

Interfaith Dialogue: A Bridge of Friendship and Respect in a Globalized World

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Last May 30, at the Faculty of Economics of the Sapienza University of Rome, Prof. Don Simone Caleffi, Professor at LUMSA University and editor of the Religion editorial staff of *Osservatore Romano* of the Communication Dicastery, gave a *Lectio Magistralis* as part of the II module of the Enterprise Communication Management Course taught by Prof. Glauco Galati. For the students in the course, it was a unique opportunity to explore the topic of interreligious dialogue, specifically between Christians and Muslims, and aspects of digital communication. The aspect that we most want to analyze below concerns the evolution of interreligious dialogue among various religious traditions.

As Prof. Don Caleffi suggests, interreligious dialogue between Christianity and Islam has evolved significantly throughout history, with highlights such as the meeting between St. Francis of Assisi and Sultan Malik al-Kamil in 1219, and the important Document on Human Brotherhood for World Peace and Common Coexistence, signed by Pope Francis and the Grand Imam of al-Azhar in Abu Dhabi. This document condemns violence and terrorism, promoting dialogue and cooperation between the two religions. Other documents that cannot be overlooked when speaking of Interreligious Dialogue are the Pope Francis' Encyclicals *Laudato Si'* and *Fratelli Tutti*, signed in Assisi. "The absence of sincere dialogue in our public culture makes it increasingly difficult to generate a shared horizon toward which we can all move forward together. The shared horizon indicates the hope-filled direction to be able to set up the 'common house of creation' in a favorable way and for the good of all people, starting from a positive vision of the person, from an anthropology rooted in faith in God the Creator (cf. *Laudato si'*, no. 13)." Prof. Don. Caleffi goes on to emphasize that divisions and conflicts are contrary to the message of religions and, in particular, to God's will. He continues by specifying that "a particularly strong signal from *Brothers All* is surely his reference to his meeting with Grand Imam Ahmad Al-Tayyeb in Abu Dhabi in 2019 and the Document on Human Brotherhood for World Peace and Common Coexistence. With this reference, Pope Francis emphasizes once again that religions should not serve to divide and strengthen ideologies, but should all be at the service of the one human family, and he clearly rejects all fundamentalist attempts to instrumentalize religion for their own ends."

In his 2020 Encyclical, *Brothers All*, Pope Francis highlights the many social problems of contemporary times, which could be characterized by the absence of social purpose and selfish

indifference to the common good. However, the Holy Father also offers a message of hope and suggests that the world should come together through renewed dialogue and friendship. The last chapter of the encyclical examines the role of religions in promoting fraternity instead of polarization. The Encyclical was the inspiration for the international conference entitled ["Responses to Fratelli Tutti from Different Religious Traditions"](#) that the UNESCO Chair in Bioethics and Human Rights organized May 22-25, 2025 between Rome and Assisi, with the motive of bringing speakers together from six traditions-Christian Orthodoxy, Judaism, Islam, Confucianism, Hinduism, and Buddhism-into dialogue, offering commentary on chapters 5-8. These chapters make a more practical proposition about how political, social and religious groups can encourage a greater sense of fraternity and solidarity in our globalized reality. However, despite the challenges, the importance of persevering interreligious dialogue as a means of promoting peace and mutual understanding is paramount.

Bringing together experts from different religions creates a rare space for dialogue characterized by an atmosphere of friendship and respect. These meetings allow us to see the other as a brother or sister in our common humanity. In an increasingly globalized world, this is of paramount importance and can help eliminate suspicions that sometimes cause distrust and even violence. In order to maintain an open dialogue based on brotherhood and respect, the UNESCO Chair is preparing for the upcoming meeting ["An Interreligious and Multicultural Perspective on The Nature of Medicine and the Role of Physicians"](#) to be held at the University Francisco de Vitoria, Madrid from December 17 to 19, 2024.

The UNESCO Chair in Bioethics and Human Rights, established at the Pontifical Athenaeum Regina Apostolorum and The European University of Rome, through the project ["Bioethics, Multiculturalism and Religion,"](#) aims to promote the art of convergence and cooperation in global ethics among bioethics experts from the world's religions, including Buddhism, Christianity, Catholic and Orthodox, Confucianism, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism and the secular perspective. The international conferences are a first step toward creating a permanent academic forum to promote bioethics dialogue and reflection in light of human rights and duties addressed from diverse religious and cultural perspectives in the ever-changing medical, legal and technological environment. Nine international conferences and workshops have been held in Jerusalem (2009), Rome (2011), Hong Kong (2013), Mexico City (2014), Houston (2016), Rome (2018), Casablanca (2019), Bangkok (2022), and Rome (2023). According to UNESCO, it is the most multicultural and interfaith

academic bioethics meeting in the world, offering important benefits to experts and institutions in the field of bioethics.