other religions contain elements of the truth we find in Christ. The Fathers of the Church called these elements “seeds of the Word”.

The Vatican Council attributed the positive values present in other religious traditions to the active presence of God through his Word, pointing also to the universal action of the Spirit “at work in the world before Christ was glorified”. (Ad Gentes n 4).

Furthermore in an Encyclical Letter on the Church written in 1964 Pope Paul VI urged that “Divine truth should be a means towards union, mutual understanding and peaceful living, and not a reason for quarrels and division.” (Ecclesiam Suam n. 32)

As we grow in our understanding of Christ and his Gospel the more we would wish others to know and experience the fullness of life and truth He gives.

DIALOGUE AND PROCLAMATION

The Church encourages Catholics to enter into dialogue with the faithful of other religions. Dialogue, involving for example contacts in daily life, meetings to deepen our understanding of other religions and collaboration together for the good of society, is of value in itself and is indeed our duty.

However, as people who seek to be attentive to the promptings of the Holy Spirit we must always be ready to explain to others why our hope lies in Christ (cf. 1 Pet. 3:15) and, on the basis of our efforts to live our faith authentically, invite others to discover the way of Christ.

The relationship between dialogue and proclamation in the evangelising mission of the Church is not cut and dried. These aspects of the Church’s life are explored in a document produced by the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue in 1991. Key themes in the document are contained in the Committee for Other Faiths’ publication “Ways of Sharing Faith”.

COLLABORATION WITH OTHERS

The Roman Catholic Church co-operates with ecumenical efforts in the field of interfaith through its membership of the Churches’ Commission for Inter-Faith Relations, (the inter-faith arm of Churches Together in Britain and Ireland). Through the Committee for Other Faiths the RC Church in England and Wales is a member of the Inter-Faith Network for the United Kingdom. Up and down the country many Catholics find in inter-faith dialogue opportunities to get to know and share with other Christians.

RESOURCES AND CENTRES:

It is not possible to give much information in a small space. Your Diocesan R.E. Centre may know of other local inter-Faith organisations and centres.

Chairman, Committee for Other Faiths and Committee for Catholic-Jewish Relations: Bishop Charles Henderson, 6a Cresswell Park, London SE3 9RD. (0181) 318 1094. The above Committees' home page: <http://www.tasc.ac.uk/cc/>

Committee for Catholic/Jewish Relations: Secretarial address: 38E Bushey Grove Road, Bushey, Herts WD2 2JQ.

Churches' Commission for Inter-Faith Relations: Church House, Great Smith Street, London SW1P 3NZ tel. 0171 2229011.

Council of Christians and Jews: Drayton House, 30 Gordon Street, London WC1H 0AN tel. 0171 388 3322.

Inter Faith Network for the United Kingdom: 5-7 Tavistock Place, London WC1H 9SS tel. 0171 388 0008.

Birmingham Archdiocesan Commission for Interreligious Dialogue: 74 Billesley Lane. Birmingham B13 9QU tel./fax 0121 449 3839 E mail wozanne@cix.co.uk

Bradford Inter-Faith Education Centre: Listerhills Road. Bradford BD7 1HD. tel. 01274 731674.

Catholic Truth Society: has published several informative pamphlets 40-46 Harleyford Road. London SE11 5AY tel. 0171 640 0042

Cambridge Centre for Jewish-Christian Relations: Wesley House, Jesus Lane, Cambridge CB5 8BJ tel. 01223 462668.

Centre for the Study of Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations and the Centre for the Study of Judaism and Jewish-Christian Relations: Selly Oak Colleges, 996 Bristol Road, Birmingham B29 6LQ. tel. 0121 472 4231.

Concord: Leeds Interfaith Fellowship: 32 School Lane, LEEDS LS7 3PN tel. 0113 262 4708.

Religious Resource and Research Centre: University of Derby, Mickleover, Derby DE3 5GX tel 01332 622222 and MultiFaithNet: <http://www.multifaithnet.org/>

Leeds Diocese Interfaith Co-ordinator: 62 Headingly Lane. LEEDS LS6 2BU tel./fax. 0113 274 5156.

International Interfaith Centre, (World Congress of Faiths) 2 Market Street. Oxford OX1 3EF tel. 01865 202745.

Middlesex University Centre for Inter-Faith Dialogue: Tottenham Campus. White Hart Lane. London N17 8HR tel 0181 362 6220.

Wolverhampton Inter Faith Centre: 43 Princess Street. Wolverhampton WV1 1HD tel. 01902 27601.

Westminster Inter-Faith Centre: St. Anne's, Underwood Road, London E1 5AW.

COMMITTEE FOR OTHER FAITHS PUBLICATIONS

Leaflets in the series "Getting to Know People of Other Faiths"

Our Neighbour's Faith and Ours - a Catholic introduction to living with neighbours of other Faiths"

"What is Islam?",	What is Daoism?
"What is Buddhism?",	Prayer and Prayers in Islam
"Who was the Buddha?"	Hindu Festivals
"The Mosque"	What is Jainism?
"What is Hinduism?"	Aspects of Judaism
"Our Sikh Neighbours",	(prepared by Committee for RC Jewish Relations)
What is the Baha'i Faith?",	What is Shinto?
"Is God at Work Outside the Church?"	Who are the Zoroastrians?
Christian Prayer and Eastern Meditation	African Traditional Religion

Leaflets in the "Family Life Series"

"Family Life in Islam",	Family Life among Sikhs
"Hindu Families",	Japanese Religion in Family Life
Family Life in Buddhism	"Jewish Family Life" (prepared by the Committee for Catholic-Jewish Relations)

Other leaflets: "Ways of Sharing Faith" (Summary of "Dialogue and Proclamation")
"Hospital Chaplaincy and Other Faiths"

To order, please fill in the form below and send to: The Secretary, Committee for Other Faiths, 6a Cresswell Park, LONDON SE3 9RD. Cheques should be made payable to: "NCF (Other Faiths)".

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ORDER FORM – orders are sent post free

Quantity:	set(s) of 18 leaflets in the series "Getting to Know People of Other Faiths" at £3.00 per set	Cost:
Quantity:	sets of six leaflets in the "Family Life Series" at £1.00 per set.	Cost:
Quantity:	bundles of 50 of the above @ £5.00 for 50	Cost:
Quantity:	copies "Ways of Sharing Faith" @ 20p each, £6 for 50	Cost:
Quantity:	copies of "Hospital Chaplaincy and Other Faiths" at 20p each, £6 for 50	Cost:
Quantity:	individual leaflets (listed separately) minimum order 10 leaflets at 20p each post free.	Cost:

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