

Angelica Berrie & Taras Dzyubansky (eds.)



Studying Judaism, Strengthening Dialogue

*Celebrating the John Paul II Center for Interreligious Dialogue
at the Pontifical University of St. Thomas Aquinas (Angelicum)*



The John Paul II Center Interfaith Network

The John Paul II Center Interfaith Network is a global community of clergy, women religious, and lay leaders dedicated to promoting interreligious dialogue, peacebuilding, and a culture of encounter in today's complex world. Present in approximately 40 countries across every continent, the network reflects the truly universal character of the Church and its commitment to dialogue among peoples, cultures, and religions.

At the heart of the network are the JP II Leaders, who serve in a wide range of pastoral, academic, and social contexts. Rooted in their local communities, they actively contribute to building bridges between religious traditions through teaching, public engagement, publications, and grassroots initiatives. Whether in parishes, universities, schools, or civic institutions, these leaders foster mutual understanding and cooperation, responding to the urgent need for peaceful coexistence in

societies often marked by division and misunderstanding. The strength of the network lies in its diversity. Its members come from varied cultural, national, and religious contexts, bringing with them a rich array of experiences and perspectives. While united by a shared commitment to interreligious dialogue, they are formed in a wide range of academic disciplines, including anthropology, biblical studies, sacred texts, pastoral and moral theology, canon law, spirituality, and philosophy. This interdisciplinary foundation allows the network to approach dialogue not only as a theological endeavor but also as a social, cultural, and human reality. Through their work, JPPII Leaders contribute to shaping a global culture of peace grounded in respect, dignity, and authentic encounter. They engage both at the intellectual level – through research, teaching, and writing – and at the practical level, by accompanying communities, facilitating dialogue, and addressing real-life challenges. In doing so, the John Paul II Center Interfaith Network stands as a dynamic and growing initiative, embodying a vision of dialogue that is lived, shared, and continually renewed across the world.

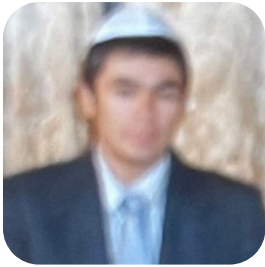
The Fellows come from the following countries: Australia, Albania, Bangladesh, Benin, Bolivia, Cameroon, Canada, Chile, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Dominica, France, Gambia, Georgia, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Hong Kong, Hungary, India, Indonesia, Ireland, Italy, Kenya, Lebanon, Malaysia, Mexico, Myanmar, Nigeria, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Poland, Romania, Russia, Rwanda, Scotland, Slovakia, Sri Lanka, United Kingdom, United States of America, Ukraine, Vietnam, and Zimbabwe.

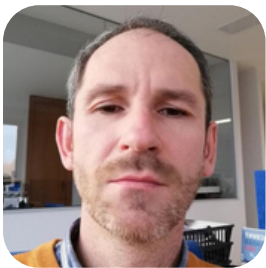














Portraits of the Fellows



Fr. Mak Caesar Abagna, Ghana

Having grown up with a positive experience of a multi-religious environment, Fr. Abagna has made it his personal quest to move the world beyond the confines of religious conflicts to a land flowing with peace and harmony by means of interfaith dialogue. This very idea inspired him to initiate a program of formation for the youth of his parish, which attracted over three hundred young adults with various religious and cultural backgrounds and has now become an annual program. Besides his service as Parish Youth Chaplain for the St Theresa Parish in Tongo, Ghana, Fr. Abagna has also worked as Associate Pastor in the same parish as well as Deanery Youth Chaplain for the Bolgatanga Deanery of Navrongo-bolgatanga Diocese. Upon completion of his second year at the Angelicum, Fr. Abagna wishes to return to his diocese and cooperate with religious leaders as well as groups of other faiths in

order to promote interreligious dialogue and ecumenical relations in and beyond Ghana with the aim of working towards the common good.



Mr. Baltazar JR. Mahilum Acebedo, Philippines

Being a former seminarian for ten years, Baltazar became familiar with Islam, Buddhism, different Christian denominations and other religions through participation in apostolate programs and school conferences.

After obtaining degrees in Theology and Philosophy, he served as an Instructor of Moral Theology and Social Philosophy at the University of Santo Tomas, Manila. During this time, he held interesting colloquies with students from different religious backgrounds as the country's government considered controversial issues such as the death penalty, same-sex marriage, divorce, along with a wide range of social issues like contraception and surrogacy. By learning more about interreligious dialogue through the Russell Berrie Fellowship, he would like to aim for a more effective approach in teaching morality among diverse religious

perspectives to guard young minds against the political relativism, secularism and the devaluation of the concept of peace.



Rev. Francis Adedigba, Nigeria

Fr. Francis had been committed to interreligious dialogue since the beginning of his priestly ministry in Nigeria, where he chaired an interreligious commission of the archdiocese of Ibadan. He trains religious and lay leadership for dialogue between faiths. With that goal he has taught seminary courses in Evangelization and dialogue, and Islam and interreligious dialogue.



Emmanuel Ikechukwu Aguiyi, Nigeria

Fr. Emmanuel Aguiyi is a Nigerian-born priest ordained for the Catholic Diocese of Umuahia. Early in his priesthood, he was appointed parish priest in a town where Catholics were a minority, an experience that required close collaboration with ministers and lay faithful of other Christian

denominations and engagement with practitioners of traditional African (Igbo) religion. This pastoral context proved formative for his later work in interreligious dialogue.

Following this assignment, Fr. Emmanuel served as Rector of his diocesan seminary in Abia State, Nigeria, where he actively promoted openness and respectful engagement with members of other denominations and religions. At the request of his Bishop, he later accepted a ministry assignment in the Archdiocese of Brisbane, Australia, where he spent nearly a decade serving as Seminary Formator, Parish Priest, and Dean. This period exposed him to a significantly different context of interreligious encounter, inspiring his book *A Contemporary Missionary: Reflections of a Nigerian Priest Working in a Suburban Australian Church*. Fr. Emmanuel is currently a doctoral student at the Pontifical University of St. Thomas Aquinas (Angelicum). Upon completion of his studies, he hopes to combine pastoral ministry with teaching, inspiring others to embrace interreligious dialogue and peaceful coexistence.



Christopher Akongnwi, Cameroon

Rev Fr. Christopher Akongnwi's interest in interreligious dialogue began in childhood through stories about Islam, Buddhism, and Judaism within his Christian community in Cameroon. His seminary formation introduced him to a multicultural environment with students of diverse ethnic, national, and denominational backgrounds. His missionary work in Southeast Asia – particularly in the Philippines and Thailand – deepened his engagement with Buddhist and Muslim communities. He taught English and Civic Education to Buddhist Burmese migrants and collaborated closely with Muslim populations. After graduating from the Higher Teachers Training College in Cameroon, Christopher taught in multi-faith educational institutions, where he observed the urgent need for interreligious dialogue in a context marked by Christian-Muslim mistrust. Rev. Fr Christopher is presently serving in the diocese of Bafia in Cameroon. He is the diocesan Secretary of Ecumenism and Interreligious Dialogue Commission. He equally serves as the Vice Principal

of SABAYA Bilingual College Bafia, a Catholic institution welcoming students of other faiths.



Ms. Berliana Ali, Indonesia

Berliana Ali began her studies at the Pontifical Biblical Institute in 2011. During the propaedeutic year there, she would stay additional hours after her studies to help her classmates who were struggling with the challenges that such a year offers. Later on she was nominated as the student representative for Asia at the institute. Berliana has furthermore been invited to work in a diocese where interreligious dialogue is much needed; therefore, she is deeply motivated to broaden her knowledge at the Angelicum. In the future she would also like to be engaged in teaching and biblical ministry; through this mission she would like to raise awareness especially among Christians to the importance of interreligious dialogue by empowering them with essential knowledge and helping them build the right mentality.



Rev. Richard James Babao, Philippines

Fr. Richard's earliest influences led him to his commitment to interreligious dialogue. He grew up in a mixed community of Muslims and Christians in the Philippines where terror and conflict are notorious. He actively takes part in the resolution of these conflicts, serving as a parochial vicar in the St. Anthony of Padua, Parish of Singalong, Malate – Manila.

Among his many duties, Fr. Richard serves as a Parish Priest at Parokya ng Ina ng Laging Saklolo Punta, Sta. Ana, Manila; He is also Assistant Minister at Ministry for Ecumenical and Interfaith Affairs Archdiocese of Manila, Instructor, Ecumenism & IRD San Carlos Seminary Makati City and Vicar Forane at Vicariate of Holy Family.



Rev. Kurian Benoy Ambazhathinal, India

As a pastor, Fr. Kurian has consistently immersed himself in religiously and culturally diverse communities, demonstrating a deep commitment to dialogue and mutual understanding. Recognizing the

importance of theological depth in addressing the complex realities of interreligious engagement, he pursued advanced studies at the Pontifical University of Saint Thomas Aquinas (Angelicum) in Rome. His time at the Angelicum enabled him to engage rigorously with questions of ecclesiology, ecumenism, and interfaith theology, equipping him with both the intellectual formation and pastoral sensitivity needed to foster meaningful dialogue - particularly in the context of Christian-Hindu relations in India. His academic initiatives reflect not only scholarly dedication but also a pastoral vision: he has sought to bridge theological reflection with lived experience, promoting conversations that encourage reconciliation, shared values, and collaborative witness among diverse faith communities. Through research, conferences, and community engagement, Fr. Kurian has contributed to strengthening ecumenical understanding and advancing respectful interreligious encounters. Currently, Fr. Kurian serves in the Syro-Malabar Catholic Eparchy of Great Britain, where he is responsible for pastoral ministry among the faithful of the Syro-Malabar Church in the United Kingdom.

In this role, he accompanies a vibrant and multicultural diaspora community, integrating his academic expertise with hands-on pastoral leadership. His ministry continues to embody a harmonious blend of scholarship and service, grounded in faith and oriented toward unity, dialogue, and community-building.



Rev. Sebastian Chukwuma Anokwulu, Nigeria

Upon completion of his Doctorate in Sacred Theology at Angelicum, Fr. Sebastian returned to Nigeria to serve as point person for ecumenism and interreligious dialogue, working directly under the Bishop. He leads workshops, seminars, and retreats to bring religious leaders in the country up-to-date on issues of religious freedom and pluralism. In 2009, he founded the Masdevan Foundation which improves the lives of young people through educational scholarships and training in agricultural skills to improve community development and create job opportunities.

He is currently Director of the Ecumenical & Interreligious Office, Onitsha Ecclesiastic Province;

Professor of Ecumenical & Interreligious Studies at Bigard Memorial Seminary and Tansi Memorial Seminary.



Kashif Anthony, Pakistan

Mr. Kashif Anthony is a Human Rights defender and Peace Activist from the Roman Catholic Church of the Archdiocese of Karachi, Pakistan. He serves as the Diocesan Coordinator at the Catholic Commission of Justice and Peace (CCJP), assisting His Grace Benny Mario Travas, the Archbishop of the Archdiocese of Karachi. Due to his leadership skills and dedication to youth development and interreligious relations, His Eminence Joseph Cardinal Coutts appointed him as a Core Committee Member of the National Commission for Inter-Religious Dialogue at the Archdiocese of Karachi. Now, He is serving as a Secretary of the Catholic Commission for Inter-religious Dialogue and Ecumenism, at the Archdiocese of Karachi. His work in Inter-Faith and Intra-Faith (Ecumenism) activities is inspired by Chiara Lubich, the founder of the Focolare Movement.

Mr. Anthony has represented CCJP and the Archdiocese of Karachi at national and international interreligious forums, building strong relationships with members and clergy of different religions in Pakistan. His contributions to Catechism, intra-faith Catholic Commission for Inter-religious Dialogue and Ecumenism, at the Archdiocese of Karachi. His work in Inter-Faith and Intra-Faith (Ecumenism) activities is inspired by Chiara Lubich, the founder of the Focolare Movement. Mr. Anthony possesses exceptional leadership qualities, earning the trust and respect of other faith leaders. He is a visionary with a strong desire to develop leadership skills among youth and foster positive societal change through interfaith dialogue.



Sr. Geraldine C. Anugwem, Nigeria

Sr. Geraldine Chinwendu Anugwem is a member of the Congregation of the Handmaids of the Holy Child Jesus of the Diocese of Ikot Ekpene in Nigeria. As a Nigerian, she grew up in a society known for its unending interreligious tensions and conflicts predominantly between Christians and Muslims in

the northern part of the country. As a religious Sister, Sr. Geraldine has been privileged to engage in some apostolates that have brought her in closer contacts with people from other religions. For instance, within the past few years, she has worked as one of the collaborators of Caritas in one of the parishes of Milan Archdiocese.

Sr. Geraldine is of the opinion that at the root of interreligious conflicts and tensions lies principally the problem of ignorance and she believes that one of the most important steps to be taken towards a peaceful co-existence of different religions is the “Creation of awareness”. She wishes to acquire more knowledge primarily on how religions relate to one another, gain theological, historical, social, and cultural knowledge, as well as critical hermeneutic skills. Peaceful co-existence between different religions for Sr. Geraldine, is possible if only adherents of different religions are enlightened on the fundamental requisites for a peaceful and harmonic co – existence.

Sr. Geraldine just concluded her Doctoral Degree program at the Lateran University in October 2025 and currently in search of possible opportunities to

render her services in the Church while still uphold the intention to take an active part in guiding people towards developing a positive outlook to religious diversity through, workshops, seminars etc. both within and outside the religious circle.



Gloria S. Guisbert Aramayo, Bolivia/USA

Gloria Guisbert Aramayo was born in La Paz, Bolivia, and immigrated to the United States at a young age. Formed between Bolivia and the United States, she grew up witnessing the intersecting realities of poverty, racial inequality, and political instability. These experiences shaped her vocation to pursue theology as a means of advancing justice, reconciliation, and human dignity within marginalized communities.

Her academic and professional work focuses on education, community engagement, and interreligious dialogue. During her undergraduate studies, she was shaped by the witness of Óscar Romero and the writings of Gustavo Gutiérrez, whose vision of the Preferential Option for the Poor continues to inform her theology. Inspired by these

influences, she helped foster local spaces for dialogue among Abrahamic religious traditions and became actively engaged in interfaith initiatives.

Currently, Gloria is completing a Master of Theological Studies at the University of Notre Dame, where her research engages liberation theology, decolonial and post-colonial thought, and theological anthropology within the Latin American context. Her work pays particular attention to Bolivia's historical experience, examining how colonial legacies, race, class, and religious formation continue to shape social and theological identities. She is especially interested in how theology can contribute to processes of healing, memory, and reconciliation in communities marked by historical injustice. Gloria intends to pursue doctoral studies in theology, with a focus on decolonial and liberation theological approaches, aiming to serve as a scholar and educator who promotes justice, reconciliation, and interreligious dialogue across diverse communities.



Gianluca Avanzato, USA

Gianluca Avanzato is a writer, artist, poet and teacher living in upstate New York. Gianluca holds a Master of Divinity from Harvard Divinity School, where he studied religion and spiritual care. He has engaged in interreligious dialogue trainings and sessions around the world and holds a Diploma in Interreligious Studies from the Pontifical University of St. Thomas Aquinas (Angelicum) in Rome. As the Student Experience Coordinator at SUNY Oneonta, Gianluca oversaw the creation of an inaugural Interfaith Prayer & Reflection Space on campus and advises the Interfaith Student Council. Along with his work in higher education and teaching Italian, he has developed and led workshops, pilgrimages and programming around the United States and Europe, including Sacred Writing Circles and Apothecary of the Word. In his work of teaching writing as a spiritual practice of self-knowing and offering 1:1 creativity coaching, Gianluca strives to help others honor, enkindle, and cultivate their sacred creativity and connect more deeply to the universe.



Halil Avci, Germany

Halil Avci is a Ph.D. student in Theology and Religious Studies at Georgetown University. Besides the Diploma in Interreligious Studies from the Angelicum, he holds an MLitt in Historical and Systematic Theology from the University of St Andrews, and a B.A. in Islamic Theology from the Eberhard Karls University of Tübingen.

His research explores interreligious encounters from a comparative islamic perspective. In addition to interreligious relations, he is interested in how religious traditions are interpreted and expressed through cultural heritage, politics and linguistic diversity.



Most Rev. John Bogna Bakeni, Nigeria

Most Rev John Bogna Bakeni is the Auxiliar Bishop of the Catholic Diocese of Maiduguri in Northeastern Nigeria. He is deeply involved in Ecumenical and Interreligious Dialogue. He is the Chairman of the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) Bornon state chapter. He currently runs a center for Interreligious Dialogue.

In addition to his priestly duties in the Catholic Diocese of Maiduguri, as a priest Fr. John has held several positions focused on religious education, specifically, the formation of pastoral and catechist agents.



Anna Veres (Balint), Hungary

Anna Veres (née Anna Bálint) – after the completion of her studies at the Angelicum – graduated as a pastor from the Károli Gáspár University of the Reformed Church in 2020. That same year, she moved to Germany with her husband and served as a scholarship pastor for the Hungarian Protestant Congregations in Baden, where ecumenism played a significant role in her ministry. Upon returning home, she served as a pastor in Budapest and later in Szigetszentmiklós. She currently lives in Budapest with her husband and young daughter. Starting in 2025, she organized baby-friendly worship services and, subsequently, a prayer circle for mothers and their infants. Additionally, she is currently studying pastoral counseling at Semmelweis University.



Fr. Herbert Banda, Zimbabwe

Herbert Banda has worked as a parish priest from 2002-2012. As a pastor he undertook hospital ministry in which he dedicated himself to the spiritual needs of patients Catholics and other Christians alike. In the first four years he was the spiritual director of the Catholic Charismatic renewal in the Archdiocese of Bulawayo and in the last four years he was the spiritual director of the catholic men's association in the Diocese of Gokwe.

