



SALA STAMPA DELLA SANTA SEDE
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Audience with participants in the 12th Colloquium between the Dicastery for Interreligious Dialogue and the “Centre for Interreligious and Intercultural Dialogue” in Tehran

This morning, the Holy Father Francis received in audience the participants in the 12th Colloquium between the Dicastery for Interreligious Dialogue and the “Centre for Interreligious and Intercultural Dialogue” in Tehran.

The following is the Pope’s address to those present:

Address of the Holy Father

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Dear Brothers and Sisters, good morning!

I am pleased to meet you during this, your twelfth Colloquium. As we all know, this long-standing form of cooperation has been most gratifying for all of us, since it fosters a *culture of dialogue*, something that I consider of critical importance and which I follow closely.

As you know, I plan to elevate the Archbishop of Tehran-Ispahan – a great friar – to the College of Cardinals. This decision expresses my closeness and concern for the Church in Iran, and in turn honours the entire country.

The life of the Catholic Church in Iran, a “little flock”, is very close to my heart. The Church is not against the government; to say otherwise is a lie. I am aware of its situation and the challenges it faces as it perseveres in bearing witness to Christ and contributing, quietly but significantly, to the good of society as a whole, while rejecting all religious, ethnic or political discrimination.

I am particularly appreciative of the theme you have chosen for this Colloquium: “*The Education of Young*

People, particularly in the Family: A Challenge for Christians and Muslims". What a beautiful topic! The family, the cradle of life, is the primordial place of education. It is in the family that we take our first steps and learn to listen to others, to acknowledge and respect them, to help them and to live with one another in harmony. A common element of our different religious traditions is the contribution made by the elderly to the education of the young. This is something I hold very close to my heart; grandparents, by their wisdom, are a crucial aid in the religious education of their grandchildren, and serve as a vital link in family relationships over the generations (cf. Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Christus Vivit*, 262). Honouring our grandparents is so important. Their religiosity, communicated informally by the witness of their lives, is invaluable for the growth of young people. I will never forget that my own grandmother was the one who taught me to pray.

One educational challenge common to both Christians and Muslims is posed by the growing, complex reality of marriages involving disparity of cult. It is easy to see that such family settings represent a privileged place for interreligious dialogue (cf. Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Amoris Laetitia*, 248). And that is what we must pursue.

The weakening of faith and religious practice in some societies has a direct impact on the family. We know what great challenges the family faces in a world that is changing rapidly and not always in the right direction. Consequently, in order to fulfil better its educational mission, the family needs the full support of everyone, including the state, the school, its own religious community and other institutions.

Some of the many tasks of the family are those of educating and "being at home" beyond the walls of its own house. Dialogue between believers of different religions does just that; it enables us to step out of our own familiar patterns of thinking and acting, and to be open to encounter within the greater human family. But for dialogue to be fruitful, it must meet several conditions: it must be open, it must be sincere, it must be respectful, it must be friendly and it must be concrete. This is what makes dialogue successful. This approach will make us credible in the eyes of our own community and before our interlocutors and their communities, while constantly reminding us that we are accountable to God for all that we think, for all that we say and for all that we do.

Finally, the education of the younger generation takes place through fraternal cooperation in the search for God. In this quest, we must never tire of speaking and working for the dignity and rights of every person, every community and every people. We must always defend their rights. Indeed, freedom of conscience and religion is the cornerstone of the entire edifice of human rights. Nor is freedom of religion limited to the expression of worship; it also entails complete freedom in the matter of one's own beliefs and religious practice (cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Declaration *Dignitatis Humanae*, 3-4).

Brothers and sisters, our world is divided and rent by hatred, hostility, wars and the threat of a nuclear conflict. We can read the latest threat in today's newspapers. This situation prompts us, as believers in the God of Peace, to pray and work for dialogue, reconciliation, peace, security and the integral development of all humanity. We profess our faith in the all-powerful God of love. The commitment to peace that we can demonstrate together will make us credible in the eyes of the world and above all to future generations.

Dear brothers and sisters, thank you for coming! May the Most High keep and bless us, our communities and the whole world, and accompany you at every step of your journey of dialogue.

Let us now take a brief moment in silence as we pray asking God to bless us all. Let us be silent.

May God bless us all. Amen.
