

Angelica Berrie & Taras Dzyubanskyy (eds.)



Studying Judaism, Strengthening Dialogue

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

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This commemorative volume honors the legacy of the **John Paul II Center for Interreligious Dialogue** and the **Russell Berrie Fellowship** at the **Pontifical University of St. Thomas Aquinas (Angelicum)** – a program that, over fifteen years, has formed a global community of leaders committed to dialogue, human dignity, and the common good. At its heart, the Fellowship represents a unique and remarkable collaboration between the **Russell Berrie Foundation**, a Jewish philanthropic institution, and one of the oldest papal universities in Rome – an enduring sign of trust, shared purpose, and the possibility of deep partnership across religious traditions.

The book gathers reflections and essays from the principal figures behind the program, offering insight into its founding vision and enduring impact. Alongside these are biographical profiles of Fellows whose work across continents – in education, religious leadership, public life, and civil society – has advanced interreligious understanding in concrete and transformative ways. Together, these pages tell a story not only of formation, but of mission: a shared commitment to building a more just and peaceful world through encounter, dialogue, and collaboration.

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Educating for Encounter: A Global Vision of Interreligious Leadership

Angelica Berrie and Dr. Idana Goldberg



Nearly two decades ago, The Russell Berrie Foundation and the Pontifical University of St. Thomas Aquinas – the Angelicum – came together around a shared conviction: that the future of religious leadership must include serious and sustained formation in interreligious dialogue.

Inspired by Pope John Paul II’s historic visit to the Rome synagogue and his embrace of the Jewish people as “our older brothers,” our founder, Russell Berrie, believed that faith must be a force for human dignity and reconciliation. After his passing, the Foundation, together with Rabbi Jack Bemporad and the leadership of the Angelicum, established the Pope John Paul II Center for Inter-Religious Dialogue and the Russell Berrie Fellowship in Interreligious Studies to carry that vision forward.

Under the leadership of Rabbi Jack Bemporad and Professor Adam Afterman, the Center educated future leaders of the Catholic Church about Jews and Judaism, strengthening Catholic-Jewish understanding at the highest intellectual and spiritual levels.

The Angelicum stands at the forefront of the Church's pontifical universities, forming priests, nuns, scholars, and lay leaders who serve across the globe. By integrating rigorous Jewish studies into that formation – both in Rome and through immersive study at the Shalom Hartman Institute in Israel – the program ensured that dialogue would be serious and authentic, and that its impact would ripple far beyond Rome.

Pope John Paul II reminded the world that “dialogue between followers of different religions is now a necessary condition for peace in the world.” His witness built upon the historic declaration of the Second Vatican Council in *Nostra Aetate* (1965), in which the Church affirmed that it “rejects nothing that is true and holy” in other religions and called for “mutual understanding and respect” through dialogue and collaboration. That moment transformed Catholic-Jewish relations and opened a door that earlier generations could scarcely have imagined.

The Russell Berrie Fellowship walked through that door with seriousness and commitment.

From the beginning, the program focused on formation. Fellows came from around the world – priests, religious sisters and brothers, and lay leaders – to the Angelicum, drawn by a desire to deepen their theological understanding of Judaism and to encounter Jewish thought and tradition as a living faith. They studied, debated, prayed, and built lasting friendships. They discovered that authentic encounter strengthens, rather than diminishes, one's own faith.

Jewish tradition teaches that every human being is created *b'tzelem Elohim* – in the image of God (Genesis 1:27). The Mishnah reminds us that because all humanity descends from a single ancestor, no person can say “my father is greater than yours.” (Sanhedrin 4:5). Every life carries equal dignity. Every soul reflects the Divine. That shared commitment to human dignity lies at the heart of this work.

Over seventeen years, more than 130 Fellows completed the program. They now serve in dioceses, seminaries, universities, parishes, and communities across continents. Some have been appointed by their Bishops and assist Cardinals in interfaith initiatives. Each carries not only knowledge, but relationships formed in Rome – relationships that have quietly shaped conversations and decisions in ways we may never fully see.

Looking back, what we hoped to accomplish was both ambitious and simple: that Jewish learning would be represented authentically within a Catholic

theological setting; that future Catholic leaders would encounter Judaism as a living covenantal tradition; that friendships formed in study would translate into leadership marked by respect; and that The Angelicum would become a place where dialogue was woven into the life of the university. And we hoped that in some small way, this work would contribute to peace.