Inspired by the social and civil challenges faced by his country, he worked with local pastors of other Christian denominations in conflict resolution and peace building workshops. Upon completing the course at the Angelicum, Herbert hopes to shift his attention to interreligious and ecumenical initiatives and become a pioneer in his country.



Ms. Lidiia Batig, Ukraine

For a number of years, Lidiia Batig worked as a journalist at the press office at the “Spiritual greatness of Lviv” website and also cooperated with Lviv City Council. Partly due to her own religion, family history and the current situation in Ukraine made religious journalism her calling. She understands that in the difficult circumstances of the time and society in which we now live we should not oppose each other’s differences but we should seek ways to find compromise.

She has also actively worked with Libertas, which is a Center for inter-confessional and interreligious dialogue, and organized various Christian-Judeo-Muslim round tables.



Dr. Paola Bernardini, Italy/USA

Paola Bernardini’s interest and passion for interreligious dialogue stem from her personal experience living in places like Saudi Arabia, the UK, Switzerland, Italy and the USA. In 2012, upon completing the Russell Berrie Fellowship Program in

Interreligious Studies at the Angelicum, Paola returned to the US to work as Associate Director for Research of "Contending Modernities," a global interfaith education and research initiative at the University of Notre Dame. She currently lives with her husband in Miami where they both work at Carrollton School of the Sacred Heart - part of an international network of schools educating women leaders to an active faith and understanding of other spiritual traditions. She has been the recipient of the ECIS International Understanding Award, the Notre Dame Global Collaborative Initiative Award, and the Chicago Interfaith Youth Core Curriculum Development Mini-Grant.



Ms. Anna Marie Bninski, USA

The first time Anna saw the marvelous potential of interreligious dialogue was when she witnessed a call to action at a public rally organized by IMPACT; a coalition of congregations which includes Unitarian, Muslim, Protestant, Jewish and Catholic members and works to identify issues affecting the marginalized members of her hometown in Virginia.

This experience remained the most beautiful aspect of interreligious understanding that she has encountered. For two years of her college career she hosted tea parties on Friday afternoons, where conversation topics covered the ethics of their lives and the guiding principles of their religious traditions. Here they welcomed the chance to explain their beliefs and to ask questions without calling names or converting. As a Jesuit Volunteer from 2013 at the Josephinum Academy in Chicago, Illinois, Anna served as a full-time volunteer at a Catholic high school for disadvantaged young women. She co-taught religion class surveying American religious diversity with an emphasis on social justice and she practiced the Jesuit Volunteer Corps' values of social justice, simple living, community, and spirituality. Anna now works in communications for the Knights of Columbus, which is one of the leading lay Catholic organizations in the United States. Anna now works in communications for the Knights of Columbus, which is one of the leading lay Catholic organizations in the United States.



Prof. Andrew James Boyd, USA

Andrew (A.J.) directs the International Fellows Programme at the King Abdullah bin Abdul Aziz International Centre for Interreligious and Intercultural Dialogue, in Lisbon, Portugal. He taught theology in Rome for more than a decade, at a variety of Pontifical and international institutions, specializing in ecclesiology, ecumenism, comparative religions and interreligious dialogue. He is an international speaker, and has trained faculty and religious leaders in dialogue around the world. He was an advisor to the World Conference on Faith and Order of the World Council of Churches in 2025, and has collaborated with the dicasteries on promoting Christian Unity, Interreligious Dialogue, and Integral Human Development, as well as several international organizations within the Church. He is a global consultant to the World Organization of the Scout Movement on spirituality and interreligious dialogue, and a board member of the North American Academy of Ecumenists.

He served as the first Assistant Director of the John Paul II Centre for Interreligious Dialogue, and spent a

decade in parish ministry and as an ecumenical officer in the US before moving to Europe as a Russell Berrie Fellow in 2009.



Elyse Brazel, Canada

Elyse Brazel grew up in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada. She received her Bachelor of Fine Arts in Visual Art and Design (BFa 2006) from the University of Alberta. After Elyse's experience living and working with refugee claimants at Toronto's Romero House, her journey shifted into more multicultural and interreligious engagement for social justice. She received her Master of Arts in Public and Pastoral Leadership (MAPPL 2014) as well as a Certificate in Indigenous and Inter-religious Studies (IIS 2017) from the Vancouver School of Theology. She has also earned a Diploma of Eccumenical and Inter-religious Studies (2016) from The Pontifical University of St. Thomas Aquinas in Rome, Italy. Elyse is alumna of several interreligious fellowships including the Faiths Act Fellowship (2009), the Russell Berrie Fellowship in Interreligious Studies (2016), the KAICIID International Fellows Program in peacebuilding (2017)

and the IFYC Interfaith Innovation Fellowship (2021). She's lived in interfaith intentional communities in Ottawa (Faith House Ottawa) and New York State (Community of Living Traditions). She is trained in dialogue facilitation and has led workshops/experiential-learning opportunities focused on religious and cultural diversity, literacy, cross-cultural communication, and inclusion on several higher education campuses across Canada, including as the Education Coordinator at the University of Calgary's Faith & Spirituality Centre. Now as the Community Connector with the Calgary Interfaith Council, her work is to find ways to bring people together to collaborate and creatively combine their strengths, talents, and assets to work together for the common good.



Asst. Prof. Val Galagate Brillo, Philippines

Immediately after completing his undergraduate studies at the University of Santo Tomas, Val began teaching theology and moral philosophy at the same institution. He also served as an administrator in the Public Affairs and Alumni Office and in the

Ecclesiastical Faculties. During his student years, he demonstrated leadership as Editor-in-Chief of *Inter Nos*, the Faculty of Sacred Theology publication, and *Benavides*, the University Central Seminary journal. Following postgraduate studies, including licentiate and master's degrees in Rome, Val returned to the University of Santo Tomas as a faculty member. He has since participated in numerous academic conferences and initiatives promoting interfaith dialogue among Christians, Muslims, and other religious communities. These include engagements with the Peacemakers' Circle Foundation, the Asia Pacific Policy Forum on the Role of Youth in Peacebuilding, the Asian Conference on Religions for Peace Philippines, Social Sciences Symposia on the Sociology of Religions, and the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines' Episcopal Commission on Interreligious Dialogue (CBCP-ECID). His work also extends to international discussions on culture and peace, religious freedom, and religious extremism, including his recent role as a Training Facilitator at the ASEAN Institute for Peace and Reconciliation (ASEAN-IPR).

As a core member of CBCP-ECID, Val continues to

contribute to interfaith understanding and interreligious and ecumenical dialogues. He is currently an Assistant Professor at the University of Santo Tomas Institute of Religion, committed to advancing scholarly dialogue and peacebuilding initiatives.



Ali Chamseddine, Lebanon/USA

Ali Chamseddine is an Advanced Practice Board Certified Chaplain (APBCC) through the Spiritual Care Association and Lead Chaplain at Gillette Children's through Regions Hospital in St. Paul, Minnesota. Born and raised in Lebanon, his work is shaped by a lifelong engagement with religious plurality, cultural diversity, and questions of meaning, identity, and healing. His experience as an immigrant continues to inform his scholarly and pedagogical commitment to interreligious dialogue and embodied practices of care. Ali developed and teaches Religion, Spirituality, and Healing in Healthcare at the University of St. Thomas, a course examining the role of spirituality, religious traditions, and interreligious engagement within clinical contexts.

In addition to his formal coursework, he has designed and taught seminars focused on interreligious encounter and leadership, including Cultivating a Culture of Encounter, Wonder, and Curiosity and Multifaith Leadership and Engagement in a Fractured World. He previously served as an adjunct professor in theology at the University of St. Thomas, teaching courses in interreligious dialogue, comparative theology, and Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. He is also affiliated with the Jay Phillips Center for Interreligious Studies, where his teaching and clinical work contribute to interdisciplinary conversations on dialogue, formation, and lived religion.

Ali holds a Licentiate of Sacred Theology (STL) in Ecumenical and Interreligious Studies, earned magna cum laude from the Pontifical University of St. Thomas Aquinas (Angelicum) in Rome. His thesis explored Shi'a eschatology as a foundation for theological dialogue. His academic and professional formation includes studies and fellowships in Rome, Jerusalem, and Vienna, including work with the King Abdullah Bin Abdulaziz International Centre for Interreligious and Intercultural Dialogue (KAICIID). Ali is multilingual, with native fluency in Arabic and

French, professional fluency in English and Italian, and working knowledge of Syriac, Latin, Biblical Hebrew, and Biblical Greek. Across his teaching, scholarship, and clinical practice, he is committed to cultivating brave, reflective, and hospitable spaces where dialogue, healing, and shared human meaning can emerge.



Sarah Katherine (Farnes) Chamseddine, USA

Sarah's interest in interreligious studies grew from her experiences of intercultural dialogue with international students at her university. During her studies for her master's degree, Sarah worked as the graduate assistant for the University's Muslim-Christian Dialogue Center. In recognition of her commitment to intercultural and interpersonal relationships, her university awarded her its Global Citizenship Award. Upon graduation, she completed an internship with the Holy See's Permanent Observer Mission to the United Nations in New York City, then moved to Rome for the Russell Berrie Fellowship.

Since 2016, Sarah has been a Campus Minister at the University of St. Thomas in St. Paul Minnesota, USA. In her role, Sarah works directly with students to design, implement, and manage faith-based programs. Her passion for dialogue is realized through her role of managing Campus Ministry's ecumenical, multifaith, and interfaith initiatives, as well as being the liaison to the affiliate Christian organizations on campus.

Sarah is a certified professional campus minister through the Catholic Campus Ministry Association (CCMA); which is endorsed by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. In addition to her work at St. Thomas, she serves on the certification committee for CCMA and was a member of the Archdiocesan Commission for Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs for the Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis.

Most importantly, Sarah is a wife and mother. With her husband, she is raising two boys to be global citizens who embrace opportunities to be in solidarity with all of God's children.



Sr. Purobi Chiran, Bangladesh

As a member of the Congregation of Religious of Notre Dame of the Missions, Purobi Chiran began her missionary journey by teaching at Miriam Shishu Bidhaloy, school Natore in Bangladesh. The school is situated in a town where mostly Muslims and Hindus live and there is not one Christian family. She soon became head mistress and after facing many challenges she was able to create harmony in the school among the teachers and the parents of the students. Her constant interaction with Muslims and Hindus made her realize that while she was practicing a “dialogue of life” it also became a “dialogue of service”.

After completing her studies at the Angelicum she is back in her home country, sharing the knowledge gained about the values of Interreligious Dialogue in the major seminary Banani, Dhaka, where seminarians are preparing themselves to become future priests to serve humanity. In addition, she has also organized a series of initiatives aimed at educating women in IRD.



Ms. Rebecca Theresa Cohen, USA

Rebecca Cohen is currently the Program and Research Specialist in the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops' Secretariat for Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs. In this capacity, she assists the bishops with their relations with the American Jewish community, including three standing dialogues.

In the past, she has interned with the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's Committee on Church Relations (now, Programs on Ethics, Religion, and the Holocaust), the Institute for Interreligious Study and Dialogue at the Catholic University of America, the InterFaith Conference (now, Council) of Metropolitan Washington, and the Secretariat. She currently sits on the board of the InterFaith Council.

Between 2012 and 2020, Rebecca was a participant, and later a presenter, in the Holy See's bi-annual Catholic-Jewish Emerging Leadership Conference held in collaboration with the International Jewish Committee for Interreligious Consultations.

She holds an MA in Historical and Systematic Theology from the Catholic University of America in Washington, DC; a certificate in Interreligious Studies

and an STL (Licentiate of Sacred Theology) in Ecumenism from the Pontifical University of St. Thomas Aquinas in Rome, Italy, where she was a Russell Berrie fellow; a certificate in Islamic Studies from the Pontifical Institute for Arabic and Islamic Studies in Rome; and a two-year diploma in Jewish Studies from the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome, during which time she was awarded the Brenninkmeijer-Werhahn Fellowship for a semester of study at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem in Israel. She is continuing her studies as doctoral student at the Catholic University of America in Religion and Culture with a focus on images of Jews and Judaism in the Armenian Orthodox Church.



Marija Corusa, Bosnia and Herzegovina

Marija was only seven years old when the Balkan war began. As a Croatian Catholic living in Bosnia, the culture of her childhood told her that the ‘other’, whether Bosnian Muslim or Serbian Orthodox, was the enemy. Her decision to try to understand her neighbors, instead, prompted her to study theology in Sarajevo, and then to pursue a Master’s in Religion,

specializing in Islam, at Rome's Pontifical Gregorian University. While a student in Rome, she had many contacts with the people of other faiths and ethnic and national backgrounds which pushed her to study more Religions and Interreligious dialogue. Finishing her studies at Gregorian University and diploma in Islam from PISA Marija wasn't still convinced that this is enough for her. She applied to the Russell Berrie Fellowship because she wanted to have more knowledge about interreligious dialogue and how to reach the people of other faiths. Finishing Russell Berrie licence at the Angelicum Marija applied for the position to work at John Paul II Office for the Interreligious dialogue at the Angelicum where she was chosen for the position.



Rev. Charles Cortinovis, USA

Fr. Charles is a civil lawyer, who was ordained a priest in 2009 for the Archdiocese of Washington. His archbishop, Cardinal Wuerl, encouraged him to complete a degree at the Angelicum in interreligious dialogue, as there were no diocesan priests specifically trained in the area. As part of his work

Fr. Charles initiates programs educating other priests and laity about the importance of interfaith understanding.

Father Charles Cortinovis served as the priest secretary to Cardinal Wilton Gregory and was also the executive director of the Office of Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs for the Archdiocese of Washington..



Ms. Emily Kathleen David, USA

Emily realized her passion for theology when she studied abroad in Rome. During her time at the University of Notre Dame, she worked with the Office of Campus Ministry where she helped lead four pilgrimages, two of which were in Rome. This Interreligious Studies experience will help form her work in youth and young adult ministry, as interfaith relations are becoming more vital for young emerging leaders. Secondly, she is interested in exploring how different religious beliefs affect attitudes toward immigration, while learning more about the spirituality of refugees and migrants in Italy.

In Rome she plans to assess, through service and research, how different faith-based institutions are addressing the refugee crisis in Europe. Finally, she hopes to sharpen her understanding of holistic health, knowing that spirituality and faith are key components in one's wellbeing. She is particularly eager to learn more about Eastern religions. In the future she aspires to practice health counseling with pastoral care, through which she will educate communities about the integration of physical, mental, and spiritual wellbeing.



Sr. Anie Deepa Nedumkallel, India

Sr. Anie Deepa is a member of the Franciscan Clarist Congregation (FCC) and has served as an educator in various schools in Kerala and Gujarat, as well as a formator within her congregation.

A Russell Berrie Fellow at the Pontifical University of St. Thomas Aquinas (Angelicum), Rome, she completed her Licentiate in Ecumenism and Interreligious Dialogue. Through this fellowship, she also had the opportunity to visit the Holy Land and deepen her understanding of Judaism.

She later pursued her doctoral studies at the Angelicum in Ecumenical Theology, specializing in interreligious collaboration. Her research compared the perspectives of St. Thomas Aquinas and Swami Vivekananda on charity and seva as expressions of divine love and unity.

She teaches Ecumenism and Theology of Religions in formation centers and seminaries, serves on the Liturgy Commission of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Thamarassery, Kerala. As Provincial Counselor for Evangelization, she conducts spiritual programs and formation sessions for youth and adults and contributes articles promote peace, harmony, and unity. Rooted in Christ, her vision affirms that true unity among peoples is realized in Him, the Savior of all humanity.



Ms. Elena Dini, Italy

Elena Dini has worked for over 15 years as a communications specialist for different religious institutions in Rome, Italy, most recently for the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre.

Until December 2024 she was the Senior Program Manager of the John Paul II Center for Interreligious Dialogue. She holds degrees in Near and Middle Eastern Studies, Communications, Catholic Theology and Interfaith Dialogue and is currently pursuing her joint PhD at the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome and the Catholic University in Lyon writing on Catholic theology of religion and interreligious dialogue.

She offers sessions and workshops on dialogue both locally and internationally and writes on the topic. A Kaiciid Fellow and Gingko interfaith Fellow and grant recipient for international projects, Elena was the trainer of the 5 weeks e-learning champion training in dialogue organized by Kaiciid during the last quarter 2025 and she will be the Christian convenor of the next GINGKO interfaith retreat in Istanbul in 2026. Elena also serves locally as the official liaison with the Muslim communities for the region around Rome (Lazio) at the Italian Bishops' Conference and is a frequent contributor to L'Osservatore Romano, the Vatican newspaper, for articles related to Muslim-Catholic and Jewish-Catholic dialogue.



Rev. Vincent George Dissanayake, Sri Lanka

Fr. George was ordained to the presbyterate for the Diocese of Trincomalee-Batticaloa in 1989 and immediately began service in parish ministry in majority Hindu and Muslim areas. Before this, his secondary education was at a Buddhist school, and his interest in dialogue with non-Christian religions has been lifelong. Since 2003, he has served as rector of the diocesan Cathedral of St. Mary. He is the author of three books, and since 1997 has been secretary and co-coordinator of the Interreligious Peace Foundation. In 2011, the Sri Lankan government recognized his contributions to dialogue and peace-building with the nation's second highest civil honor, the title of Deshamanya (Pride of the Nation). Fr. Vincent is currently serving as a Parish priest of China bay, (Trincomalee Eastern Port city and second largest natural harbour in the world) Multi ethnic multi religious parish where Sinhalese, Tamils and Muslim live. In addition to his pastoral ministry, he is also Diocesan Director of Interreligious and Ecumenism and Member of the committee of

papal visit and interreligious and ecumenical gathering in Sri Lanka.



