

Pope Francis' Encyclical Letter; 'Universal Brotherhood'; Chapter Eight Religions at the service of Fraternity

The different religions, based on their respect for each human person as a creature to be a child of God, contribute significantly to building fraternity and defending justice in society'. So begins this final chapter, devoted to the place of religions and to the significance of dialogue between religions in the pursuit of fraternity worldwide.

Pope Francis highlights the importance of transcendent truth. Without it, he argues, there is no sure principle for the guarantee of just relations between people. Without it, self interest as a class, group or nation would set them in opposition to one another. Believers of the different religions know that their witness to God benefits our societies. God is love. The effort to seek God sincerely helps us to recognise each other, true brothers and sisters on the road of life. When in the name of ideology, on the other hand, we remove God from society, inevitably people lose their way, dignity is walked on and rights are denied.

That's why the Church has a public role over and above her charitable and educational activities. It serves in a world of many crises, a world that lacks a sensitive human conscience, with people more and more distanced from religious traditions in a veritable sea of individualism, accompanied by materialistic philosophies that deify the human person and replace the supreme and transcendental with worldly and material values.

He then points out the Church's esteem for the way God works in other religions and has high regard for what is true and holy in them. At the same time, he states that if we, as Christians, lose touch with the Gospel we will no longer hear the strains that challenge us to defend the dignity of every man and woman. Others drink from other sources but our source is Christ. The wellspring of our dignity and fraternity is in the Gospel, leading us ultimately to 'universal communion with the entire human family as a vocation for all'.

The Church, as catholic, is present around the world. It appreciates from that perspective the importance and beauty of universal love. All things human are its concern and it rejoices to be included in the councils of nations, addressing the rights and duties of man. This journey of fraternity rejoices also in the role of Mary, the universal mother.

Just as the Church promotes the freedom of non-Christians in places where they are a minority, she earnestly asks also for freedom of religion for Christians where they are a minority. It upholds religious freedom for believers of all religions. Here too, Pope Francis upholds the importance of ecumenism within the Church of Christ, who prayed that we may be one. That calls for dialogue and working together for the common good and

for the poor. Worship of God and love of neighbour are what matter and what engage us.

Violence has no place in our fundamental religious convictions so terrorism is not due to religion, even when terrorists instrumentalise it. It is due to incorrect interpretations of religious texts and to policies linked to hunger, poverty, injustice, oppression and pride. Religious leaders are called to be people of dialogue and peace.

Pope Francis then re-invokes the historic declaration he shared with Grand Imam Ahmad Al-Tayyeb in Abu Dhabi in February 2019 and goes on to acknowledge people like St. Francis of Assisi, Martin Luther King, Desmond Tutu, Mahatma Gandhi and Blessed Charles de Foucauld as wonderful people of dialogue and universal brotherhood. The letter then ends with two prayers, the first an inter-religious prayer to the Creator and the second an ecumenical Christian prayer

The Parish Office is closed to the public for the time being. Because of the current seriousness of concern for public health, we have decided to close the parish office to the public for the time being. However, parishioners are invited to leave a message on the phone (01 6683316 or 01 6683894) or to contact Fr John (01 6684265/0876294325) or Fr Cormac (01 6686845) for any services required. Phone messages to the parish office will be checked daily and responded to.

Sacramental Preparation

We don't know when it will be feasible to celebrate the sacraments this year. Meantime our sincere thanks to parents who have registered their intention that their boy or girl will be receiving Confirmation or First Communion when it becomes possible to do so.

Confirmation Commitment Ceremony

On Thursday next, April 29th, a Ceremony of Commitment will be held with the young people and their parents who are preparing to celebrate Confirmation. The young people are working on their personal commitments in learning, service, prayer and self control. Meantime we greatly appreciate the work of their teachers in bringing them through the Grow in Love programme. Later, in advance of celebrations we will have a Ceremony of Light. The number of celebrations will depend on the numbers permitted to attend at the time. If 25 is the maximum it will mean 11 celebrations to accommodate 77 young people who have registered their intention to be confirmed with us.