None of this would have been possible without the trust and commitment of the Angelicum's leadership and faculty, and without the courage of the Fellows who embraced this vision.

The Russell Berrie Foundation has had the privilege of witnessing the fruit of this investment in the testimonies of Fellows whose ministries have been transformed by their experience. Again and again, we heard that what mattered most was not only what they learned, but who they encountered on this interfaith journey.

At a time when religious differences are too often misunderstood or exploited, this history reminds us that serious faith does not retreat from encounter. It seeks it – with intellectual rigor, spiritual depth, and love.

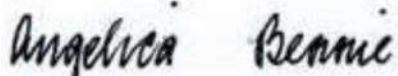
This book tells the story of our journey – the founding vision, the partnership, and the remarkable individuals who will carry this mission forward.

We offer it with gratitude and hope: gratitude for what has been built together, and hope that the spirit which animated this endeavor will continue to inspire leaders of faith to choose dialogue over division, understanding over suspicion, and peace over fear.

Seventeen years ago, this work began with a conviction that formation matters – that educating leaders in the spirit of respect and encounter can shape the future of the Church and its relationship with the Jewish people. Today, that conviction feels more urgent than ever. As the Church continues to guide a world longing for moral clarity and unity, we offer this work as a testament to what can be accomplished when institutions act with courage and vision.

May the seeds planted through the Pope John Paul II Center and the Russell Berrie Fellowship continue to bear fruit – strengthening the bonds between our communities and encouraging renewed commitment to the sacred work of dialogue for generations to come.

With deep appreciation,



Angelica Berrie
President
The Russell Berrie Foundation



Dr. Idana Goldberg
Chief Executive Officer
The Russell Berrie Foundation



Interreligious Dialogue as a Path of Truth and Healing

Rabbi Jack Bemporad

If one looks honestly at the history of relations among religions, one must conclude that interreligious dialogue today cannot be merely an academic exercise, nor simply an exchange of courtesies. It must be a form of healing. Religions have too often not only misunderstood one another, but misrepresented, denigrated, excluded, and at times even persecuted one another. Nor has this been true only among religions. Divisions, condemnations, and conflicts have also marked the life of religions within denominations. For that reason, dialogue must be twofold: a dialogue among religions and a dialogue within religions. Without both, peace remains fragile, because falsehood within a tradition easily becomes falsehood about the other.

This healing requires more than good intentions. It requires honesty, historical truthfulness, and a willingness to examine inherited patterns of thought. Dialogue is needed if we are to arrive at a more objective and historically accurate understanding of one another. No honest observer can deny that, in the history of Christian attitudes toward Jews and Judaism, and Jewish attitudes toward Christians and Christianity, one often finds negative stereotypes and false representations. Past misunderstandings must be clarified. A new direction must be taken in the way we view one another. Not only does demonizing the other – or even demonizing different parts of one's own faith – make it almost impossible to work together; it also undermines the true task of religion itself, which is to be the conscience of society and the voice for humanity.

Over many decades of participation in interreligious dialogue, I have become convinced that peace and the pursuit of peace are among the greatest tasks religion can offer to a conflict-ridden world. This is especially true of the monotheistic religions. Precisely because they speak in the name of the one God, they bear a special responsibility to be witnesses to the dignity of the human person, the sanctity of life, and the moral imperative of peace. Yet this task cannot be fulfilled if religion is politicized in such a way that it becomes captive to power, ideology, or self-justification. Each religion must resist the temptation to imagine that it has so fully cornered the market on truth that the other has nothing to teach. One cannot enter into genuine dialogue while reducing the other to insignificance, deficiency, or falsehood. The search for

truth about one's own faith must be joined to the search for truth about the other.

This was understood with remarkable clarity by Saint Pope John XXIII. In initiating Vatican II, he recognized that we cannot be fully true to ourselves unless we seek the truth about the other. If we misrepresent the other, stereotype the other, or bear false witness to the other, then we are not fully true even to our own faith. In this sense, one of the most important questions in interreligious life can be expressed very simply: How can I be true to my own faith without being false to yours? That question, in many ways, stands at the heart of all authentic dialogue.

Thanks to the great achievements of Vatican II, and especially to the Declaration *Nostra Aetate*, a revolution took place in the foundations of interreligious dialogue. Together with the later Guidelines and Notes, important papal speeches, *We Remember*, the statements of the European bishops, the Israel-Vatican accord, and related biblical and theological documents, much of the inherited negativity of the past has been overcome. None of this happened quickly or easily. Yet taken together, these developments made possible a new relationship grounded not in stereotype, but in truth, respect, and moral seriousness.