Rev. Dr. Mother Nozipho Dlodlo, Zimbabwe

Nozipho has been working as pastor for the Kwazulu Natal Council of Churches in South Africa since the end of 2016, where she encounters people from various faith communities such as Christian, Muslim or Hindu on a daily basis and helps them resolve interreligious conflicts in order to live in harmony together. Her background includes a university education in the various fields of religious studies including religion philosophy, gender and biblical studies and religion sociology, but she has also held positions such as student lecturer, hospital chaplain, community worker and translator for the Paratext Software created by the Canada Bible Society. She believes that interfaith dialogue helps individuals and thereby communities accept the “non-universality” of their faith and allows more meaningful and constructive engagements for people from different faith groups. After completing her year at the Angelicum, Nozipho hopes she will be better

equipped to respond to the different conflicts in her community and thus to change the world that she works in. I now serve as a full time priest in the Episcopal Diocese of Wisconsin in the USA.



Matthew Doeing, USA

Matthew received his M.A. in Theology from Providence College and his B.A. with majors in Religious Studies and Biology from Elizabethtown College. Based in Pennsylvania in the U.S., in 2025 he initiated the Lebanon Young Adult Catholics group to serve as a spiritual resource for those ages 18 to 39 who are based in Lebanon County, Pennsylvania, or surrounding areas. He has also served as a contributor for Ascension Press, having contributed to their The Catechism in a Year Companion, Volume II publication.

Currently Matthew works as a Garden Center Department Manager in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania. He is interested in furthering interreligious dialogue and ecumenism within his local area, including via participation with the local Focolare community. Matthew is ultimately

interested in growing deeper in love with Jesus Christ and serving Him in whatever capacity he is called to.



Mr. B. Kim. Dolan, USA

From 1998 to 2004, Kim served as Director of Catholic Campus Ministry at Northern Michigan University and was active in the university's ecumenical and interreligious association. He previously led Urbs Sacra, an apostolate for English-speaking pilgrims visiting Rome.



Manoj Rasanjana Angodage Don, Sri Lanka

Fr Manoj Rasanjana Angodage Don is a Sri Lankan priest and pastoral minister known for his commitment to spiritual formation, community service, and the promotion of faith-based engagement in society. Born and raised in Sri Lanka, he has dedicated his vocation to serving local communities through preaching, pastoral care, and initiatives that foster moral and social responsibility. Fr Manoj's ministry reflects a strong concern for the spiritual and human development of those he serves,

with particular attention to education, community outreach, and the role of faith in responding to contemporary social challenges. He is especially interested in the relationship between religious life and the practical needs of society, encouraging dialogue, compassion, and service as essential expressions of faith.

Through his priestly vocation, Fr Manoj Rasanjana Angodage Don continues to contribute to the life of the Church and the wider community in Sri Lanka, offering pastoral leadership rooted in dedication, humility, and a deep sense of spiritual mission.



Dr. Taras Dzyubansky, Ukraine

Taras holds a B.A. in Philosophy and studied at various papal institutes in the Vatican. He has deepened his involvement in interfaith dialogue by working in Kazakhstan and in eastern Ukraine, and by teaching religion courses at St. Maurice Catholic School in Stamford, CT, U.S.A.

In 2012, he obtained his PhD in Theology and Interreligious Dialogue. Since October 2012, Taras has been working as an adviser to the mayor of Lviv for

religious and ecumenical issues. In May 2013, he inaugurated an interfaith center “Libertas,” the first of its kind in Ukraine. Since its creation, the center has held over 80 ecumenical and interreligious events in view of promoting dialogue and understanding among different religious groups.

Taras has been awarded with several distinctions related to his innovative approach on interfaith dialogue and social issues. He is now an adviser to the President of the Lviv Chamber of Commerce and Industry on social issues.

Author of three books, Taras is strongly committed to promoting interfaith and intercultural dialogue. He believes that people of different faiths have a lot to offer to humanity through their religious experiences and traditions which are an invaluable source of wisdom, prudence, love and respect.

Currently, Taras is based in Rome working with the Collins Center for Abrahamic Heritage of the Acton Institute.



Mr. Peter Joseph Dzedzic, USA

Peter is currently finishing his PhD in Comparative Religion at Harvard University. His research focuses on Sufism in Kashmir, Kashmir as a site of interreligious encounter, Muslim-Catholic theological dialogue, and comparative religious perspectives on the environment.

Peter currently serves as the Assistant Director of Undergraduate Studies in the Study of Religion at Harvard, an Instructor in Religion, Ethics, and Philosophy at Phillips Exeter Academy, and an Adjunct Professor of Religious Studies and Islamic World Studies at DePaul University, the largest Catholic university in the United States. At all three institutions, he strives to advance the field of interreligious studies by developing courses that center pedagogies of encounter and experiences of deep reading across traditional literary and religious canons.

Peter is also researching interreligious pilgrimage experiences. Having completed the Catholic Camino de Santiago in Spain, the Buddhist Shikoku Henro in Japan, and the Muslim Arbaeen pilgrimage in Iraq, he

is passionate about developing cross-cultural encounters on pilgrimage routes as a way to build intercultural understanding and religious literacy.



Rev. Celestine Ezemadubom, Nigeria

Father Celestine having completed his doctorate, in obedience to his bishop, is working as a chaplain of the Nigerian Catholic Community in the Italian city of Modena. He believes much in inter- denominational and interfaith activities. In carrying out such activities, he is convinced following the view of Saint Pope John Paul II that the first phase may not be far from healing the memories of past hurts. That motivated his doctoral research on ‘the process of healing of memories’ for the individual and for the group.

Presently, he has published a part of that research both in Italian and in English – “La Guarigione delle Memorie: Il Segreto della vera Libertà è di una vita Felice”; “Healing of Memories: The Secret of true Freedom and a happy Life” With this book, he is conducting conferences and seminars among Italians and Nigerians in Italy alike, on the process of healing

of memories for co-habitation of the human race. He is preparing to go back to his home country Nigeria to initiate this process which is very crucial after the civil war which took place 48 years ago but which still keeps both sides prisoners of the past hurts suffered and inflicted.



Mr. Derek Clinton Farmer, USA

Derek has been a Naval intelligence officer, field director for a successful mayoral campaign, and recently finished the seminary formation program to become a lay ecclesial minister. His interest in promoting Catholic Christian engagement in interreligious dialogue comes from his experience in the culturally and religiously diverse environment of the Pacific Northwest, dominated as it is by the ‘spiritual but not religious’ demographic. His interests were developed especially through a year-long pilgrimage around Europe and the Middle East. He hopes to promote dialogue and the new evangelization, especially with the spiritually seeking but ecclesially and religiously unaffiliated, after completing his certificate.



Fr. Caetano Joaquim Fernandes, India

Caetano Fernandes lives in a society where there is a need of mutual acceptance of others, Goa being a state in India with 26% of Catholics and India being a country which comprises less than 3% of Christians. He lives in a land dominated by other religions, such as Hinduism, Islam, Sikhism, and Buddhism; therefore, a healthy interaction with people of different religions came naturally from an early age. Later on the Archbishop of Goa and Daman appointed him as a member of the Committee for the Apostolate of Inter-religious Dialogue in 2008 and then as the Convenor of the same Committee in 2013. As the Convenor, Caetano worked to sow seeds of harmony, peace and justice by organizing inter-religious meetings at the diocesan level and celebrating various festivals such as Christmas, Eid and Diwali. Currently, Fr. Caetano is a Pastor at Holy family Church, Porvorim of the Archdiocese of Goa and Daman, India. Also in-charge of the Apostolate of Ecumenism in the diocese with an appointed team; member of the committee of the interreligious

dialogue. Besides he teaches "Ecumenism and Dialogue" courses in the major seminary.



McKenzie Flowers Fergus, USA

McKenzie Flowers Fergus is an American scholar of religion, interfaith dialogue, and social engagement whose academic and personal journey reflects a deep commitment to the pursuit of truth, human dignity, and spiritual vocation. A native of Abilene, she completed her undergraduate studies in religion at McMurry University after beginning her academic formation at Texas Christian University.

She went on to earn a Master of Divinity from Yale Divinity School, where she studied on a full scholarship and distinguished herself through academic excellence and leadership, including serving as captain of the Yale Graduate Rugby Club. During her time at Yale, she also worked in both the Yale Medical Library and the Yale Divinity Library, deepening her interdisciplinary interests in religion, public health, and global justice.

Awarded the Russell Berrie Fellowship, Fergus pursued advanced study in interfaith dialogue at the

Pontifical University of St. Thomas Aquinas in Rome, with additional academic travel that included time in Israel and participation in international scholarly forums such as a symposium at Oxford University. Her intellectual interests include liberation theology, religious responses to social suffering, and the emerging intersection of medicine and religion. Raised in the life of St. Paul United Methodist Church, Fergus has pursued ordination as a deacon in the United Methodist tradition and hopes to dedicate her career to human rights and nonprofit service. Alongside her academic pursuits, she is an accomplished distance runner who has completed major races including the Boston Marathon and aspires to compete in the Rome Marathon. Guided by faith, intellectual curiosity, and a passion for social transformation, Fergus continues to explore unconventional paths that unite scholarship, spirituality, and service to the global community.



Philip Lajo Fuentes, Philippines

Philip Lajo Fuentes is an Associate Professor of Theology at the University of Santo Tomas (UST) Institute of Religion. His academic and pastoral work centers on ecumenism, interreligious dialogue, the theology of migration, Thomistic philosophy and theology, and religious studies.

He is a Russell Berrie Fellow and a member of the John Paul II Center for Interreligious Dialogue in Rome, Italy. He also serves in the core group of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines (CBCP) Episcopal Commissions for Ecumenical Affairs and Interreligious Dialogue.

Philip earned his Licentiate in Ecumenism and Interreligious Dialogue from the Pontifical University of Saint Thomas Aquinas (Angelicum) in Rome in June 2014. He later pursued doctoral studies in Religious Studies at The Chinese University of Hong Kong through a postgraduate scholarship, completing his PhD on November 25, 2022, with a dissertation titled "Lived Experiences and the Christian Faith of Catholic OFW Mothers in Hong Kong: Towards a Renewed Integral Pastoral Care for Migrants."

Associate Researcher at the UST Research Center for After returning to UST, he was appointed Faculty Secretary of the UST Ecclesiastical Faculties (15 February 2022–31 July 2023). He is currently an Theology, Religious Studies, and Ethics (RCTRSE) and is part of the national research team studying synodality and the status of Catholic Christianity in the Philippines, a CBCP initiative in collaboration with UST. He also serves as a Borrowed Professor at the UST Ecclesiastical Faculties of Philosophy and Theology.

He is affiliated with Uniharmony Partners Manila and Religions for Peace Philippines, and serves as Vice-President of the Philippine Association for Sociology of Religion (PASR). He has presented papers in national and international venues and has published in philosophy and theology. His advocacy in Jewish-Christian dialogue includes a plenary talk in a joint international conference between UST and the B'nai B'rith Jewish Community of the Philippines commemorating the 60th anniversary of Nostra Aetate, and a paper presentation on Jewish-Christian relations at an international academic conference in 2021. He was also the keynote speaker for the Week

2021. He was also the keynote speaker for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity 2025, jointly organized by the CBCP and the National Council of Churches of the Philippines.



Fr. Floyd Kanongi Gatana, Papua New Guinea

He is a Marist Father. Studied in Rome from 2016-2020. Did Bachelor Studies in Theology at the Angelicum University. Was part of the Russell Berrie in 2019. He obtained a Licentiate in Ecumenical and Interreligious Studies at the Angelicum University. Currently working in the Parramatta Diocese, Australia. Working in the Parish and involved with the diocese in the work of Interfaith. Member of the Interfaith commission of the diocese. Working more with other religions in the diocese.



Fr. Richard Emmanuel Gokum, Nigeria

Fr. Richard Gokum Emmanuel originally from Jos, Nigeria is a priest of the Catholic diocese of Sokoto Nigeria. He is the CEO of Veritas University Endowment Foundation (Veritas University is the

Catholic University of Nigeria).

Fr. Richard teaches Interreligious dialogue, History of Islam, and Religion and Sectarian division in Veritas university Abuja Nigeria in the department of Theology. Being surrounded by the ever-present tension between Nigerian Christians and Muslims all his life, facilitating interreligious cooperation lies at the very heart of Fr. Richard's activity as a Catholic priest in the northwest of Nigeria. Since his priestly ordination in 2012, he has worked as a curate in St. Theresa Funtua, parish priest of St John's Gidan Kurma as well as St Joseph's Jibiya, both now in Katsina Catholic diocese which is a challenging place for pastoral work not only because of the long-standing conflict between Muslims and Christians, but also because of the extreme poverty and deprivation of the Christian settlements. His initiatives to promote peaceful co-existence between the Christian and Muslim communities include, among others: a cooperation to provide financial aid for the old and the vulnerable; the scheme of building a nursery and primary school for the use of both religious communities; and a successful peace meeting for Christian and Muslim leaders for

prevention of violence in the 2015 elections. Fr. Richard has a Licentiate and a Doctorate from Angelicum in Rome and a Diploma in Islamic and Arabic studies from PISAI, Rome. He believes that he is well equipped to continue building bridges among the various faith communities in Nigeria, whether in the communal sphere or in the field of research through interactive sessions and conflict resolution programs.



Ms. Courtney Hartmann, USA

Courtney Hartmann has the heart and soul of an educator and works hard to inspire young people to love and serve their community and the Church. She's had the gift of teaching various levels of Catholic education, from first grade through first year in college. Courtney always remembers having an interest in both Judeo-Christian and Interfaith Relations, which have informed her teaching. During her studies, Courtney traveled to Yad Vashem in Israel for a conference entitled, "Teaching the Shoah: Fighting Racism and Prejudice" and a second time with the Russell Berrie Fellowship. She also attended

a Peace Seminar in Hiroshima, Japan. During the 2025 Holy Jubilee Year of Hope, Courtney was able to spend time in Rome in April for the services for Pope Francis, and again in September for the Canonization of the two new holy young Saints, Carlo Acutis and Pier Giorgio Frassati. She was thrilled to be in the presence of Pope Leo XIV so soon after his installation. Courtney is grateful for Vatican II and serves the Church as a lector, Eucharistic minister and Confirmation catechist. Courtney is currently running several apostolates whose united mission is to assist the laity to grow intentionally in holiness.



Rev. Kwan Ho Edward “Eddie” Hsueh, Hong Kong

Fr. Eddie became a consecrated member of the Focolare movement in 1976, and was ordained to the priesthood in the diocese of Hong Kong in 2002. He brings more than twenty years of experience in ecumenism and interreligious dialogue from his academic and pastoral work in Hong Kong and Macao. He is deeply committed to the spirit of dialogue and aims at the realization of unity of all humankind for which Jesus prayed: “That all men be one” (Jn 17:17).

A decade of service as a social worker preceded Fr. Eddie's over twenty years of teaching career in the field of social work at the tertiary level. More than a decade of pastoral ministry then followed. He has also published several articles in the areas of interreligious dialogue and the role of religion in society. Fr. Eddie is now teaching Ecumenism at the Holy Spirit Seminary of Hong Kong, and is doing research in the field of Inter-religious Dialogue. He is a long-time member of the Diocesan Ecumenical Commission. He has helped organize the Catholic-Buddhist Symposium in Dharma Drum Mountain and in the Catholic Fujen University in Taiwan in March, 2017 during which he presented a paper on "Global Ethics and Inter- Religious Dialogue". Fr. Eddie Hsueh was in the citadel of Tagaytay in the Philippines from 2019 to 2022, working as co-director of the School of Oriental Religions (SOR). He obtained his doctorate in Theology in 2017, specializing in Ecumenical and Inter-religious Dialogue at the Pontifical University of St. Thomas Aquinas in Urbe (Angelicum). He published a book on inter-religious dialogue, entitled: The dynamism of conversion and dialogue in the person of John WU, 2018, Angelicum, Rome. Various

articles on ecumenism and inter-religious dialogue in both Chinese and English.



Meilia Irawan, Indonesia

Meilia Irawan's interest in interfaith dialogue began in 2015, following her graduation from the Islamic and Middle East Studies program at the University of Indonesia in Jakarta. During her studies, she became increasingly aware of significant gaps in understanding between religious traditions – particularly within the Islamic world – which she believes have contributed to misunderstanding and tension among people of different faiths. This realization motivated her to focus her academic and professional work on interreligious dialogue as a means of fostering peace and harmony among religious communities.

Meilia is a researcher at the InMind Institute, a nonpartisan nonprofit organization dedicated to research, comparative studies, education, and human resource development. As part of the InMind Institute team, she contributes to projects that promote tolerance, trust, and mutual understanding within

Indonesian society. In 2019-2020, Meilia studied in Rome as a recipient of the Nostra Aetate Foundation Fellowship of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, where she deepened her knowledge of Christianity. In 2021, she continued her academic formation as a Russell Berrie Fellow at the Pontifical University of St. Thomas Aquinas (Angelicum), becoming the second Muslim fellow to pursue the Diploma in Interreligious Studies at the university. Upon graduation, Meilia plans to work with Youth for Peace, a philanthropic organization in Indonesia that coordinates national and international initiatives aimed at promoting interfaith cooperation and addressing humanitarian challenges.

Meilia is also one of 25 youth representatives selected from faith-based organizations, university staff, and community leaders in the 2023 of Young Women Interfaith Leaders, Australia Awards Indonesia. Currently, Meilia is teaching at an educational institution in Indonesia and conducting research on interfaith dialogue.



