

OIKOUMENE*

A NEWSLETTER OF THE COMMISSION FOR ECUMENICAL AND INTERRELIGIOUS AFFAIRS
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*OIKOUMENE IS GREEK FOR "HOUSE" "FAMILY" "PEOPLE" "NATION" "OPEN TO OR PARTICIPATING IN THE WHOLE INHABITED WORLD" AND IS THE SOURCE OF OUR WORD "ECUMENICAL," BUT HAS A BROADER SENSE. [PER ENCYCLOPEDIA BRITANNICA]

"From the Desk of the Director"

May 14, 2026

[the novena (9 days) between Ascension & Pentecost are especially recommended for ecumenical gatherings]

Dear Clergy, Religious & Lay friends,

"True progress in the ecumenical movement, therefore, does not come merely by reckoning with the sins of history, amending our judgments about another Christian community, or overcoming inherited prejudices. True reconciliation requires a deeper transformation – a conversion of relationship – from suspicion to trust, from division to communion, from seeing the 'other' as a stranger derided to the 'other' as a friend embraced."

-The Rev. Nicholas Kazarian – Ecumenical Officer for the Greek Orthodox Church of America

During the conflict between Hindus & Muslims in India, Gandhi was once visited by a troubled Hindu who had just killed a Muslim man, the only parent of a young boy. His remorse was so great that he sought Gandhi's counsel, who advised the man to take the boy and provide a home for him. Furthermore, he should raise him as a Muslim.

"I seem to hear whispered in my soul that God is always the friend and protector of truth."

-Mohandas Gandhi

"Unity among Christians: "it's looking out, being attentive to the Holy Spirit at work within another person's life. Listening is a big part of that."

-Nathan Smith – Director of Glenmary's Catholic/Evangelical Relations

"More than ever, our world needs our unity, our friendship, and our collaboration. Each one of our religions can contribute to alleviating human suffering and taking care of our common home, our planet Earth." -Pope Leo XIV (10/29/25 - at a gathering of 300 representatives of world religions- incl. Christians, Jews, Muslims, Buddhists, Hindus, Sikhs, Zoroastrians, Taoists)

"The desire for full communion among all believers in Jesus Christ is always accompanied by the search for fraternity among all human beings."

"We are all invited to overcome the scandal of the divisions that unfortunately still exist and to nurture the desire for unity for which the Lord Jesus prayed and gave his life."

-Pope Leo XIV (11/28/25) – at Nicea ec. Service for 1700th anniversary of Council of Nicea

"I wish the Jewish community to know that the Catholic community stands with them in sorrow and in resolve, committed to friendship that does not waver when fear threatens to paralyze us."

-Archbishop Paul Coakley – Pres. USCCB (12/15/25 – after Sydney attack)

“If every person is already touched by the offer of divine life, then dialogue with other religions is not a negotiation between insiders & outsiders. It is a mutual recognition of grace at work in different histories, languages and rituals, a shared search for the mystery that has already found us. ...The same God who speaks in other traditions speaks also through the margins of our own. The call of ‘Nostra Aetate’ is not only to dialogue outward but also to listen inward—to the unfamiliar voices within the body of Christ that reveal where grace is moving next....Applied to interreligious dialogue, this means letting go of the need to define God’s presence in advance. The encounter between religions becomes not just a polite academic exchange but a shared exposure to the divine mystery that always exceeds our language. The Christian does not enter dialogue as one who owns the truth. Instead, one trusts that truth is already at work in the other.”

-Hal St. John – America “Nostra Aetate” & interreligious dialogue (1/12/26)

“The rise of Christianity & Islam served to spread among the nations, to the furthest ends of the earth, the knowledge that there is one God who rules the world, who rewards and punishes and reveals Himself to humanity.” -Rabbi Emden

“The true meaning of love of one’s neighbor is not that it is a command from God which we are to fulfill, but that through it and in it we meet God.” -Martin Buber

“Don’t be caught off guard when people show up from outside of whatever system or institution or religion or perspective or doctrine or worldview or culture you’ve created and they have something profound and good to give you.” -Rob Bell

“What happened at Utah Valley University [the assassination of Charlie Kirk] this afternoon is unacceptable. We reject all forms of political violence. There is no place in our country for such acts, regardless of political disagreements. We are praying for Charlie Kirk, his family, and all those at Utah Valley U. impacted by this horrible act as the community processes and recovers.

-Young Democrats of Connecticut AND Connecticut Young Republicans

“There may be times when we are powerless to prevent injustice, but there must never be a time when we fail to protest.” -Elie Wiesel

“A human being is a part of the whole that we call the universe, a part limited in time and space. He experiences himself, his thoughts & feelings, as something separated from the rest – a kind of optical illusion of his consciousness. This illusion is a prison for us, restricting us to our personal desires and to affection for only the few people nearest us. Our task must be to free ourselves from this prison by widening our circle of compassion to embrace all living beings and all of nature.”

-Dr. Albert Einstein

The 106th archbishop of Canterbury, Dame Sarah Mullally, just after her installation, attended a special ecumenical service in Canterbury Cathedral with the Catholic delegation that attended her installation. At both she wore the episcopal ring given by Pope Paul VI to Archbishop Ramsey. At an event commemorating the 60th anniversary of the Common Declaration of March 24, 1966 – the first formal ecumenical declaration between the Anglicans & R.C.C., Pope Leo met with the

new Archbishop at the Vatican and she said: “As Archbishop of Canterbury, I too am called to serve as an instrument of communion within the Anglican Communion, and to seek the full and visible unity to which our Lord has called us all.”

After President Trump criticized Pope Leo, she said, “I stand with my brother in Christ, his Holiness, Pope Leo XIV, in his courageous call for a kingdom of peace.” “As innocent people are killed and displaced, families torn apart, and futures destroyed, the human cost of war is incalculable. It is the calling of every Christian – and all people of faith & goodwill – to work and pray for peace. We must also urge all those entrusted with political authority to pursue every possible peaceful and just means to resolving conflict.”

“It would be a scandal if we did not continue to work toward overcoming our differences, no matter how intractable they may appear.” -Pope Leo at a prayer service with King Charles III

“It’s necessary to build bridges in a time when hate has been given oxygen to thrive.”

-Rabbi Matt Cutler, himself a victim of an anti-Semitic hate crime

“Faith leads a believer to see in the other a brother or sister to be supported and loved.”

“In the name of God who has created all human beings equal in rights, duties and dignity, and who has called them to live together as brothers and sisters....”

“In the name of innocent life that God has forbidden to kill, affirming that whoever kills a person is like one who kills the whole of humanity, and whoever saves a person is like one who saves the whole of humanity.”

“We thus call upon all concerned to stop using religions to incite hatred, violence, extremism and blind fanaticism, and to refrain from using the name of God to justify acts of murder, exile, terrorism and oppression....God, the Almighty, has no need to be defended by anyone and does not want His name to be used to terrorize people.”

“The pluralism & the diversity of religions, color, sex, race and language are willed by God in His wisdom, through which he created human beings.”

“this Declaration may constitute an invitation to reconciliation and fraternity among all believers....it may be a witness to the greatness of faith in God that unites divided hearts and elevates the human soul...” -Document on Human Fraternity for World Peace & Living Together

(Pope Francis & Grand Imam of Al-Azhar--2/4/19)



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