By far the most revolutionary of these documents was *Nostra Aetate*. With respect to Jews and Judaism, it brought about a fundamental reorientation.

It rejected inherited patterns of contempt and opened the possibility of a new beginning. It made possible a relationship in which Christians and Jews could strive to understand one another more truthfully, not merely for the sake of civility, but as part of religious integrity itself. It showed that truth about one's own faith and truth about the faith of the other belong together.

Saint Pope John Paul II deepened this insight and gave it historic force. As Cardinal Cassidy and others helped to show, false representations of the other are not harmless errors. They can lead to immense suffering. If we do not recognize how such distortions contributed to exclusion, hostility, and persecution, then we fail in our own responsibility as religious people. To be true to one's faith requires devotion, but it also requires repentance, purification of memory, and the courage to correct falsehood. In his first meeting with Jewish leaders, Saint John Paul II said that Christians must strive to learn by what essential traits Jews define themselves in the light of their own religious experience. That was a profound statement. But it is equally necessary that Jews strive to understand the Church and Christians in terms of how they define themselves. Genuine dialogue must be reciprocal. Each must learn to understand the other as the other understands itself.

It was out of this post-conciliar vision that an important educational responsibility emerged. Vatican II made clear that Jews, rabbis, scholars, and representatives of the Jewish community should participate in the education of Christians. As a result, a number of us were invited to teach at Catholic

universities and institutions. At the time, Jews were still too often forced into the position of defending Judaism against anti-Semitic accusations and long-standing distortions. It became clear to me that this burden could not remain solely with Jews. Non-Jews too needed to know enough about Judaism, about the history of anti-Judaism and anti-Semitism, and about the demands of interreligious understanding, so that they could respond responsibly, educate their own students, and help shape a better future.

With the support of the Russell Berrie Foundation and the Angelicum, the John Paul II Center was established at the Pontifical University of Saint Thomas Aquinas in Rome. The Center was not intended to be simply another academic enterprise. It was meant to embody the interreligious vision opened by Vatican II and deepened in the pontificate of Saint John Paul II. Its mission took shape around three foundational questions, which structured its courses, its fellowships, and its larger educational purpose.

The first question harkens back to Saint Pope John XXIII's visionary Vatican II: How can I be true to my own faith without being false to yours? This question requires that one strive to understand the other as he or she understands himself or herself. It demands that one speak of one's own faith without distorting or denigrating the faith of the other. Fidelity to one's own tradition does not permit false witness about another. On the contrary, part of being true to one's own faith is correctly characterizing the other.

The second question was: What is the place of the faith of the other within the self-understanding of my own faith? This question moves beyond fairness in description to a deeper form of recognition. It asks, “With what eyes do we see the other, and with what eyes does the other see us?” It also asks what space I make for the other within the horizon of my own belief. How do I frame the other in my own religious self-understanding? How do I reconceptualize the other, not according to inherited categories of suspicion or negation, but in a way that allows me to recognize the religious seriousness, dignity, and enduring significance of the other? In this sense, the question involves a kind of recognition: a learning to see the other anew. It asks whether one’s own faith can mature by discovering new concepts and new language adequate to the reality of the other.

The third question was: How can religions work together for the common good of humanity? This question is perhaps the most urgent of all. If religions truly believe in God and seek to do God’s will, then one of the greatest imperatives of our time is to work together for peace. In a world marked by conflict, destruction, and war, religions cannot remain content with dialogue that is merely theoretical. They must become champions of peace. They must bring their moral authority, their spiritual depth, and their capacity to shape conscience into the service of reconciliation, justice, and the dignity of all human beings.

These three questions provided more than an academic framework. They offered a moral and spiritual method. They were meant to form scholars, teachers, and future leaders who would be deeply rooted in their own traditions, yet equally committed to truth about the other and responsibility for the human future. The Fellows who studied at the Center, along with the many students who participated in its courses, were taught not only by me, but by distinguished Jewish scholars from around the world, each chosen because of excellence in his or her field. This volume is, in part, a tribute to those scholars and to the Fellows whose promise as future leaders and whose prior scholarship made them worthy of such support.

More deeply, however, this volume is a tribute to a vision: that the future of religious life depends in no small measure on whether we can educate men and women who are serious in faith, disciplined in thought, honest in memory, and open to the dignity of the other. Religion is at its best not when it seeks domination, but when it calls human beings beyond self-centeredness, fear, and the need to denigrate others. Its true vocation is to awaken conscience, deepen compassion, and help humanity move toward justice and peace.