Mr. Peter Ivanecky, Slovakia

During his studies at the Pontifical University of Saint Thomas Aquinas, Peter's Licentiate thesis focused on the arguments of Moses Maimonides in the works of Thomas Aquinas concerning the limits of the rational knowledge of God. After graduating, Peter moved to Chile for family reasons, where he worked as a professor of philosophy at several universities. He also served as one of the editors of *Aporía: Journal for Philosophical Investigations* at the Institute of Philosophy of the Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile. In 2024, Peter completed his Ph.D. at the Universidad Alberto Hurtado, where he investigated the issue of the socio-epistemic normativity of the suspension of judgment. He currently works as a project manager in the food processing industry for a Slovak company.



Janusz Edmund Janoszka, S.A., Poland/United Kingdom

Fr. Jan began the formation program with the Friars of the Atonement in Rome (Feb. 2018), after leaving his ministry at Saint Anselm's Catholic Church in Southall, London, UK.

Between 2009 and 2018, he had the privilege of collaborating with many faith-based and secular organizations in London, e.g., the RC Diocese of Westminster, Jesuit Refugee Services, and Citizens UK. One of his responsibilities was to form part of the multi-faith leadership team that engaged local Sikh, Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist, and Christian communities in activities promoting community cohesion, reconciliation, and healing. He also served the poor, immigrant, and refugee communities in Liverpool (England), Tijuana (Mexico), Kolkata (India), or Ceuta (North Africa).

Fr. Jan professed his first vows in Assisi (Feb. 2020), made the perpetual profession in Graymoor (Jan. 2023), and completed his S.T.L. degree in theology with specialization in ecumenism and interreligious dialogue at the Angelicum, Rome (Feb. 2023).

Having spent several months in the SA community in Lima, Perú, he was ordained to the diaconate, and subsequently, the presbyterate as a Friar of the Atonement.

In October 2024, Fr. Jan was assigned rector of Sant'Onofrio al Gianicolo, Rome. Since then, he has been offering hospitality to various international groups and individual pilgrims visiting the Eternal City during the Jubilee Year of 2025. He has also been providing pastoral and spiritual assistance to the Sisters of Mother Teresa of Kolkata, the Missionaries of Charity, in San Gregorio al Celio.

He is a member of the S.A. General Council Team (elected in 2024).



Rev. Dr. Jackson Johnson, India

Fr. Jackson Johnson was born in the multi-religious, multicultural context of Kerala, India. From early childhood, he became aware of other religions, especially through friendships formed at school. His interest in other religions deepened during his philosophical studies, where he explored various Hindu and Islamic philosophies.

His initial interest in Judaism arose during his theology studies while researching the Jewish background of the Gospels. During his doctoral studies in Biblical Theology at the Pontifical University of Holy Cross in Rome, he further developed his interest in Judaism. Later, Fr. Jackson started his studies for a licentiate at the Cardinal Bea Centre of the Pontifical Gregorian University in order to better understand Judaism from an academic perspective. His licentiate thesis received the prestigious John Paul II Prize for Catholic-Jewish Studies in 2023. After finishing the one-year Russell Berrie Fellowship at Angelicum, Fr. Jackson commenced his doctoral studies in order to further explore certain theological themes that are deemed sensitive in the Jewish-Catholic relationship.

Fr. Jackson aims to acquire the necessary skills for interreligious dialogue through his studies at the Angelicum. He seeks to integrate interreligious dialogue both academically and pastorally. Academically, he aspires to contribute to the ongoing scholarly discussions regarding Jewish-Christian relations through his research. He emphasizes the

importance of interreligious dialogue and the peaceful coexistence of diverse religions as pastors often work with people of other faiths in their pastoral work. The religious landscape of Kerala - and more broadly India – provides abundant opportunities for dialogue and exchange. Fr. Jackson aspires to be actively involved in interreligious dialogue, addressing the growing intolerance and fostering understanding between communities.



Dr. Sr. Josmy Jose, FMA, India

Adjunct Professor Josmy Jose is a Daughter of Mary Help of Christians (Salesian Sisters of St. John Bosco) and a faculty member at the Pontifical Faculty of Educational Sciences “Auxilium,” Rome, where she teaches: Introduction to World’s Major Religions, Workshop on Religious Education in Multireligious Contexts, Catechetical Methodology, Workshop on Catechetical Methodology
Responsible for Internships Bachelors in Religious Education.

Her doctoral research, published in 2021, presents an encyclopedic study on interreligious dialogue,

combining rigorous theological reflection with practical pastoral application. The study is based on field research conducted in ten village communities near Bengaluru, India, using participatory observation to analyze social situations in light of current scholarly research in India and abroad. Rooted in the historical tradition of the Catholic Church, as reaffirmed by the Second Vatican Council, her work emphasizes forming individuals for dialogue, drawing inspiration from Pope Francis' encyclical *Fratelli Tutti*. It also highlights reflections by leading theologians of the universal Church and practices developed in Asian churches over the past century.

As a professor of the Workshop on Interreligious Dialogue at Auxilium, Rome, Sr. Josmy educates young priests and religious and lay people from diverse religious backgrounds, nurturing a culture of dialogue. Upon completing her tenure as a Russell Berrie Fellow, she hopes to complement her teaching with practical initiatives in collaboration with other universities, motivating others to foster a more peaceful and harmonious world. She also collaborates with the Dicastery for Interreligious Dialogue as a member of the Interreligious Women Network.



Sr. Lucy Joseph, India

Having lived in several areas in India all characterized by various religious beliefs, Sr. Lucy has been exposed to the need of interreligious dialogue early on. She later became a Franciscan Missionary working in the remotest villages of Jharkhand and taught students coming from difficult backgrounds. During this time she worked towards raising their self-esteem and breaking down the cultural barriers and social factors militating against them. In the past seven years she was also actively involved in the Formation of her Religious Congregation where she helped members develop various skills through counseling. Upon completing the Fellowship, Sr. Lucy hopes to equip today's youth with a wider perspective towards religion and culture and to make interreligious dialogue a living reality.



Dr. Sr. Vimal Jyothy Joseph, India

Dr. Sr. Vimal Jyothy is a family physician, social activist, councilor, professor and preacher. At the start of her healing ministry, she was enlightened by the sympathy shared among patients, relatives and staff in the hospital ward. As she was also working among Muslims and Hindus this has helped her better understand different customs and cultures. All of these experiences inspired her to work towards the comprehensive holistic growth and development of people regardless of caste, creed, color, race or religion. This passion was further strengthened by her time spent in Mumbai, where she worked with people suffering from HIV/AIDS, as well as with marginalized children and vulnerable women. She is also the director of ISHOMS Trust, which is an institute offering support for underprivileged people from all backgrounds. With the help of the Russell Berrie Fellowship, she hopes to deepen her knowledge and understanding of different religions for the promotion and continuation of peace, harmony and unity.



Fr. Baiju Julian, India

Born in a land of multiple religions, castes, and creeds, Fr. Baiju Julian is naturally drawn to the study of religion, history, and culture. He has witnessed firsthand how false interpretations of religious ideas can give rise to violence and hatred, shaping the lives of thousands. Convinced that interreligious dialogue is essential for peace, Fr. Baiju believes such efforts must be strengthened to spread truth and harmony within Indian society.

Focused on this lifelong goal, he developed a deep knowledge of Hindu religions during his philosophical studies. In his doctoral thesis, published by the Pontifical Institute of Theology and Philosophy in 2005, Fr. Baiju engaged the thought of Dr. Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, a modern Indian religious philosopher. He has also contributed articles to leading academic journals, including *Vidyajothi* and the *Journal of Dharma*.

Fr. Baiju taught moral theology for thirteen years at the Pontifical Institute of Theology and Philosophy in Kerala, India. After assuming the role of Coordinator of Pastoral Ministries in the Diocese of Quilon, he

organized numerous interreligious seminars throughout the diocese. He is convinced that interreligious studies foster the integral development of the human person and offer pathways for meaningful dialogue with marginalized communities, contributing to liberation from social and economic deprivation.

As a Russell Berrie Fellow at the Angelicum, Fr. Baiju seeks to deepen his understanding of Judaism. By acquiring a comprehensive knowledge of the monotheistic traditions – Judaism, Christianity, and Islam – he hopes to enrich his future ministry and academic contributions in the field of interreligious dialogue.



Emily Lauren Judd, USA

Emily Judd is the senior communications specialist at the Zayed Award for Human Fraternity in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates. In her position, she has penned speeches for heads of states and global religious leaders, as well as spearheaded communications for the first-ever Faith Pavilion at a UN climate conference (COP28) and launched the Human

Fraternity Fellowship program with Georgetown University. Previously, she worked as a journalist in Dubai for pan-Arab news outlet Al Arabiya.

Before moving to the Middle East, Emily worked as a journalist across all media platforms in the United States, with news organizations such as Fox News Channel, Associated Press, and Huffington Post. Emily received a master's degree in religion from Yale University in 2019 and a master's degree in journalism from Georgetown University in 2016.



Melsen Kafilaj, Albania

Melsen Kafilaj comes from the “Nation of BESA,” a Country that has given to the Holy See 4 Popes, St. Jerome, and St. Mother Teresa, and which is widely recognized as a model of Interfaith Coexistence. He has written many articles in different academic reviews and newspapers on Interreligious Dialogue, Intercultural Philosophy and Intercultural Communication. A special interest he has dedicated to 3 different Popes (Pope Clement XI, Pope Paul VI and Pope John Paul II) and in 2022, at the Swedish

Museum of History, he held the conference paper: "Vatican II Council, Pope John Paul II and the Jews." Kafilaj is educated in Philosophy, Theology, History, Political Sciences, and Jewish Studies in Tirana, Rome, Stockholm, Vienna and Barcelona. Currently, he is studying at the University of Heidelberg (Germany).



Mr. Christos Kalaitzidis, Greece

Christos became acquainted with interreligious dialogue through education. Trained in the Continental and Analytic traditions of philosophy, he has written his thesis on the Christian philosophers Abelard and Kierkegaard. His primary interest in religious studies is of a comparative nature between East and West and has also written on interreligious communication, particularly on Muslim-Christian relation. After finishing his university studies, Christos plans to become a professor teaching philosophy and religion in order to foster understanding between different faiths.



Olena Komisarenko, Ukraine

While studying at the Faculty of International Relations in Ukraine, Olena Komisarenko acquired foundational knowledge in diplomacy and the principles of interreligious dialogue. She understands dialogue as a fundamental process that fosters trust and openness, while encouraging continuous learning, respect for diversity, collaborative problem-solving, leadership, and cultural exchange.

In 2013, Olena moved to Hué, Vietnam, where she worked as an Economic and Administrative Assistant Manager in a multicultural and multireligious professional environment. In 2015, she relocated to Beijing, China, and worked as a teacher for over a year. Through these experiences, she came to view dialogue as a means of expanding human capacities for attention, awareness, care for others, and mutual learning.

In 2016, Olena moved to Rome, Italy, where she became actively involved in the Economy of Francesco, a global movement of young economists, entrepreneurs, and change-makers under the age of 35. In 2019, she began her studies at the Faculty of

Social Sciences of the Pontifical University of St. Thomas Aquinas (Angelicum) and in 2024 successfully defended her PhD. Her dissertation is dedicated to the topic “The Role of Interreligious Dialogue in the Labor Market Inclusion of Migrant Muslim Women in Italy: the Case of the Community Of Sant’Egidio”.

During her year as a Russell Berrie Fellow at the Angelicum, Olena deepened her knowledge of interreligious dialogue and intercultural mediation that developed practical skills for her work as an intercultural mediator for the Community of Sant’Egidio assisting refugees from Ukraine mainly in healthcare sector.



Ashin Mandalarlankara, Myanmar

Ashin Mandalarlankara is a Theravada Buddhist monk and peace activist, dedicated to interfaith and intercultural dialogue in Myanmar and internationally. He has been a Buddhist monk for nearly three decades, having entered monastic life at the age of 10. Growing up in a traditional Buddhist monastery, he studied Buddhist texts and immersed

himself in a deeply religious environment. He has taught Buddhist literature to young monks and novices in Myanmar for many years and conducted training programs on interfaith and intercultural dialogue in Myanmar, Rome, Sri Lanka, Malaysia, the United States, and Austria. Ashin Mandalarlankara has been invited to speak at panels, public events, and universities on topics including peace, religion, culture, and interfaith dialogue. He pursued studies in interfaith and interreligious dialogue at the Pontifical University of St. Thomas, Rome in 2016. He is a proud KAICIID Fellow. In recognition of his efforts, he received the Heroes of Dialogue Award from the KAICIID Dialogue Center, Vienna, Austria in 2019. After completing the Russell Berrie Fellowship at the Angelicum, he plans to continue promoting peace and harmony among diverse religious and cultural communities.



Andrew Mixson, USA

Andrew Mixson was raised as a Roman Catholic and educated in Catholic schools. During university, he engaged deeply in discussions on ancient philosophy and presented prominent Doctors of the Church and theologians, such as Saint Augustine and Saint Thomas Aquinas, to club groups. He found these discussions especially rewarding when challenged by friends or peers presenting counterarguments from other saints or theologians. These experiences taught him the value of interfaith exchange.

Andrew served informally as an interfaith leader, promoting dialogue and shared cultural understanding within university social life. His passion for the positive impact of such work – on both grassroots and global levels – led him to pursue a graduate degree in the Peace Studies Program. This program combined his studies in Classics, exploring historical understandings of conflict, with an analysis of the interplay between politics and religion in conflict management and diplomacy.

He recognizes that while religion is not the primary cause of crises worldwide, it often contributes to

underlying tensions. Conversely, religion can be a powerful force for unity. Andrew believes that the first step to building peace in personal, societal, and even state-level contexts is understanding, achieved by overcoming ignorance and fear. Interfaith dialogue and communication are essential tools for building stronger, more resilient communities globally.

Rev. Clement Wykliffe Karathi, Kenya



Fr. Clement serves as a parish priest at the Parish Priest of Holy Spirit Catholic Parish, Gilgil, Kenya. He has been in this parish since he completed his studies in Rome, in June 2012. He is also a part time lecturer at Laikipia University, Nakuru Campus teaching religious studies.

According to Fr. Clement, the interreligious studies program at the Angelicum and his PhD thesis (The Role of the Religious Leaders and the Imperative of Interreligious Dialogue as a Dimension of Evangelization) is a very handy tool in his pastoral work both in the parish and the university.



Rev. Karikoga Tawanda Hope, Zimbabwe

Rev. Karikoga Tawanda Hope's interest in interreligious dialogue began in childhood, inspired by stories about other religions such as Islam, Buddhism, and Judaism that he heard within his religious community in Zimbabwe.

After his ordination as a pastor in 2009, he studied in Nigeria, where he witnessed firsthand the tensions between Christians and Muslims. This experience deepened his commitment to promoting peaceful coexistence among different religious communities, a concern that remains highly relevant as religious tensions continue to rise globally.

Rev. Karikoga is also a trained lawyer and Advocate of the Superior Courts of Zimbabwe, which has enabled him to promote religious freedom and human dignity by strengthening the relationship between religion and law in Zimbabwe. He is dedicated to countering false interpretations of religion that incite violence and hatred and believes that interreligious dialogue is essential for spreading truth, peace, and social transformation in society.

As a Russell Berrie Fellow at the Angelicum,

Rev. Karikoga aims to further develop his expertise in interreligious issues to advance advocacy and teach humanity the principles of peaceful coexistence. Guided by the spirit of Ubuntu, he emphasizes that societies must live together in peace and tolerance.

Fr. Nigel Joseph Karam, Dominica



Nigel's interest in ecumenism and inter-religious studies began during his seminarian studies. His professor taught the subject with dedication and passion, and to Nigel, this subject resonated with a value that he holds dear: the value of unity. Nigel comes from the island of Dominica which can be found in the Caribbean archipelago, where although races, religions and rhythms mix, they are also able to exist side by side in harmony. It is this harmony and unity that Nigel would like to understand, share and grow for the greater development and integration of the people in the Caribbean. His direct involvement in the field of ecumenism and inter-religious dialogue has been through teaching in the permanent diaconate program within his own diocese. This short experience together with his seminary class helped

Nigel see the importance of theology in helping to foster unity and harmony, mutual respect and tolerance.



Ms. Elena Kariofylidou, Greece

Elena is an Orthodox lay woman, a theologian and a canonist. Her research has specialized in the question of apostasy in Orthodoxy, and the interpretation of scripture in Jewish, Christian, and Muslim texts and the need for interreligious dialogue to provide more than a model of tolerance and moving beyond misunderstanding. Her motivating question is how to be true to the faith of the other, without being false to her own. She is conversant in Greek, German, English, French, Arabic and Sign Language.



Bogdana Katarzhuk, Ukraine

Bogdana Katarzhuk grew up in Western Ukraine in a predominantly Christian environment, largely shaped by the tradition of the Greek Catholic Church. In 2014, she moved to Odesa, a multicultural city in southern Ukraine where Christians, Jews, Muslims,

and Buddhists live side by side. This transition challenged her to reflect on how to articulate her understanding of God in ways that respect the worldviews of others, including those of her new family members.

In recent years, Bogdana has been actively involved with Plast, a national Christian scouting organization founded on principles of love and loyalty to both country and God. As the organization continues to expand throughout Ukraine – Including its southern regions with significant cultural and religious diversity – Bogdana has become increasingly concerned with how Muslim children from annexed Crimea can be meaningfully included as full participants in the organization.

Bogdana's first formal academic engagement with interreligious studies began in 2015, when she participated in the Tertio Millennio Seminar on the Free Society. During the seminar, she examined key themes of Catholic social teaching through the lenses of religious freedom, ecumenism, and interreligious dialogue. She has since taken part in numerous interreligious conferences and initiatives, including those organized by the Ukrainian Catholic University.

Her interest in interreligious dialogue is shaped both by her personal encounters across religious boundaries and by her professional work as a lawyer dealing with legislation and legal frameworks related to interreligious issues in Ukraine.



Elizabeth Ann Langan, USA

Elizabeth (Liz) Langan currently serves as a Deputy White House Liaison in the Trump-Vance Administration. In her role as a political appointee she serves the American people by helping implement the conservative agenda of the President of the United States while modernizing the federal workforce. She coordinates the vetting and hiring of political appointees, oversees personnel, and ensures federal agency actions align with the administration's policy priorities. In 2025 her agency issued guidance strengthening protection over expression of religious beliefs for all federal government employees, including accommodation of faith-based practices such as, but not limited to, wearing religious attire, displaying religious items, engaging in voluntary religious discussions in the workplace, and

participating in religious obligations outside of work that require flexibility in scheduling.

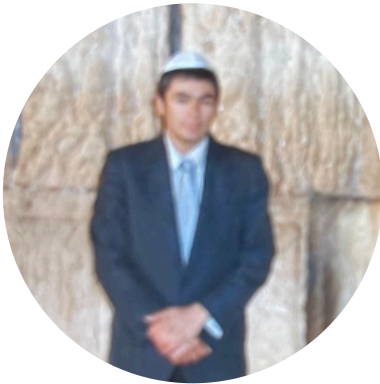
After the Russell Berrie Fellowship concluded, Liz spent an additional year in Rome working for the Angelicum Thomistic Institute. She then moved back to Washington, DC to accept a role as Director of Development for the Catholic Information Center. A year later, she accepted her appointment in the Administration.

Before her time in Rome, Liz spent four years working at the Becket Fund for Religious Liberty, a Washington, DC-based law firm that defends the free exercise of religion for people of all faiths. Becket has been involved in landmark First Amendment cases, including:

- Little Sisters of the Poor v. Pennsylvania – protecting nuns from being required to include contraceptives in insurance coverage
- Hosanna-Tabor Lutheran Church v. EEOC – protecting religious institutions' rights to select ministers without government interference
- Singh v. Carter – protecting a Sikh Army Captain's right to wear a beard and turban while serving.

All three cases reached the Supreme Court of the

United States, highlighting Becket's national impact. Liz previously served as a missionary with the Fellowship of Catholic University Students (FOCUS), where she directed foreign mission trips and worked with university campus ministries.



Mr. Carlos Roberto Latin, USA

Carlos Roberto began his college studies at the University of Texas Pan American, majoring in Rehabilitative Services (B.A. in 1996). Robert also obtained a Bachelor's degree in Theology at Pontifical University in Mexico City, where he plans to graduate with a License in Systematic Theology in May 2011.

During his missionary work performed in NYC and Boston Massachusetts he became a member of IJCCJ an international Jewish Christian community coordinated by Stefan Wegener and Elizabeth Höftberger in Hannover, Germany. He plans to propose the pastoral application of Fr Eric Ross studying in Fribourg, Switzerland Manual Of Theology of Israel The Alliance that was never Revoked to his pastor Alejandro Flores of St Joseph Parish in Edinburg, Tx and parroquial Administrator Greg Labus

of Our Lady of Sorrows in McAllen, Texas. He has proposed classes to University in Edinburg UTRGV to coordinators Sofia Barreto, Ryan Garcia and FOCUS coordinators Darien Rivas and Diana Solis of University of Texas Rio Grande Valley.



Claudia Leal Luna, Chile

Claudia comes from a university-level teaching background. Her courses have included Sciences of Religion, Biblical Theology, Bioethics, Eschatology, and Religious and Philosophical Ethics. She also served as an assistant in the Philosophy for Children Program at the Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile. After completing her PhD studies in Italy, Claudia was appointed in 2021 as Assistant Professor at the Faculty of Theology of the Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile (Santiago). Since 2022, she has served as Full Professor of Fundamental Theology at the Pontifical John Paul II Theological Institute for Marriage and Family Sciences in Rome. In 2023, she was appointed Consultor to the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith.



Ms. Christine Cheng Kim Lim, Malaysia

Growing up in Malaysia, a multi-religious, multi-cultural, multi-racial, and multi-ethnic society ruled by a predominantly Muslim-controlled government, Christine is convinced that interreligious dialogue is of utmost importance to live together in peace and harmony. Religious tolerance of one's neighbour who professes a different faith requires effort to understand that faith and belief, which is the underlying reason for their way of life, their thoughts and attitudes in any given situation, their actions and reactions in different circumstances. Christine is conscious that dialogue thrives on friendship and we need to continue to pave the way to promote understanding among each other, for we do not live alone in this world. God has created each of us out of His infinite love and blessed us with His gifts. These gifts given to us are to be used in the service of all humanity.



Ms. Samantha Anne Lin, USA/Canada

Samantha Lin is the Director of Growth and Student Recruitment of the Cristo Rey Network national office. The Cristo Rey Network is the only network of high schools in the US that integrates four years of rigorous college preparatory academics with four years of professional work experience through the Corporate Work Study Program. Comprised of 41 Catholic, career focused, college preparatory schools, the Cristo Rey Network delivers a powerful and innovative approach to education that equips students from families of limited economic means with the knowledge, character, and skills to achieve their aspirations.

In addition to her work at Cristo Rey, Samantha is active in interreligious dialogue and the life of the laity in the Church. She was a delegate to the 2023 Emerging Leadership Conference, a Vatican-sponsored conference for young Jewish and Catholic leaders and the 2018 pre-Synodal meeting for Young People, The Faith and Vocational Discernment. Samantha is a former Russell Berrie Fellow in Interreligious Dialogue, holds a Sacred Theology

License in Judaic Studies and Jewish-Christian Relations from the Pontifical Gregorian University, and graduated magna cum laude from the Georgetown University School of Foreign Service.



Fr. Norbert Lis, O.P., Poland

Ordained in 2002 at the Radom Cathedral in Poland, Fr. Norbert Lis entered the Dominican Order in 2011 and has been engaged in academic teaching since that time. After completing his Master of Theology at the Radom Diocesan Major Seminary in 2002, he pursued advanced doctoral studies in theology and mission.

Fr. Lis earned a Doctorate of Theology from the University of Warsaw in 2008, with a specialization in missiology. He subsequently completed a Doctorate of Missionary Sciences at the Pontifical University Urbanianum in Rome, focusing on Interreligious Dialogue. He began teaching at the Dominican College of Philosophy and Theology in Krakow, where he continues to teach, and is also affiliated with the Institute of English Studies at the University of Warsaw. Between 2013 and 2017, he served as a

founding member and Director of the Studium Dominicanum, the School of Philosophy and Theology in Warsaw.

Fr. Lis's current research project, *The Dignity of the Human as the Foundation of Interreligious Dialogue in Christian and Jewish Anthropologies in Post-Holocaust Times in the Context of the Post-Vatican II Self-Understanding of the Church*, examines human dignity as the cornerstone of interreligious dialogue. His work explores Christian and Jewish anthropological perspectives after the Holocaust and their implications for the development of Christian-Jewish dialogue. Through this research, he also seeks to articulate general guidelines for interreligious dialogue grounded in the dignity of a conscious and responsible society.



Sr. Teresa Avila Tran Ngoc Minh Sa, Vietnam

Sr. Teresa Avila Tran Ngoc Minh Sa is a Dominican Sister (Dominican Sister of Saint Catherine of Siena, Newcastle, Natal) from Vietnam with a deep commitment to interreligious dialogue and peacebuilding through sacred music.

She earned a Licenza in Sacred Music and a Licenza in Liturgical Music in Rome (Italy).

Born in the highlands of Vietnam, Sr. Minh Sa grew up among diverse ethnic groups, each with unique spiritual practices. This early exposure sparked her interest in the differences in spiritual life, particularly in daily religious practices. She has a special passion for sacred music as a medium for worship and dialogue.

During her studies in Rome, Sr. Minh Sa was inspired by the vespers at the Basilica di San Paolo fuori muro, where religious leaders and people of different faiths gather to pray for unity. This experience strengthened her dedication to promoting dialogue. Her special talent in music drives her vision to use sacred music as a tool for peacebuilding and interreligious dialogue, both in Vietnam and globally through virtual platforms.

Currently, Sr. Minh Sa is a member of DSE (Dominican Sister European) Justice and Peace contact.



Diana Marinescu, România

Born and raised in a conservative Romanian Orthodox family, Diana studied in Cluj, the main city in the multicultural and multi-confessional region of Transylvania. Her interest in interfaith dialogue deepened during her BA and MA studies, where she attended courses on the history of the Church, religious alterity, confessional identities and borders, and the coexistence between Christians and non-Christians. During her university years, she studied works of Catholic and Orthodox theologians, traveled to Italy, and in Rome, befriended Catholics, Protestants, and Muslims while volunteering in charity projects, ecumenical events, and student associations.

As a Ph.D. student at Babes-Bolyai University in Romania and a Post-Graduate Fellow at Accademia di Romania in Rome, Diana focuses on Jesuit and Franciscan missionaries, their missionary strategies, and their relationship with the Orthodox Church in 16th–18th century Moldavia. She conducts research in the Society of Jesus archives and the De Propaganda Fide Congregation Archives in Rome. Her

research interests include the history of the Church(es), Christian missions in Central and Eastern Europe, the Middle East, and Southeast Asia, confessionalization, Catholic-Orthodox relations, ecclesiology, the ecumenical movement, and Latin paleography. She is also the translator (Latin to Romanian) of Scivias, the main work of the 12th-century visionary and mystic Hildegard of Bingen. Diana aspires to become a professor and work in ecumenical dialogue, aiming to debunk religious stereotypes dividing Orthodox and Catholics in Romania, and to educate younger generations in the spirit of tolerance, mutual understanding, and dialogue. Her greatest dream is to witness a reunited Christendom in line with Christ's last prayer, ut omnes unum sint, and to contribute actively to this vision.



Fr. Naqash Azam Masih, Pakistan

Arriving in Rome from a country facing a number of challenges, such as extremism, ethnic and religious conflicts and political instability, Fr. Naqash made it his responsibility as a church leader to work for peace

His desire is to use education as a tool for both teachers and students to address these challenges, therefore he has already arranged for specific training programs in schools. This training program is focused on educating teachers on peace building and equipping them with experience that they can use to exercise peace education not only during school activities, but also in their daily lives. This way teachers can function as channels of peace through promoting tranquility and harmony and can develop values such as tolerance, social justice and equality in the pluralistic society of Pakistan.

Fr. Naqash is currently a board member of the National Commission for Inter-religious Dialogue and Ecumenism (NCIDE) which was established by Pakistan's Catholic Bishops, and Diocesan Director of the Archdiocese of Lahore. He participates regularly in the programs organized by the Commission to promote peace and interreligious dialogue. Examples of these activities include prayer services, peace-building workshops, peace walks and cricket tournaments for peace.

Educational background includes: Diploma in Theological Studies, National Institute of Theology,

Karachi, Pakistan, 2016; Bachelor in Philosophy, Pontifical Urban University, Rome, Italy, 2012. In 2016 he completed his graduation and in 2019 he went to Rome for the diploma in Interreligious Dialogue and Licentiate in Ecumenism Pontifical University of St. Thomas Aquinas, Italy. At present he is working as a Diocesan Director with the national directors from all the dioceses in Pakistan for the promotion of peace and interreligious harmony. He is also the rector of St. Mary's Seminary, Lahore-Pakistan. He is helping young seminarians to become leaders in the church and be the peace builders in the society.



Bernadette Mary McGonigle, Ireland

Bernadette McGonigle is a legal aid lawyer, specializing in refugee law and family law. She has Masters degrees in Peace Studies and in Biblical Studies. She previously worked in Mindanao, the Philippines, in Peace and Reconciliation and was on mission in Syria working with UNHCR on the resettlement of Iraqi refugees. She was also involved in the setting up of an interfaith project in Lebanon for Syrian refugees.

She is on the executive of Pax Christi Ireland and was a chairperson of Amnesty International in Ireland. Her interests relate to the role of religion as a ground of persecution in refugee claims and the role of interreligious dialogue in peace and reconciliation.



Rev. Fr. Kevin Que Medilo, SM, Philippines

Rev. Fr. Kevin Medilo is a Catholic Priest of the Society of Mary (Marist). He grew up and studied in the Southern Philippines where he met friends and classmates from the Muslim community. He is currently the major superior of the Marist Fathers based in the Philippines.

After his Priestly Ordination in 2003, he worked as Assistant Parish Priest as well as Chaplain in various religious communities in the Philippines before taking up a lead position in Ranong Mission in Thailand in 2007. Ranong Mission responds to the needs of the predominantly Buddhist Burmese migrants suffering from poverty, discrimination and exploitation by focusing on their education and health needs, especially HIV-AIDS. In 2010, Fr. Kevin and the Marist

community initiated the Australian Catholic University Online Diploma Programme in Ranong, thanks to which many migrant students have been able to fulfil their dreams of taking part in tertiary education.

Fr. Kevin completed his Licentiate in theology specializing in Interreligious Dialogue with Angelicum University in Rome in 2020. Then he was assigned as a parish priest in a Catholic Church in the Parramatta Diocese in Western Sydney. He was also a member of the Parramatta Diocesan Interfaith Commission which spearheads the engagement with communities and leaders of other religious traditions in Western Sydney.



Rev. Bovas Mathew Meloott, India

Fr. Bovas Mathew was the Director of the Youth Apostolate of the Major Archdiocese of Trivandrum, a member of the Synodal Commission for Youth. Media and Social Apostolate for Major Archiepiscopal Curia His interest in interreligious studies is the result of growing up in India, a religiously diverse culture of Hindus, Muslims, Christians, and others. Through his

Fellowship at the Angelicum, Fr. Bovas has deepened his knowledge in IRD so he felt well equipped upon his return to India.

Since his return to India, Fr. Bovas had been working as the Executive Director of the Diocesan Caritas where he focused more on the employment of rural youth with poverty. He started programs for giving skill training to 1200 youths from different religious groups. At the same time as a visiting faculty he has given two courses on Nostra Aetate and Unitatis Redintegratio at St. Marys Major Seminary, Trivandrum, India. After completing 5 years in Trivandrum, he was appointed as the Proto Presbyter of the ecclesiastical district of Anchal in which 20 parishes are included. He is also the parish priest of two parishes at Anchal, Kerala, India which include around 330 families. He is working there as the local manager of St. Johns School with 2600 students (40% Hindus 30% Muslims and 30% Christians). With these responsibilities he is also working as the Public Relations Officer (PRO) of the Major Archdiocese of Trivandrum and Chief Editor of Christava Kahalam, the Diocesan Publication.



Ms. Lynda Kay Middleton, USA

After many years of service in the United Methodist Church, Lynda converted to Roman Catholicism. Initially, she managed a homeless shelter for men, women and families from all sorts of situations, many of them she now counts as friends. She currently serves as a Catholic Chaplain in a sectarian not-for-profit hospital, which involves working with people of many faiths or no faith at all. Upon finishing her year at the Angelicum, Lynda would like to return to chaplaincy while researching and writing about interreligious concerns in the pastoral care of patients and their families. She would also like to offer medical workers an interfaith support group based on various traditions' spirituality of work. She is particularly interested in opening dialogue in the interfaith community on mental illness.



Rev. James Eroni Miriago, Kenya

He is a Kenyan Pentecostal minister committed to Christian unity, ecumenical dialogue, and service rooted in faith. He is a member of the Pentecostal Church in Kenya and is part of a generation of church leaders shaped by international theological formation and intercultural engagement.

Miriago pursued advanced studies at the World Council of Churches' Ecumenical Institute at Bossey, where he completed the Master of Advanced Studies in Ecumenical Studies. During his time at Bossey, he engaged deeply with themes such as Christian unity, shared spirituality across traditions, and the role of ecumenism in promoting justice, peace, and reconciliation in a divided world. His academic and spiritual formation emphasized practical Christian service, intercultural understanding, and the dismantling of barriers between communities. Reflecting on his studies, Miriago described his formation as a transformative journey that equipped him with both knowledge and practical skills to promote a common Christian witness. He has expressed a strong commitment to serving human

needs, fostering unity in Christ, and working toward justice and peace through dialogue and cooperation among diverse Christian traditions.

Through his ministry and theological formation, Rev. James Eroni Miriago represents a growing movement of church leaders dedicated to building bridges across denominational and cultural divides, and to advancing the ecumenical vision of reconciliation and shared Christian mission.



Fr. Koumakpai Noukpo Moise, Benin

Koumakpai Moise’s interest in Ecumenism and Interreligious Dialogue has two different aspects; an internal and an external. As for the internal, Koumakpai believes that it was a message addressed specifically to him by God that he was sent as a missionary priest to Tunisia, a Muslim-majority country. Due to the coexistence of his own Christian faith and the religion of Islam, with the agreement of his Bishop, he decided to study Arabic and Islam in order to promote the dialogue between Christians in his country with their Muslim Brothers. During his time in Tunisia, Koumakpai restructured “JCAT”,

which stands for African Christian Youth in Tunisia and was designed to help African students integrate into Tunisian society. The external aspect is connected to the fact that Koumakpai is from the Beninese nation, where the religion of the population varies, for there are Christians, Muslim, believers of Vodun and “No-Creed people”. To be effective in the dialogue between Christians and Muslims, Koumakpai believes that he needs to deepen his knowledge of his own Christian faith and also to complete training in Islamic studies.