That is why interreligious dialogue is not a luxury. It is a necessity. It is part of the purification of religion itself. Only if it rises above superficiality, will it succeed; only if it faces painful history head-on, will it succeed; only if it challenges inherited distortions, will it succeed. But if it becomes a disciplined search for truth – truth about oneself, truth about the other, and truth about our shared

responsibility before God – then it can help religions become what they are meant to be: sources of healing rather than division, and servants of peace in a suffering world.

To place this volume before the Holy Father is therefore to offer not only scholarship, but hope: hope that religions may continue the work of healing within themselves and among one another; hope that education can overcome distortion; hope that faithfulness and truthfulness need not be opposed; and hope that religious communities, working together, may become ever more fully the conscience of society and a voice for humanity.

Rabbi Jack Bemporad

Director Emeritus John Paul II Center for Interreligious Studies

St. Thomas Aquinas University, Rome,

and Director, The Center for Interreligious Understanding Teaneck, NJ

Many of our Fellows from many different countries, either preceding or following their conferences, read this International Prayer for Peace, which The Center for Interreligious Understanding now has in 21 different languages:

Dear God,

Thank you for all creation.

In the spirit of Jesus of Nazareth, and all teachers of peace who inspire the many faith traditions, help me, and all the people of the world, learn how to replace hate, war, oppression and division with love, forgiveness, freedom, and reconciliation.

Help me to embody Your love in my relationships with my family and friends, strangers – even my enemies. I commit myself to this sacred task throughout my life.

So let it be.



A Legacy of Dialogue: The Russell Berrie Fellowship and the Formation of Interreligious Leadership

Professor Adam Afterman

This book offers a welcome opportunity to honor the remarkable legacy of the John Paul II Center for Interreligious Dialogue and the Russell Berrie Fellowship in Interreligious Studies. The Fellowship stands as a lasting testament to Jewish-Catholic friendship and to the profound promise of interreligious understanding. More than an academic initiative, it became a true community of learning and relationship, shaped by intellectual seriousness, spiritual openness, and a shared commitment to mutual respect.

The 135 alumni represented in these pages – clergy, religious, and lay leaders from over 40 countries – continue to give living expression to that vision through their work and service.

The Fellowship emerged from a historic partnership between the Pontifical University of St. Thomas Aquinas (Angelicum) in Rome and the Russell Berrie Foundation, a distinguished Jewish philanthropic institution whose generosity, foresight, and moral leadership helped bring into being one of the most significant interreligious programs of its kind. This singular collaboration was sustained not only by the Foundation's support, but also by the commitment of its trustees and leadership, whose vision recognized the enduring importance of forming a new generation of religious leaders through study, dialogue, and understanding. Among them, Ms. Angelica Berrie, President of the Russell Berrie Foundation, played an especially memorable role. Her unwavering dedication, personal warmth, and profound belief in the promise of Jewish-Catholic relations lent the Fellowship a distinctive spirit and human depth.

Ms. Berrie's presence was never merely formal. She participated in every academic visit to Israel, accompanied the Fellows in their journeys of learning and discovery, and forged personal bonds with many of the alumni over the years. To those who took part in the program, she was not simply a benefactor, but a gracious and inspiring presence. Through her example, the Fellowship came to embody not only institutional partnership, but genuine friendship. The program's intellectual depth and distinctive character were immeasurably enriched by the pioneering work of Rabbi Jack Bemporad, the founding director of the program, a distinguished leader in interfaith dialogue, and a permanent core faculty member at the Angelicum.

Through his teaching of Hebrew Bible and Jewish philosophy, Rabbi Bemporad helped ensure that the study of Judaism occupied a central place within the curriculum. Under his guidance, the Fellowship cultivated a serious and respectful engagement with Jewish sources, thought, and tradition, opening for its Fellows a deeper path toward knowledge, humility, and mutual regard.

It was my privilege, as a Senior Scholar of the Shalom Hartman Institute in Jerusalem, to help coordinate the academic dimensions of this exceptional endeavor. The close relationship between the Fellowship and the Shalom Hartman Institute gave the program an essential scholarly foundation. Leading Hartman scholars were invited to Rome to teach specialized courses in Jewish thought and interreligious dialogue, offering Fellows a rich and authentic engagement with Judaism. I also had the privilege of coordinating these faculty visits and helping shape the academic seminar in Israel, which became one of the defining experiences of the Fellowship.

Among the program's most transformative elements was the mandatory ten-day academic seminar in Israel. For every Fellow, this was far more than a study tour; it was a direct engagement with Judaism in the land, history, and living reality that have sustained it across the centuries. Based at the Shalom Hartman Institute in Jerusalem, the seminar brought Fellows into conversation with Israeli scholars, led them to sites sacred to Jewish and Christian memory, and created opportunities for meaningful meetings with local religious leaders.

Accompanied each year by Ms. Angelica Berrie, these visits united academic rigor with a palpable sense of shared purpose and personal connection. For many alumni, the days spent in Israel remained among the most formative and unforgettable of their lives.

The enduring significance of the Fellowship is found in the community it formed and in the work it continues to inspire. Today, its alumni serve across the globe, carrying forward a vision shaped by learning, openness, and reverence for the religious other. In universities, seminaries, schools, parishes, religious communities, and interfaith initiatives, they continue the vital work of advancing understanding, reconciliation, and peace. Their witness stands as a tribute to the trustees, leaders, scholars, and friends whose wisdom, generosity, and devotion made this extraordinary undertaking possible.

I would also like to express my gratitude to the present leadership of the Angelicum for sustaining and honoring this important legacy, especially to the Rector Magnificus, Fr. Thomas Joseph White, O.P., and to Fr. Hyacinthe Destivelle, O.P., director of the Institute for Ecumenical Studies.

Their leadership reflects the Angelicum's continuing commitment to the ideals of dialogue, learning, and friendship that have animated this program from its inception.

It is an honor to contribute these words in recognition of a program whose

influence extended far beyond the classroom, forming not only scholars and religious leaders, but also enduring relationships of trust, respect, and friendship. Its legacy lives on in its alumni and in the many bridges they continue to build across traditions, cultures, and nations.

Prof. Adam Afterman

Senior Scholar, Shalom Hartman Institute, Jerusalem

The John Paul II Center for Interreligious Dialogue, Rome



In the Service of Truth and Friendship: The Angelicum and the Russell Berrie Foundation

Fr. Thomas Joseph White, O.P.

It is with deep gratitude that I offer these words in recognition of a remarkable collaboration between the Pontifical University of Saint Thomas Aquinas and the Russell Berrie Foundation. Over the past two decades, this partnership has given life to the John Paul II Center for Interreligious Dialogue, an initiative that has not only enriched our academic community but has also embodied, in a tangible way, the spirit of encounter called for by the Second Vatican Council.

The presence of Jewish scholars within a Catholic institution is not merely a sign of humane openness and affability; it is also a condition for authentic dialogue between Jews and Christians. Mutual understanding cannot unfold in abstraction or at a distance but only through genuine conversation. This requires personal encounter, intellectual honesty, and above all, the respect of Christians and Jews for

for each other as representatives of deeply related traditions. The collaboration with the Russell Berrie Foundation – rooted in Jewish philanthropy and animated by a profound commitment to human dignity and mutual understanding – has made this encounter possible in a sustained and meaningful way.

At the Angelicum, this conversation has been shaped by a distinctly Thomistic approach – one that unites faith and reason in a disciplined search for truth. In the spirit of St. Thomas Aquinas, dialogue is not a negotiation based on relativism or “perspectivalism”, but a rigorous intellectual engagement grounded in the conviction that truth is one and ultimately knowable, even if at times only partially grasped. Such an approach demands clarity of thought, precision in language, careful attention to sources, and a genuine openness to learning from the other. It resists both superficial agreement and polemical opposition, instead fostering a mode of communication that is at once critical and charitable.

This Thomistic intellectual ethos has provided a firm foundation for the work of the John Paul II Center. Dialogue between Christians and Jews here has never been reduced to a polite exchange of ideas. It has been lived as a shared journey: in classrooms, in study halls, and in sustained engagement with sacred texts and living traditions. Jewish scholars have not only contributed their intellectual heritage but have also invited our students and faculty into the depth of their lived tradition – its texts, its interpretive methods, and its spiritual

vision. In doing so, they have helped cultivate a form of dialogue that is both deeply rooted and intellectually demanding.

This initiative has been a blessing for our students, who have had the rare opportunity to participate in a formative experience that is both rigorous and transformative. Over nearly twenty years, they have encountered not only ideas, but persons; not only doctrines, but traditions embodied in human lives. Such encounters leave a lasting mark. They form minds, but they also shape hearts.