Recently, Fr. Moise has been nominated Pastor Dean (Curé Doyen) of the Saint Family parish of ADJARRA Porto-Novo Diocese in Benin. Fr. Moise is also a Diocesan Director of Pontifical Missionary Works, Diocesan Chaplain of Ecumenism and a Member of Interreligious Dialogue commission, in Benin.



Rev. James Malloy Morrison, USA

Interreligious studies seem to reflect Deacon James’s experience of Catholicism as his life has been a journey with Catholics, Protestants and people of other religions for as long as he can remember.

He entered the seminary at age 18, immediately after graduation from high school and during the summers he would gain experience through seminary internships and other temporary assignments to local Catholic parishes. Deacon James believes that our relationships of trust and love are the foundation of many conversations about God, faith, and religion and he hopes to enter into this dialogue more fully through the Russell Berrie Fellowship and the John Paul II Center for Interreligious Dialogue. Upon the completion of his degree at the Angelicum, Deacon James would like to return to the Archdiocese of Washington, DC to begin ministry as a Catholic priest where he hopes to contribute his voice to the dialogue between the Catholic Church and the people of other religions.



Celestine Muonwe, Nigeria

Fr. Celestine's interest in interreligious dialogue sparked during his seminary days when during his six-week apostolic work, he visited the homes of Catholics, Protestants, and members of the indigenous African Traditional Religion. He continued

with this practice after his ordination in 2011 and in 2013 he was sent by his Bishop as Fidei Donum to Mali. It was during these three years that he first encountered Muslims. In order to learn more about the religion, he enrolled for a one-year program at the Institut de Formation Islamo-Chrétienne (IFIC), which is a center for formation in Christian and Muslim dialogue in Bamako, Mali. Before the end of the year he was offered a scholarship by the Institute to continue his studies at the Pontifical Institute for Islamic and Arabic Studies (PISAI) in Rome. Here he had the opportunity to complete a research project he began in Bamako on Boko Haram, resulting in a publication entitled *Islam Beyond Extremism: A Perspective*, which has since generated interest in Nigeria and has sold over 1,000 copies.



Rev. André Mujyambere, Rwanda

Fr. Andre has held teaching positions in several institutions in Cameroon and Rwanda. He speaks Kinyarwanda, French, Spanish, Italian, English, and has good skills in classical Latin, Greek, and biblical Hebrew.

His doctoral research as a Russell Berrie Fellow helped him acquire new tools in biblical fields to help carry on interreligious and ecumenical formation back in Africa.

Educational background includes: Bachelors in Philosophy, Bachelors in Theology, License in Sacred Scriptures, currently pursuing his Doctorate in Biblical Theology at The Angelicum.



Rev. Ryan Austin Muldoon, USA

Father Ryan A. Muldoon is a priest of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of New York. He presently serves as Priest-Secretary to Timothy Cardinal Dolan (Archbishop Emeritus of New York), as Director of the Office of Ecumenical and Interreligious Dialogue for the Archdiocese of New York, and as Adjunct Professor at St. Joseph’s Seminary (“Dunwoodie”) in Yonkers, NY.

In January 2022, Fr. Muldoon was awarded the inaugural John Paul II Prize for Catholic-Jewish Studies for his licentiate thesis, "The Land of Our Fathers in Faith: The Theological Role of the Land of Israel for Contemporary Jewish-Catholic Dialogue." Fr. Muldoon has previously served as Parochial Vicar of the Church of St. Joseph in Bronxville, NY (Summer 2019), the Church of St. Patrick in Yorktown Heights, NY (2020-2023), and the Cathedral of St. Patrick in New York City (2023-2025). He is active in various local and national ecumenical and interfaith dialogues.



Prof. Vladimer Narsia, Georgia

Vladimer is a theologian and canon lawyer with over two decades of experience at the rare intersection of Orthodox, Catholic, and Anglican canonical traditions. His scholarly work bridges Eastern and Western Christian legal systems, utilizing them as tools for dialogue among the churches.

He is the recipient of the Presidential Scientific Award of Georgia for his role in developing the discipline of Canon Law in his home country.

He is the author of the first university textbook on Canon Law in the Georgian language, which established this field of study as an academic discipline at Ilia State University.

Vladimer has held prestigious international fellowships, including at Lambeth Palace (U.K.) and as a Fulbright Resident Scholar (U.S.). His research portfolio further includes competitive fellowships from the Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation (Sweden), KAICIID (International Dialogue Centre), and the John Paul II Center for Interreligious Dialogue.

Vladimer enriched his research through collaborative partnerships with Baylor University (Waco, Texas) and the University of the Incarnate Word (San Antonio), and served as a faculty fellow at Northwest Vista College, Alamo Colleges District (San Antonio).



Renata Anna Nehring, OV, Poland

As a young student, S. Renata opened herself to dialogue through numerous contacts with the ecumenical Taizé Community in France. Currently she fosters understanding and reconciliation through her engagement in the Ecumenical Movement,

Jewish-Christian dialogue, and her active participation in the Catholic Archdiocese of Poznań, Poland, particularly during the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, which begins with the Day of Judaism. Among her initiatives, she invited Fr. Peter Hocken to deliver a lecture on the Jewish roots of Christianity as part of the Day of Judaism and organized a retreat featuring Israeli dances in collaboration with the Community of the Beatitudes. Her academic formation includes a Master's degree in Romance Philology, a Bachelor's degree in Journalism, a Master of Theology— focusing on Jesus' prayer for unity in John 17— and a Master's degree in Advanced Ecumenical Studies from the Ecumenical Institute at Bossey. In 2025, she joined the Ordo Virginum and became a consecrated virgin. S. Renata prays for the advancement of ecumenical dialogue, particularly for Pope Leo XIV, that through his teaching, many Catholics may respond to his encouragement and actively promote Christian unity and interreligious understanding. Sister Renata trusts that her future ministry will help draw hearts closer together and, by God's grace, bear fruit in reconciliation and peace.



Fr. Vinh Hoang Nguyen, Vietnam

Vinh Nguyen was born in the family of “interreligious dialogue” whose mother converted to Catholicism. During his student life, he had observed and found interest in the relations among different faiths. His interest grew more in interreligious studies after he joined the Order of Preachers, completed an STB, took courses about Vatican II and took part in the Common Study Program for Dominicans of the Asia Pacific Region. In this program, Vinh had the chance to learn more about Judaism, Islam, and Buddhism, which is also a widespread religion in Vietnam. He also took part in a trip to Tuyen Lam pagodas, in Da Lat City, also in other pagodas in Vietnam, to study and exchange the experience of different methods of meditation, praying and beliefs. In the future, Vinh plans to teach in the Theological Faculty of the Dominican Center of Study in Vietnam. He hopes to present a proposal for the interreligious-dialogue formation to the young clergymen and religious.



Fr. Jan James Nowotnik, United Kingdom

Fr. Jan was ordained a priest for the Archdiocese of Birmingham in 1998 and spent many years of his ministry in parishes and school chaplaincies in the diocese. His desire to work in the field of interreligious dialogue began a few years ago on an ecumenical study trip to Yad Vashem in Jerusalem. Although the main purpose of this was to learn more about the horrors of the Holocaust, it also gave him the opportunity to reflect on the nature of dialogue in the holy city and further afield. This eventually led to his bishop asking him to do a licence in Ecumenical Studies and Interreligious dialogue at the Angelicum, which he has just completed. As he begins his doctoral studies he would like to learn more about the tension between Evangelization and the need for dialogue. Upon returning to the UK, he hopes to put into practice all that he has learned in this field.



Evans Nyamadzawo, Zimbabwe

Evans Nyamadzawo's interest in interreligious studies was sparked during his undergraduate studies at the University of Jos in Plateau State, Nigeria. A native of Zimbabwe, he witnessed firsthand a series of violent clashes between Muslim and Christian communities in Nigeria, which resulted in significant loss of life and property. These experiences led him to recognize the urgent need for interreligious dialogue as a means of fostering tolerance, peaceful coexistence, and social cohesion.

During his time as a Russell Berrie Fellow in Italy, Evans further advanced his knowledge through participation in this intensive program and a study trip to Israel. These formative experiences opened doors to additional opportunities, including fellowships with several international initiatives. He later served as a KAICIID Fellow and a Conflict Transformation Fellow, continuing his commitment to peacebuilding, dialogue, and social harmony. Evans has contributed to global interfaith platforms as a panelist at the Parliament of the World's Religions (Chicago, 2023) and as a facilitator of five

dialogue sessions during the 11th Assembly of the World Council of Churches (Germany, 2022), further demonstrating his commitment to peacebuilding, dialogue, and social cohesion.



Sr. Mary Ogeyi Odey, Nigeria

Sr. Mary Ogeyi Odey is a member of the Congregation of the Sisters of Jesus the Good Shepherd of the Diocese of Abakaliki, Nigeria. Prior to her theological studies, she assisted with the Initial Formation Programme for young sisters in her congregation and worked in the congregation's communications department.

From a young age, Sr. Mary experienced both intra- and interreligious tensions between Christians and Muslims. These tensions were particularly pronounced in northern Nigeria, while in the eastern part of the country conflicts also occurred among Christians of different denominations and with adherents of traditional religions. These experiences awakened in her a deep concern and a strong desire to work toward peaceful coexistence among diverse religious communities, especially as such tensions

continue to increase. Sr. Mary's interest in interreligious dialogue developed further through her academic studies in Ecumenism and Dialogue, as well as through her involvement in the Ecumenical Movement in her home state. During her fellowship year at the Angelicum, she hopes to deepen her knowledge of interreligious dialogue, gain a better understanding of other religious traditions, and acquire practical skills to foster dialogue and collaboration among different religions at both diocesan and regional levels.



Fr. Anthony Oguejiofo Okolo, Nigeria

Fr. Okolo's interest in interreligious studies is shaped by growing up in a country characterized by ethnic and religious conflict between Christians and Muslims. Before leaving Nigeria, he was a lecturer in Comparative Study of Religion, Interfaith Dialogue and Ministry in the Christian Church and Acting Dean of Studies and intends to return to teach and promote Interreligious Studies.

At present, Fr. Anthony is a Parish priest in Lake Havasu, Arizona. In the recent past, he has held a

symposium in Nigeria about inter-religious dialogue, also provides teaching to other seminarians or priests from his congregation in Nigeria (Holy Ghost Congregation) being sent to other countries, speaks to them about other religions, contexts.



Sr. Jisha Jacob Olikkara, India

Sr. Jisha Jacob Olikkara is a religious sister of the Franciscan Clarist Congregation in India. She grew up in a multireligious region where Christians are a small minority, comprising approximately 0.5% of the population in the state of Gujarat. From an early age, she encountered neighbors and friends belonging to different faith traditions, shaping her sensitivity to religious diversity.

As an active social worker in remote villages, Sr. Jisha recognized the urgent need to move beyond narrow interpretations of religion. Under the Diocese of Rajkot, she works for the upliftment of women, children, and the elderly, spreading Gospel values through dedicated service. Her community mission focuses on responding effectively to the needs of predominantly Hindu villagers who face poverty,

discrimination, and exploitation. Sr. Jisha is involved in a wide range of interreligious initiatives, including child education programs, value education for youth, training programs for parents and teachers, and academic coaching for school dropouts. Her congregation also promotes and organizes women's self-help groups, providing support and guidance for Income Generation Programs (IGPs) aimed at creating employment opportunities and financial stability. During her studies at the Angelicum, Sr. Jisha hopes to gain a deeper understanding of interreligious dialogue that will equip her with the skills and knowledge needed to enhance her social work. Her future mission will address fundamental human issues of dignity and respect, and she looks forward to teaching junior sisters in her congregation about interfaith engagement while organizing further initiatives to promote peace and interreligious understanding.



Rev. Fr. Louis Taiwo Omojola, Nigeria

Rev Fr Louis Taiwo Omojola developed interest in interreligious studies because of the reoccurrence of religious clashes in Nigeria. He believed that one of the best solutions to the problem is dialogue among Muslims, Christians and adherents of African Traditional Religion in Nigeria. Thus, he is convinced that the best way for him to initiate this dialogue is to have a better knowledge of interreligious activities in the world so as to know the areas to identify and address in management and restoring of religious harmony in Nigeria. After the completion of his Bachelor degrees in Philosophy and Theology which provided him with background knowledge in Interreligious studies, he enrolled and completed a Masters of Arts degree in Religious Studies at Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Nigeria with specialization in Comparative Religion but the focus of his Thesis was on Interreligious Dialogue. After the studies, he was appointed by his bishop as the Director of Interreligious Dialogue Commission of the Catholic Diocese of Ekiti and a member of the Nigerian Interreligious Dialogue Council (NIREC), Ekiti

State, Nigeria.

He applied for the Russell Berrie scholarship so as to have a Licentiate in Interreligious Studies at Angelicum with the believe that the study would help him to know the approach of the Catholic Church better on interreligious matters. He believed that the study will help him better to foster peaceful relationships among the adherents of the three dominant religions in Nigeria; Christianity, Islam and African Traditional Religion, but most importantly in the Catholic Diocese of Ekiti. After the completion of his studies at Angelicum, he was assigned to a parish with a predominant Muslim population and his studies have been helpful in his pastoral works where he has been involved mainly in the dialogue of life and action. He is still working with the Muslim community to initiate dialogue of Theological Exchange in the Community between Muslims and Christians.

Fr Louis has been interested in transmitting his knowledge to students in educational institutions in Nigeria. Hence, since he understands that the production of reading materials will help him to achieve this ambition; he has published an

introductory material on Interreligious Studies titled “An Introduction to the Study of Interreligious Studies in Nigeria”. He hopes to introduce and make copies of the material available to students in tertiary institutions and future priests in the seminaries so as to instill in them from the seminaries interest in Interreligious activities. Again, since he understands that the best way for Christians and Muslims to dialogue with adherents of African Traditional Religion is to have a basic knowledge of African Traditional Religion, he has also published an introductory material on African Traditional Religion titled “An Introduction to Catholic Church Perspectives on African Traditional Religion” and his work titled “Introduction to the Study of Ecumenism in Nigeria” introduces his readers to different divisions in the Church: East and West and the different movements, methods and approaches of the Christian Churches towards the unity of all Christians. The work also examines the place of the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) as a body for the promotion of Christian unity in Nigeria. He is currently the Director of Interreligious and Ecumenical Commission of the Catholic Diocese of

Ekiti, Nigeria and a member of Nigeria Interreligious Council (NIREC), Ekiti State Chapter, Nigeria. He has completed his Doctorate Degree in Religious Studies at the Nigeria Premier University, University of Ibadan, Nigeria and Lectures at the Department of Religious Studies, Faculty of Arts, Federal University, Oye-Ekiti, Ekiti State, Nigeria. He is the Parish Priest of St Columba's Parish, Igbemo-Ekiti, Ekiti State, Nigeria.



Fr. Joseph Origbo, Nigeria

For Joseph Origbo, it was after a few years of his ordination as a Catholic Priest that he had the opportunity of working as the Diocesan Director of the Pontifical Mission Societies, where he came in direct contact with the reality of interreligious dialogue. During his contact with the National Secretariat he learned about the necessity of interreligious dialogue in Nigeria especially in the area of missionary activities in the Catholic Church. Within the first two years after the completion of the course at the Angelicum, Joseph would like to return to his country and with his Bishop's support, open the Diocesan office of Ecumenism and Interreligious

Dialogue. He would also like to collaborate with the State arm of the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN), to establish a state committee on Interreligious Dialogue not particularly with the Catholic Church but within the entire Christendom under CAN. Currently, he is finishing his degree at the Angelicum.



Xavier Kanatt Ouseph, India

Fr. Ouseph was a parish priest for 11 years in different parishes throughout Mumbai. Returning to his country, he started to provide training and workshops to youth and children, through schools and colleges, to help promote religious and social harmony. Fr. Ouseph's interest in interreligious studies started when he was studying at the Pontifical Institute Dharmaram Vidya Kshetram in Bangalore, well-known for its active role in promoting interreligious dialogue



Rev. Gianpaolo Pagano, O.P., Italy

Fr. Gianpaolo is a Dominican friar, currently serving as pastor of the Sanctuary of the Madonna dell' Arco near Naples, and is involved with the Center for Studies and Dialogue with Islam. He has contributed several articles with interreligious themes (Judeo-Christian relations, and Lutheran Sola Scriptura) to the Italian ecumenical journal O' Odigos.

Educational background includes: B.Phil., S.T.B., S.S.L., and S.T.D. in Biblical Theology from The Angelicum.



Sophie Palopoli, USA

From a young age, Sophie Palopoli learned how to care for others from her mother, a previous worker with the Little Sisters of the Poor in New Orleans, and her father, a doctor. Blessed with multiple young, vibrant, female teachers at St. Peter's grade school and St. Scholastica high school, Sophie became convinced that knowing God was the key to true happiness. During her studies at Providence College, she discovered a passion for the dignity of the human

person through relationships and service. She served in a variety of roles, including a Resident Assistant, My Brother's Keeper volunteer, Friars Club member, and Student Minister for RCIA. During a semester in Austria with Franciscan University of Steubenville, she was deeply struck by Pope St. John Paul II's concept of *środowisko*, or "accompaniment," which led her to participate in Jesuit Volunteer Corps Northwest (JVC) upon graduation.

While in JVC, she worked as a 5th grade teacher to Aaniiih and Nakoda children in Hays, Montana. The resilience and generosity of the community deepened her understanding of the interconnection between spirituality, tradition, culture, medicine, and human flourishing, in addition to the devastating impact of trauma.