An essential component of this formation was the program's study tours to Israel, where Fellows encountered Judaism not merely as an academic subject, but as a living tradition. These visits enabled participants to immerse themselves in the religious, intellectual, and cultural realities of contemporary Jewish life through direct engagement with scholars, rabbis, practitioners, and academics from a wide range of institutions and communities. Pilgrimages to Jerusalem and throughout the Holy Land exposed Fellows to the richness and diversity of Jewish thought and practice, while also deepening their understanding of the historical and spiritual bonds linking Jews, Christians, and Muslims to the land.

These journeys also reflected the profound institutional commitment of the Pontifical University of Saint Thomas Aquinas to authentic friendship between Christians and Jews. Every study trip to the Holy Land was accompanied by a

representative of the Angelicum, ensuring that the experience remained deeply integrated into the broader intellectual and spiritual formation of the Fellows. The presence of faculty and institutional representatives fostered continuity between classroom study and lived experience, while also embodying the Thomistic conviction that truth is best pursued through disciplined reflection.

The spirit of friendship and shared exchanges in the search for truth between Christians and Jews are of greater relevance today even than in past years. As the Catholic Church condemns all forms of antisemitism and hostility toward the Jewish people, so she also seeks to foster just and human relationships between Jews and Christians. The formation of future Catholic leaders at the Angelicum extends to this mission as an integral dimension of the life of the University for the service of the universal Church.

I extend my sincere appreciation to the Russell Berrie Foundation and the John Paul II Center for Interreligious Dialogue for their vision, generosity, and enduring commitment to this shared mission. May this partnership stand as a testament to what is possible when faith and reason, grounded in truth and animated by charity, come together in the service of authentic fraternal dialogue and lasting peace.

Fr. Thomas Joseph White, O.P.

Rector, Pontifical University of Saint Thomas Aquinas (Angelicum), Rome



Formed in Rome, Transformed in the Holy Land: A Global Network of Interfaith Leaders

Dr. Taras Dzyubanskyi

The John Paul II Center Interfaith Leaders Network is the living continuation of a vision that began not simply as an academic program, but as a formative journey – one rooted in encounter, sustained by friendship, and oriented toward peace.

Emerging from the work of the John Paul II Center for Interreligious Dialogue and the Russell Berrie Fellowship, the Network today brings together leaders from more than forty countries: priests, religious sisters and brothers, and lay men and women who carry forward a shared commitment to interfaith understanding. As the earlier formation emphasized, dialogue is not an optional dimension of religious life, but a necessary condition for peace –

something to be lived, taught, and embodied in concrete relationships.

What distinguishes the JPPII Leaders Network is precisely this integration of formation and mission. Its members are not only formed intellectually and theologically in the traditions of Judaism, Catholicism and interreligious dialogue; they are also deeply pastoral and engaged. Across continents, they teach in seminaries and universities, publish and contribute to public discourse, accompany communities, and foster grassroots encounters in parishes and local contexts. In doing so, they give “living expression” to a vision that was never meant to remain within the walls of the classroom, but to shape communities and cultures.

At its heart, the Network is a community. The Fellowship experience demonstrated that authentic dialogue is born not only from study, but from shared life – learning together, praying in proximity, and encountering the religious other not as an abstraction, but as a partner and, ultimately, as a friend. Many of us discovered that such encounters do not weaken one’s faith; rather, they deepen it, purify it, and open it toward a more authentic recognition of the dignity of the other.

Among the most transformative elements of this formation – and one that has left an indelible mark on every Fellow and on the Network as a whole - was the Academic and Spiritual Visit to the Holy Land. This was not simply a study trip,

but a profound moment of convergence between history, theology, and lived reality. Rooted at the Shalom Hartman Institute in Jerusalem, the experience brought Fellows into direct engagement with Jewish thought in its living context, while also immersing them in the land that is sacred to Jews, Christians, and Muslims alike.

Walking through Jerusalem, praying at holy sites, engaging with scholars, and encountering local religious leaders transformed theoretical knowledge into lived understanding. The Scriptures took on new depth when read in the very landscapes in which they unfolded. At the same time, the complexity of contemporary realities challenged simplistic narratives and invited a more mature, humble, and attentive approach to dialogue.