These experiences convinced Sophie that interfaith dialogue and a spirit of hospitality are essential to equitable healthcare which goes beyond simply treating pathology and actually accompanies people, helping them live meaningful and joyful lives. While in medical school, she founded Philosophy for Everyone, a club designed to engage students of all backgrounds in suffering, morality, happiness, and

the good life using artwork and conversation. After completing medical school, Sophie will pursue a rural Family Medicine residency. Her interests within general practice include pediatrics, wound care, psychiatry, and restorative reproductive medicine. She hopes to be a good doctor and a good friend to all, particularly the sick, the sad, and the suffering.



Nataliia Pavlyk, Ukraine

She is the Founder and Head of the NGO The Oriental Studies Circle (Ukraine), focused on interreligious and intercultural dialogue. She is also the President of Georgetown Interfaith Society (USA) and a PhD candidate in Theology and Religious Studies at Georgetown University in Washington, DC.

Actively engaged in nonprofit initiatives for interfaith harmony, peacebuilding, and social inclusion, she has organized more than 50 educational projects for young people and professionals across Ukraine, Europe, and Asia. Nataliia has previously served with the State Service of Ukraine for Ethnic Affairs and Freedom of Conscience, the World Council of Churches, the John Paul II Center for Interreligious

Dialogue, and KAICIID. She was a member of an international working group on preventing violent extremism in Belgium and worked with unaccompanied minor refugees from the Middle East and North Africa, supporting Christian-Muslim dialogue in Austria. Since the start of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, she has supported Ukrainian refugees in Romania.

Her research interests include interreligious dialogue and comparative religious studies, with particular attention to Jainism, Orthodox Christianity, and the ways soteriological spiritual practices can foster interfaith relations.



Rev. Dr. Maria Michael Peters, C.P.P.S., India

Fr. Michael belongs to the Precious Blood Missionaries. He served the Church and the Congregation to which he belongs in various capacities: a Parish Priest, a Retreat Preacher. He served his Congregation in India as its Administrator and Counselor. He was involved in intercultural and Inter-Religious dialogue for a long time.

He was a staff at National Biblical, Catechetical and Liturgical Center (NBCLC), which is part of CBCI of India, where he taught Indian Meditation, Inculturation, courses in relation to IRD and wrote a book on Meditation which contains different religious traditions techniques of meditation, yet remaining faithful to the Catholic Tradition.

He did his doctorate and wrote his thesis which was a comparative study of Ramayana, one of the oldest Indian Hindu Epics, in the context of family moral values and compared with the teachings of the Catholic Church regarding marriage and family, opening new understanding to create a new ministry towards those couples and families formed out of interfaith context, particularly between Catholics and Hindus.

Returning from Rome after his Doctoral studies, he was accepted into the Conference of the Catholic Bishops of India (CCBI) as National Executive Secretary for Family Commission under the Chairmanship of Rt. Rev. Dr. Lawrence Pius. Presently he is Director of Mission House, the first community of the Precious Blood Missionaries at Goa and continues his teaching and preaching ministry.

Recently in the month of July 2018 at Bosnia Sarajevo, Sarajevo, The Third International Conference of Catholic Theological Ethics in the World Church Meet, he presented a Poster in connection with IRD from a Religious and Political context. He has authored several books and has written articles in important ecclesiastical journals. Recently (2025) he translated an Italian book on “Sanguis Christi” into English - “The Blood of Christ”.



Dr. Ana Petrache, Romania

After her year as a fellow, Dr. Ana Petrache developed her work as a postdoctoral researcher at the Ecumenical Institute at the Angelicum. She currently teaches political philosophy at the Angelicum. She earned her PhD in Philosophy from the École Pratique des Hautes Études and the University of Bucharest. She has served as a postdoctoral fellow at the Foundation for Interreligious and Intercultural Research and Dialogue at the University of Geneva, as well as at the Accademia di Romania in Rome. Her scholarly work focuses on the relationship between religion and

politics in twentieth-century Western Europe.

Ana's research interests include political theology, interreligious and ecumenical dialogue, political philosophy, and the philosophy of history. A central focus of her work is eschatology and the political consequences of religious concepts such as the Kingdom of God and the sovereignty of God, examined first within the Christian tradition and comparatively in Judaism and Islam.

Born and raised within the Orthodox Christian tradition, Ana's intellectual formation has been deeply shaped by Catholic and Protestant theology, particularly through her research in political theology. This background positions her well for engagement in ecumenical dialogue. During her doctoral and postdoctoral studies, she participated in several research projects at the University of Fribourg (Switzerland), the University of Bucharest, and the Institut Catholique de la Méditerranée in Marseille. In 2017, she published *Gaston Fessard, un chrétien de rite dialectique*. In addition to her academic work, Ana has served as an advisor to the Secretary of State for Religious Affairs in Romania, a governmental body dedicated to promoting religious

freedom and strengthening relations between religious communities and the state. In this role, she contributed to the development of public policy on religious affairs, advocated for the equitable treatment of all religious denominations, and promoted freedom of religion and belief through initiatives in religious literacy. After her Russell Berrie Fellowship, she further deepened her expertise in interreligious dialogue by becoming a KAICIID Fellow. She recently published the open-access volume *Le Dieu qui guérit* (Chemins de Dialogue, 2024).



Dr. Mariia Petrova, Russia

Dr. Maria Petrova developed an interest in interreligious studies during the period of relative religious freedom in Russia following the collapse of the Soviet Union. While studying at St. Petersburg State University, she engaged with people of diverse faiths, including representatives of Christian denominations, Muslims, Buddhists, Hare Krishna followers, and adherents of alternative religious movements.

In 2005, she pursued a PhD in Interreligious Studies at the University of Manchester, UK, focusing on the historical presence and influence of Eastern religions, particularly Hinduism and Buddhism, in Russia and their reception among Russian intellectual circles. Her research examined the interactions between these movements and Orthodox Christianity, highlighting the Russian Orthodox Church's tendency to stigmatize other religious groups as competitors. Following her doctorate, Dr. Petrova continued academic research on religious persecution in Soviet Russia at the Keston Archive, Baylor University, Texas, USA. She has authored numerous scholarly articles and presented at international conferences on interfaith issues and communication. For the past twelve years, Dr. Petrova has taught Eastern religions and cultures at St. Petersburg State University. Her students come from diverse nationalities, faiths, and worldviews, often facing challenges in communication. As a lecturer, she aims to provide a platform for respectful and thoughtful interreligious dialogue, fostering peaceful coexistence and combating religious intolerance in Russia.



Teresa Maria Piacentini, Italy

Teresa Piacentini was born in a family with 12 children, and grew up in a village (the Architect Village of Reggio Emilia) where a group of families chose a life experience of fraternity and communion. The project of this Village was designed by her father, Osvaldo Piacentini, architect and urbanist. In the large central green space, surrounded by terraced houses, 40 children played and lived as brothers, establishing ties of eternal friendship and sharing. At the age of 20 she entered the Little Family of Annunciation, a monastic community founded by Don Giuseppe Dossetti (Constituent Father), devoted to the study of the Bible, of religions, of spirituality, cultures and world history. She studied in depth the Holy Bible in the original languages (including Biblical Hebrew) and the comparative history of the three monotheistic religions (Christianity, Judaism and Islam) from their birth to present. In the religious community, she deepened the study of “laws” of spiritual asceticism and unconditional charity-love, already experienced in family and life in the village. After many years of monastic life, she graduated in Rome with a PhD in

Theology (on the topic of original sin) at the Pontifical University of St. Thomas Aquinas (Angelicum, Rome). Then she achieved a certificate in interreligious dialogue at the John Paul II Center for Interreligious Dialogue. She then undertook a second doctoral program on liturgy and neuro-linguistic programming, still underway at the Pontifical Athenaeum Sant'Anselmo - Rome. Then she left the monastic community to follow a more apostolic vocation to devote herself to the care of people, relationships, families, and communities to collaborate in the creation of a new symphonic humanity. In addition to guiding the Family Constellations of the Soul, she carries out a personal, systemic and spiritual personal accompaniment service to the dissolution of traumatic memories and the creation of harmonious and creative links between people, within family systems and in any kind of group. She provides a spiritual guidance service for the purification of the personal ego and the path to pure love, the divinization of the human, and the creation of a new symphonic humanity.



Dr. Rafiqur Rahman, USA

Rafiqur was born into a marginalized community within South Asia where, per Hindu socioreligious norms, one's caste status at birth irrevocably determines one's social location, societal worth, and individual 'place of honour' at the community table. The sizeable cultural, religious, and societal biases encountered during his childhood in South Asia and then later in America left an indelible psychological impression – inculcating within him a lifelong passion to advocate for religious freedom, interreligious harmony, peace, social justice, and the preservation of human dignity for all people. Upon completion of the Russell Berrie Fellowship and as a future Afro-Catholic professor and theologian, Rafiqur would like to assist his undergraduate students to comprehend how St. Aquinas can still figuratively function as a current day beacon for ethical leadership.



Rev. Ioan Robert Reikli, Romania

Fr. Robert's course of work has included many interreligious avenues in both Romania and during his studies in Rome. Having finished his studies in Rome, he became involved in pastoral work for the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Corfu (Greece).

Fr. Robert is also head of Caritas Corfu, a global charitable organization.



Fr. Randolph Romero, Philippines

According to Randolph Romero, the greatest privilege and challenge in his entire seminary formation was when he reached third year in theology. He was elected for the office of General Beadle in the second semester of the year 2010-11, which position means to be the head of all seminarians. Randolph strongly believes that knowledge is not meant to be kept, but is meant for sharing. Therefore, if the Theology seminary allows him to teach, he would like to share what he has learned through his studies at the Angelicum. He would like to inculcate in his future students that dialogue is also possible with other

religions like Islam, not only with the different Christian denominations.

He is currently assigned at the Mary Help of Christians High School Seminary as the Prefect of Discipline and at the same time, he teaches at Mary Help of Christians Theology Seminary as a guest professor where he teaches Interfaith Dialogue.



Late Michal Sadowski, Poland

Fr. Sadowski has worked in parishes in Belarus, the Russian Federation, Poland, and the UK.

His academic area of interest is Christianity and the religions of the East, especially Islam. His current doctoral research focuses on the Trinitarian Dialogue between the Oriental Christianity and Islam.

Among his duties were his positions as a Prefect of studies in the Major Diocesan Seminary in Wloclawek; Lecturer in dogmatic theology at the Faculty of Theology at the Copernicus University in Torun; Secretary of the Faculty's quarterly "Teologia i Człowiek"; Diocesan chaplain of the Club of Catholic Intellectuals.



Rukmal Salgado, Sri Lanka

Rukmal Salgado's commitment to interreligious dialogue has been deeply shaped by her experience of growing up in the pluralistic cultural and religious landscape of Sri Lanka. An academician by profession, she is passionate about teaching, research, and scholarly publication, with experience in both secular and religious educational contexts. Rukmal was the first female faculty member in residence to teach full time at the Theological College of Lanka, where she served a diverse student body representing a wide range of religious, cultural, and ethnic backgrounds. In this role, she was a strong advocate and mentor for women seminarians in residence, supporting their spiritual formation as they navigated cultural pressures and societal barriers to active ministry. Her academic and social interests focus on fostering interreligious harmony, tolerance, and dialogue within society, with particular attention to women and university undergraduate students. Motivated by these commitments, Rukmal pursued a Diploma in Interreligious Studies at the Angelicum as a Russell Berrie Fellow.



Mr. Omar Sillah, Gambia

Omar holds the unique position of being the only Muslim student in the Doctoral program at The Angelicum. In his native Gambia, Omar created the “Center for Interreligious Dialogue, Tolerance, Reconciliation, and Conflict Resolution” (Citrec). He has participated in the International Interreligious Youth Gathering in 2006 and is currently working on a book entitled “Interreligious Dialogue and Tolerance – The Gambian Experience”. He believes that the resolution of international disputes and conflicts lies in peaceful diplomacy and interreligious dialogue. He wishes to teach interreligious studies at the University of Gambia upon returning home. Educational background includes: M.A. in Islamic Civilization, M.A. in Religion and Culture specializing in Christianity for the purpose of interreligious dialogue, License in Social Sciences from The Angelicum, currently working on his Doctorate in Social Sciences at The Angelicum.



Mr. Nazar Sloboda, Ukraine

Nazar Sloboda's interest in interreligious dialogue came into fruition when he began his formal interreligious academic formation at the Pontifical University of St. Thomas Aquinas (Angelicum) in Rome. His studies in Western Europe together with working in the USA enriched Nazar with a refined understanding of the task of interreligious dialogue as being multidimensional and complex and it also helped him to become more realistic regarding the expectations in the field of interreligious studies. During his work in St. Nicholas Eparchy, Nazar was involved in various interreligious initiatives, conducted under the patronage of the Archdiocese of Chicago and leading academic Christian institutions in the Chicago metropolitan area. He also speaks Polish, Russian and is learning Hebrew, which enables him to draw close parallels between the usually more reserved vision of the Eastern Orthodox Church and that of the Roman Catholic Church, which therefore provides him a balanced view of major Christian denominations and rabbinic Judaism in the field of interreligious affairs.

Currently, Nazar is a Faculty member in the department of Theology and Religious Studies at Georgetown University and Canisius University.



Mr. William John Stainsby, Ireland

William is a lecturer, writer/author and Director of the Centre for Faith & Culture in the Republic of Ireland. He has worked periodically with several Pontifical Councils in the Vatican and participated in the Synod on Europe in 1999. His publications reflect his vision and wide experience including *Creating a Climate of Confidence in the Media*; *The Living Tradition* (on the Rule of St Benedict); *Christ, the Source of a New Culture for Europe* (with the collaboration of Cardinal Poupard, President Emeritus of the Pontifical Council for Culture in the Vatican) and *Forget Not Hope* which sets out his vision for Faith and Culture in Europe for the new Millennium. Looking to the future, William sees Interreligious dialogue as the hermeneutical key to unlocking the unfathomable treasures of Faith & Reason which will enrich and enhance humanity. William also has an Licentiate in Judaic Studies and Jewish Catholic Dialogue from the Gregorian

University in Rome. He studied Phenomenology in his philosophical doctoral studies for four years at University College Dublin.



Nay Myo Swe, Myanmar

Nay Myo Swe is a community-minded leader from Myanmar whose work reflects a commitment to social engagement, public service, and the well-being of local communities. His activities focus on fostering cooperation, supporting grassroots initiatives, and encouraging constructive dialogue in contexts shaped by social and cultural diversity.

Through his involvement in community and civic life, Nay Myo Swe has contributed to efforts that promote education, social responsibility, and mutual understanding. His work reflects a broader concern for sustainable development and the role of civic participation in strengthening social cohesion. Grounded in a strong sense of responsibility to society, Nay Myo Swe continues to engage in initiatives that seek practical solutions to local challenges while encouraging collaboration and shared purpose.



Nadiia Sybira, Ukraine

Nadiia's interest in interfaith studies is deeply rooted in her childhood when her family moved from the Orthodox Volyn region in Northern Ukraine to the predominantly Greek-Catholic Lviv region which experience made her attain a great level of comfort with different religious traditions.

Nadiia's thirst for theological knowledge was so strong that after her Master in foreign languages she continued her studies at the Ukrainian Catholic University, Institute of Ecumenical Studies.

Eventually she went on to follow her vocation by studying at Jeunesse Lumiere missionary school in France where she discovered a wholly new way of spirituality through live encounters with different religions and cultures.

Later on Nadiia learned more about Judaism during her work as tour guide in Lviv, Ukraine, and also became acquainted with Buddhism, Hinduism and Islam during her volunteering in Sri Lanka where she taught English and French. After her interfaith studies at the Angelicum, Nadiia continues her work by

bridging interreligious gaps, promoting dialogue and building mutual understanding, whether on a local level in Lviv or on a global level abroad.



Annamaria Szalma, Hungary

Anna first encountered interreligious dialogue as a child in her own Catholic and Protestant family. As a student of theology, she became interested in Hasidic philosophy which inspired her to study Jesus' relationship with the Torah. As a social educator, she has worked 9 years in the Hungarian Reformed Church's Bethesda Children's Hospital, where she drew immense strength and inspiration from the genuine community of faith among the Catholic and Protestant co-workers. She went on to research Turkish sufi communities as well as homegrown terrorism's connection with social marginalization and racism.

According to Anna, the course on interreligious studies at the Angelicum gave her a deeper understanding of how difference is constructed and how connection between differences can become experience



Rev. Rafal Maciej Szweda, Poland/Scotland

Deacon Rafal was born into a Catholic family in Poland but since early childhood he was very much aware of his partial Jewish roots. Throughout his life, he was always very keen to deepen his knowledge of Jewish religion and culture especially in the field of the history of the Jews in Poland. On his arrival to Scotland in 2004 he found himself in a multicultural city where people of different nations and creeds blend together in one society. This experience prompted him to engage in various events promoting ecumenical dialogue within Christian community. As a result, Deacon Rafal started to understand his vocation to Catholic Priesthood and in 2011 he began his formation in The Pontifical Scots College in Rome. By studying Ecumenism and Interreligious Dialogue, he hopes to obtain knowledge and skills necessary for ministry in a country where Catholics are a minority and where there is a growing Muslim population. Ordained to the priesthood in 2018, Fr. Rafal is continuing his License at the Angelicum.



Ms. Elena Tadiello, Italy

Elena Tadiello is currently the president of a community called Comunità Abramo, which promotes evangelization. She currently works in the Secretariat of the Governor General of the of the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem (Vatican).

She completed the License in Religious Sciences at the Pontifical University of Saint Thomas Aquinas in Rome, gained a Certificate in Interreligious Studies (from the same university as a Russell Berrie Fellow, cohort VII) and successfully completed one year Advanced Course in “Cultural, Training and Linguistic Mediation” at the University “G. D’Annunzio” Chieti – Pescara.

She is primarily interested in Interreligious Dialogue due to the fact that she was born in an area in Italy which has the highest percentage of immigrants. Before moving to Rome, she worked for the local government at the tax office, so she was in contact with the immigrants on a daily basis, and thus had the opportunity to get to know more about their cultures and habits and occasionally, their faiths. In Rome she

worked for 8 years for the Ministry of the Environment (Department for Sustainable Development) and participating every year as member of the official Italian delegation to the COP-UNFCCC she could experience how the issue of the environment and sustainability can create opportunities for Interreligious Dialogue. As President of Comunità Abramo, every month she spends time together with the members of her community in prison and with homeless people of different religions, talking to them, listening to their problems, and sharing each other's thoughts about God and faith. Elena also takes part each year in the organization of the Missionary-Interreligious Vigil of the Diocese of Vicenza and in supporting foreign Dioceses in their humanitarian project of dialogue with other religions (for instance Diocese of Multan in Pakistan – dialogue with Muslims). She also led a youth ecumenical experience in Belfast, organized by the Abramo Community in partnership with the then Auxiliar Bishop of Belfast, Donal Mckeown (now Bishop of Derry), and a group of Catholic and Protestant pastors of Ulster. She runs various programs for young people of the Abramo

Community in Europe, with particular attention to non-believers. In January 2020 she was called to speak about youth to the First International Conference for Charismatic Communities Leaders in Recife (Brasil).



Ms. Linda Schappals Taggart, USA

Linda is an adjunct professor of Hebrew Scriptures and Interreligious Studies, and has been working with St. Leo University's Center for Jewish-Catholic dialogue for over a decade. She serves as a member of the diaconate formation faculty for the diocese of St. Petersburg, and an active member of the Florida Holocaust Museum's Leadership Council. She has developed and taught a dozen different courses in interreligious studies, and produced more than fifty presentations and publications on the same topic. She intends to pursue a doctorate degree to allow her to continue her research, teaching, and formation of pastoral leaders in interreligious dialogue.



Dr. Matthew John Paul Tan, Australia

Matthew is Dean of Studies in Vianney College Seminary in the Diocese of Wagga Wagga. His work in the academy has included theology, philosophy, history, international relations, law, as well as chaplaincy assignments in the Archdiocese of Brisbane Church Life and Mission Office. He has participated in interreligious conferences both in Australia and overseas (one of his papers was presented at the Centre for Theology and Philosophy in Rome 2008 on Reason, Politics, and Evangelization), and is interested in implementing interreligious dialogue in the resolution of anti-migrant tensions in Australia.

As a Russell Berrie Fellow, Matthew completed his License in Sacred Theology at the Pontifical University of St Thomas Aquinas in Rome, following the completion of his Doctorate in Theology at the Australian Catholic University.

He returned to Australia in 2011 and served as a Lecturer in Theology and Philosophy at Campion College Australia. During this time, he was seconded as a visiting research fellow in the Centre for World

Catholicism and Intercultural Theology at DePaul University in Chicago.

In 2016, Matthew was appointed the private secretary of the Most Rev Anthony Randazzo, auxiliary Bishop in the Archdiocese of Sydney. In this role, he is also a member of the Archdiocese's Ecumenical and Interfaith Commission. In 2021, he accepted the role of Dean of Studies at Vianney College Seminary in the Diocese of Wagga Wagga. He is also an adjunct Senior Lecturer in Theology at the University of Notre Dame Australia. He blogs at [Awkward Asian Theologian](#) and co-hosts the [Awkward Asian Theologians](#) podcast.



Fr. Michael Thangaraj, India

Rev. Fr. Thangaraj is from the state of Tamil Nadu, in India. He belongs to the Catholic Diocese of Vellore. After completing Licentiate in "Ecumenism and Inter-Religious Dialogue" as a Russel berrie fellow from the Angelicum, he also continued to do his Doctoral studies in Ecumenical Theology with specialising in Interreligious Collaboration and Understanding. Then along with his pastoral work in the diocese and

Ecumenism, He completed ten years of this mission 2014-2024. He also in between became Regional Secretary in the State of Tamil Nadu India for three Years (2016-2019).

Fr. Thangaraj after being immersed in Ecumenical and Inter Faith Harmony works, for about Ten years in Tamil Nadu and his Diocese, went to Rome to do his Post Doctoral Research in Ecumenical Theology in the Year 2024-2025.

At present (2026), Fr. Thangaraj continues to work in the same Commission of Ecumenism and Religious Harmony in the Diocese. At the same time, he was also given an opportunity to give Legal Guidelines to the people by being a Secretary in the Legal Cell the Diocese of Vellore, Tamil Nadu, India. He also publishes articles and books in the same fields.



Tran Van Thien, O.P., Vietnam

Deacon Tran Van Thien grew up in Vietnam, a multireligious and multicultural society in which Buddhism is the predominant religious tradition. While Catholics and followers of other religions have long lived side by side in Vietnam, Deacon Thien

observed that meaningful collaboration and sustained engagement across religious boundaries were often limited. He is convinced that interreligious dialogue – particularly conversations that share doctrinal perspectives and foster mutual understanding – is essential for building deeper cooperation for the common good in such contexts. During his academic formation, Deacon Thien developed close friendships with people from diverse religious and cultural backgrounds, including Buddhist nuns as well as Catholic sisters and brothers. One of his closest friendships was with a devoted Buddhist nun who lived and practiced her faith at a local pagoda, which he visited on several occasions. Together, they organized a small social outreach group, visiting the poor in the region and volunteering at the Binh Loi Merciful Class, a school serving children from disadvantaged backgrounds. After completing his university studies, Thien entered the Order of Preachers with a desire to proclaim the Word of God to all people. In his formation work with young catechists, he emphasized two foundational dimensions: sound Catholic doctrine and pastoral practice. He taught courses in Introduction to the

Bible and the Spirituality of the Dominican Order to junior Dominican Sisters of the Holy Rosary in Vietnam. He is currently continuing his theological studies as an S.T.L. student at the Pontifical University of St. Thomas Aquinas (Angelicum) in Rome, where he seeks to explore how interreligious dialogue can serve the Church's mission of evangelization within the broader human community, particularly in multicultural and multireligious societies such as Vietnam.

Upon completion of the Russell Berrie Fellowship in Interreligious Studies and his studies at the Angelicum, Deacon Thien hopes to continue working in the field of interreligious and ecumenical dialogue, as well as teaching theology and ecumenical studies in seminaries.

Rev. Quan Dinh Tran, Vietnam/USA



Fr. Quan was six years old when his family fled to the United States after the fall of Saigon. He grew up in California. After practicing law for ten years he enrolled in seminary to philosophy and theology. He is convinced of the importance of Christians

working together with other religions in order to build relationships and work for common causes. Fr. Quan is currently Parochial Vicar at Christ Cathedral Parish in the Diocese of Orange. He is also Episcopal Vicar for Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs for the Diocese, and Secretary to the Pastoral Provision, a process where former Anglican clergy can become Catholic priests. He is also the founder of Fullness of Grace, a ministry that helps Christians grow in their spiritual life.



Humphrey Uche Udechukwu, Nigeria

Rev. Fr. Humphrey Uche Udechukwu was ordained for the Catholic Diocese of Ogoja, Nigeria, in 2011. Following his ordination, he served as a bursar and teacher at Pope John Paul II Minor Seminary in Okpoma, Nigeria. After two years in seminary formation, he was appointed priest-in-charge of the Church of the Assumption in Grassfield, Ikom, where he served for four years. At the conclusion of his pastoral assignment, Fr. Humphrey was named Administrator of St. Benedict Cathedral in Ogoja, a role in which he worked closely with Bishop Donatus

Edet Akpan of the Diocese of Ogoja. Fr. Humphrey's interest in interreligious dialogue was sparked by his firsthand experience of religious violence in Nigeria. Witnessing the devastating effects of such conflict inspired in him a commitment to promoting peace and mutual understanding among people of different religious traditions. This commitment took concrete form through his service on the diocesan Commission on Ecumenism and Interreligious Dialogue, where he participated in mosque visits, interfaith conferences, and public talks on religious acceptance and peaceful coexistence. As Administrator of the cathedral, he remained actively involved in interreligious initiatives, and at the request of his Bishop, he pursued further academic formation in ecumenism at the Angelicum in Rome. Upon completion of the S.T.L. program at the Pontifical University of St. Thomas Aquinas, Fr. Humphrey hopes to promote interreligious dialogue and foster education for peaceful coexistence in his home country. He is particularly committed to supporting and reintegrating individuals and communities affected by religious violence.



Rev. Michael Ufok Udoekpo, Nigeria

Fr. Michael Ufok Udoekpo, John Paul II Leader for IRD, is a Nigerian born American and a priest of the Catholic Diocese of Ikot Ekpene, Nigeria. He previously served as an Associate Professor of Scriptures at Sacred Heart Seminary and School of Theology, Milwaukee (2010-2019), the Catholic Institute of West Africa (CIWA), and St. Joseph Major Seminary, Ikot Ekpene. He currently serves as the founding professor of biblical studies/theology, in the Department of Theology and Ecclesiastical Faculty of Theology of Veritas University Abuja, where he had also served as a two term – Dean of the Faculty of Humanities. He is widely published in books, and in reputable peer reviewed journals, in areas of scripture, and interreligious dialogue, and belongs to various professional Associations, including, CBA, SBL, CABAN, PACE and CATS.



Rev. Ambrose Ezenwa Ukaonu, C.M.F., Nigeria

Fr. Ambrose is a Claretian, and served as Director of Interreligious Dialogue for his congregation where he organized seminars and workshops on peace and dialogue between Christians and Muslims involving eminent scholars and speakers. He has worked as an instructor of Islamic and Comparative Religion at various seminaries and after completing his degree at the Angelicum, he returned to Nigeria to take up a position in the Interreligious Department of the Catholic Secretariat of Nigeria, in addition to his continuing work as an instructor at seminaries in Nigeria.



Fr. Cyrille Uwizeye, Rwanda

After completion of his doctoral studies and research at the Angelicum, Fr. Uwizeye returned back to work on the Program for Christian and Muslim Relations in Rwanda, raising awareness of ecumenical and interreligious dialogue.

He is a parish priest of Muyunzwe parish in Kabgayi diocese, Rwanda. Also, he serves as the vice-

chairman of the Bible Society of Rwanda and the chairman of the ecumenical commission of Kabgayi diocese.



***Sr. Gracy Joseph Peechanavelil Vadakara,
Daughters of the Church (D .C), India***

Growing up in India, a religiously diverse country, Sister Gracy has been aware of interreligious dialogue since early adolescence. She is a member of the Daughters of the Church, whose Mother house is in Rome. Their mission is also to conduct prayers and discussions for Christian unity and interreligious dialogue. Following her graduation in Sociology, she has committed herself to teaching sociology to the professional nursing students in Bangalore, India.

After 10 years of her stay in Rome, as a General Councillor to the Congregation of the Daughters of the Church and obtained Phd from St Thomas Aquinas and meanwhile equipped in interreligious dialogue with Russell Berrie programme. Sr. Gracy has returned to India to served as superior of her community and manager of a school run by the

Sisters of the Daughters of the Church in Kerala. Being fully involved in counseling the students of her school and as animator of the youth in the parish is an inspiring experience for her to spend time with the young students who are progressive and are motivated to bring peace and harmony in society. At present she is using dialogue of life and has initiated programme called "dialogue at grass root level" involving all the students and teachers of the school, established an interreligious library in the school. She served as a Provincial Superior of the Congregation in India from 2018 to 2024 in Bangalore. While she gave seminars on interreligious and Ecumenical dialogue in the seminaries and at the theological Institute run by the CRI (Conference of Religious India) at Mater Dei, Goa. She gives annual conferences to the young religious and also served as a pastoral council member of the diocese of Bangalore.

At present she serves as a member JWG (Joint Working group) with the WCC in the dicastery of Christian unity (2024 to 2030). At present she is asked to move to the Philippines (Matteo Rizal) for a Formative programme.



Fr. Marco Valentini, Italy

During his youth, Fr. Valentini experienced different cultures and faith backgrounds throughout his twelve years spent in Romania, Saudi Arabia, Canada and Ireland. In 1994 he was ordained priest for the Diocese of Rome, where he worked for 28 years. Then he spent about three years in the Archdiocese of Milwaukee and since 2025 he is working in the Diocese of Chur, Switzerland. Fr. Valentini has organized different interreligious events for his community, has developed church architectural projects and has acted as a liturgical consultant. He holds a bachelor's degree in philosophy, one in theology, a license (master's) Summa cum Laude in liturgy (S. Anselmo 2016) and he attended a doctorate program for interreligious dialogue at the Angelicum.



Fr. Ladislav Varga, Slovakia

As a seminarian Fr. Ladislav was involved in prayer meetings of the Ecumenical community in Kosice, which also included representatives from the local Jewish community. As a priest associate from 2010 through 2015 he worked as a teacher of religious education and later as a secretary for the Ecumenical community in Kosice. From 2015 until 2020 he studied Ecumenism and Interreligious dialogue at the Pontifical University of St. Thomas Aquinas.

In 2020 he returned back to Slovakia where he served as a priest in the diocese of Košice. During the COVID-19 he went to hospital as a priest and voluntary worker.

Currently he is a member of Ecumenical community in Košice, serves as parochial vicar at st. Francis of Assisi parish in Vranov nad Topľou and school chaplain in Catholic school of Dominic Savio in Vranov nad Topľou.

Fr. Ladislav believes that contextual understanding of the various issues between different religions as well as understanding one's own identity has an important

place in interreligious dialogue as ecumenical relationships as well.

Rev. Peter Vu Van Vuong, Vietnam

During his pastoral work in his home country, Vietnam, Rev. Vuong has had the opportunity to gain insight into the lives of many interreligious families and marriages which experience led him to believe that interfaith learning and dialogue is essential to building a harmonious family and a united community in today's Vietnam as it helps deepen understanding not only of other religions but also of one's own faith and religious values. Besides teaching catechism to couples just about to enter marriage, Rev. Vuong is also responsible for the religious instruction of the youth as Deputy Superintendent of the Thi Nghe community. After completing his year at the Angelicum, Rev. Vuong is planning on returning to Vietnam to promote interfaith dialogue within his own congregation by teaching Interreligious Studies to the seminarians of the Hue Archdiocese as well as help the sisters of other congregations in the Archdiocese to better understand other religions.



Ms. Shu Chin Gabrielle Yang, Malaysia

The need for interreligious dialogue in Malaysia stems from the desire to better understand one another and in respecting and appreciating others' faiths and beliefs. For Gabrielle, embarking on interreligious studies means to be equipped with a more comprehensive understanding so that she is able to dedicate her life to continue to share and witness what it is to be fully alive and fully human. She views everyone as part of a family where bridges of trust, love and friendship continue to be strengthened, as nothing genuinely human fails to raise an echo in her heart. After completing her year at the Angelicum, Gabrielle hopes to work with young children in order to help them build a solid and moral foundation in their lives.



Rabbi Allyson Zacharoff, USA

Rabbi Allyson Zacharoff is the Associate Director of Interreligious Affairs at American Jewish Committee (AJC), working globally and based at AJC headquarters in New York City. Rabbi Zacharoff has held numerous interfaith fellowships over the years, including when she served as a Russell Berrie Fellow in Interreligious Studies at the Pontifical University of St. Thomas Aquinas in Rome, where she studied alongside Catholic clergy; as a Conflict Resolution Fellow at the Pardes Institute of Jewish Studies in Jerusalem; and as an International Peacemaking Program Fellow at Hartford International University for Religion and Peace in Connecticut, where she focused on Islam and Christian-Muslim relations. Her work has included designing and directing numerous grant-funded interreligious projects and serving in leadership roles in local, national, and international interfaith initiatives. Immediately preceding her time with AJC, Rabbi Zacharoff led Congregation Beth Hatikvah in Summit, New Jersey.



Rev. Marco Zara, Italy

Don Marco has been a priest since 2003, serving in parish ministry and contributing to the academic and religious community through teaching, conferences, and constant dialogue with students and professionals of other religious backgrounds. His studies include great interest in St. Thomas Aquinas' contributions to the Catholic Church and the ways in which he laid a foundation for modern interreligious dialogue.

Fr. Marco serves as a military chaplain in Italy. Currently, he is also Director of the Diocesan Office for Social Pastoral Care and Labour of the Military Ordinariate of Italy. He is currently completing a PhD in Comparative Theology at the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross in Rome.



Roksolana Zarytska, Ukraine

Throughout her life, Roksolana has always believed that it is possible for a person to make a difference in the world. Living in a uniform society she often came across national and religious stereotyping. To bring about positive change she has been part of the Ecumenical Social Week for the past five years, which is dedicated to various topics in society, such as education, immigration and social responsibility and brings together representatives of various religions. She also worked on projects related to corruption, injustice and intolerance at the International Institute for Ethics and Contemporary Issues (UCU). Upon completing the Fellowship Roksolana decided to continue her studies at the Bea Center in Rome.



Rev. Joseph M. Zwosta, USA

Father Joseph Zwosta was ordained a priest for his native Diocese of Brooklyn in 2012. He completed his STL at the Angelicum the following year as a Russell Berrie Fellow. He served for several years as Associate Vicar for Ecumenical and Interreligious

Affairs for his diocese. In 2020, he successfully defended a doctoral dissertation at the Angelicum entitled: “Intercultural and Interreligious Dialogue with Islam in Light of the Regensburg Lecture of Benedict XVI.” Since 2020, he has served on the faculty of Pope St. John XXIII National Seminary in Weston, Massachusetts. In 2022, he became Academic Dean. One of the courses he currently teaches is “Ecumenism and Interreligious Dialogue.”