For many Fellows, this experience became a turning point. It deepened not only their intellectual formation, but their spiritual imagination. It fostered empathy, sharpened awareness of historical wounds, and strengthened a commitment to dialogue as a vocation rather than a project. The shared intensity of those days – studying, traveling, reflecting together – also forged bonds among Fellows that would endure long after the program ended. In many ways, the Holy Land experience became a cornerstone of the Network’s identity: a shared memory that continues to shape its spirit and mission.

Equally formative were the relationships with those who guided and

accompanied this journey. The friendship with Rabbi Jack Bemporad was, for many of us, a first real encounter with a Jewish teacher who combined intellectual rigor with deep humanity.

His way of teaching opened not only texts, but perspectives, inviting us into a respectful and serious engagement with Jewish tradition.

Dr. Adam Afterman, through his scholarly depth and personal dedication, helped shape the academic and spiritual architecture of the program. His presence – both in Rome and during the seminars in Jerusalem - modeled a form of dialogue that is intellectually honest, spiritually grounded, and deeply relational.

Ms. Angelica Berrie brought a unique and irreplaceable dimension to the Fellowship. Her presence was never distant or symbolic; it was personal, attentive, and profoundly human. She journeyed with the Fellows, accompanied them in their experiences in Israel, and built genuine relationships that transcended institutional roles. Through her, many Fellows encountered not only generosity, but a living example of what interfaith friendship can look like.

The wider faculty of the program – together with the professors of the Pontifical University of St. Thomas Aquinas (Angelicum) – also played a crucial role in

shaping the Network. They created an academic environment in which dialogue was not marginal, but central; not superficial, but rigorous. Within the life of the Angelicum, Fellows were not isolated participants, but part of a broader intellectual and ecclesial community. Interactions with other students further enriched the experience, situating interfaith dialogue within the wider context of theological formation and ecclesial life.

Importantly, the impact of the Fellowship did not end with graduation. The Russell Berrie Foundation continued to accompany Fellows in the years that followed, offering not only ongoing support but also trust in their capacity to lead. Through this sustained relationship, many of us were given the opportunity to design and implement meaningful interfaith dialogue initiatives in our own contexts – programs in parishes, educational institutions, and civic spaces that translated formation into action. This continued investment ensured that the Fellowship was not a closed chapter, but the beginning of a long-term commitment. It empowered Fellows to become multipliers of dialogue, extending the reach of the program into communities across the world.

As the Network Coordinator, and as a Fellow myself, I have experienced all of this not as an abstract narrative, but as a personal journey. The formation I received was not limited to lectures or seminars; it unfolded in conversations over meals, in shared moments of prayer, in challenging questions, and in

unexpected friendships. The Holy Land visit, in particular, marked a decisive moment – one in which the call to dialogue became more concrete, more urgent, and more deeply rooted in both faith and reality. The continued support after the program made it possible to carry that experience forward, transforming it into concrete initiatives and sustained relationships.

In today's increasingly polarized world, where religious identity is often instrumentalized and differences become sources of division, the importance of such programs cannot be overstated. Serious engagement with Judaism and other religious traditions does more than provide knowledge; it transforms the person. It challenges prejudices, deepens self-understanding, and cultivates the humility necessary for authentic encounter.

Studying the faith of another, especially in a context of trust and friendship, becomes a path of personal conversion – one that reshapes how we see God, others, and ourselves.

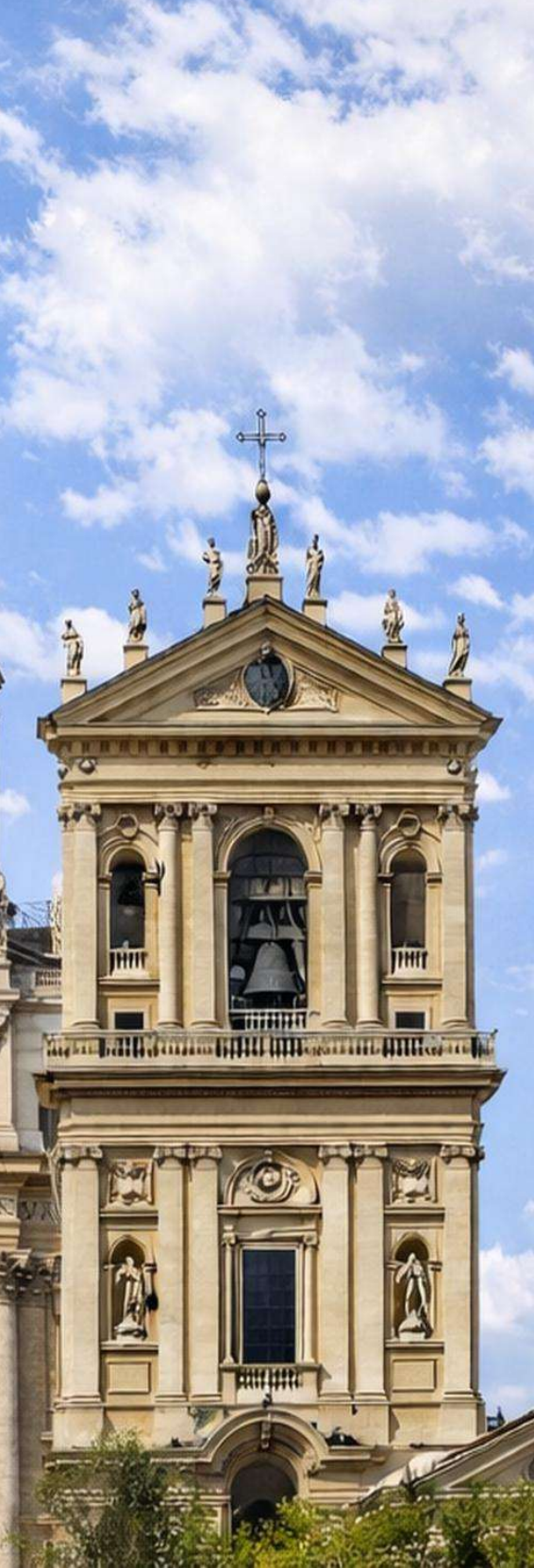
What remains today is not only a memory, but a living network - a global community bound together by shared formation, enduring friendship, and a common mission. The relationships formed with mentors, faculty, and fellow participants continue to inspire collaboration, mutual support, and a shared commitment to peace.

In a world where religious differences are too often misunderstood or manipulated, the John Paul II Center Interfaith Leaders Network offers a different witness: one shaped by encounter, sustained by friendship, and committed to forming leaders who can build bridges where others see only divisions. It is, ultimately, a network of relationships: born in study, deepened in the Holy Land, strengthened through continued support, and now lived out across the world.

Dr. Taras Dzyubanskyy

John Paul II Center Network

Acton Institute/Collins Center for Abrahamic Heritage



The John Paul II Center Fellowship: Jewish Learning at the Heart of the Fellowship

The Russell Berrie Fellowship in Interreligious Studies was a flagship initiative of the John Paul II Center for Interreligious Dialogue, dedicated to forming a new generation of leaders committed to peacebuilding and dialogue among religions. Made possible through the generosity of The Russell Berrie Foundation, the Fellowship brought together clergy, religious, and lay scholars from around the world for advanced study at the Pontifical University of St. Thomas Aquinas (Angelicum) in Rome. It was established as a collaborative partnership between the Foundation, the Angelicum, and the Institute of International Education (IIE), combining academic excellence with a strong commitment to practical engagement in interreligious dialogue.

Inspired by the legacy of Pope John Paul II, the Fellowship embodied his vision of encounter, respect, and cooperation among religious traditions.

As Karol Wojtyła, he completed his doctoral studies at the Angelicum, and throughout his papacy he became one of the most influential advocates of interfaith dialogue in modern history. His historic initiatives – such as convening world religious leaders in Assisi to pray for peace – set a powerful example of how dialogue can transcend differences and foster unity. Naming the Center after him reflects a deep commitment to continuing this mission in today’s global context.

From 2008 to 2022, the Fellowship offered participants rigorous academic formation in ecumenism and interreligious dialogue, grounded in the teachings of the Second Vatican Council and the Church’s ongoing commitment to engagement with other religions. Fellows not only studied theology and related disciplines but also encountered diverse perspectives through shared learning, study trips, and lived community experience. This holistic formation equipped them with both intellectual tools and practical skills to promote dialogue, reconciliation, and mutual understanding in their home countries.

Upon completion of the program, Fellows became part of the global JPPII Leaders Network, through which they continue to collaborate, share expertise, and implement initiatives in their local contexts. Today, these leaders are active in over 40 countries, working in universities, parishes, NGOs, and public institutions. They teach, publish, organize dialogue initiatives, and engage in grassroots peacebuilding, embodying the Fellowship’s enduring impact well beyond the classroom.

The success of the Fellowship is rooted in the strength of its institutional partners. The Russell Berrie Foundation provided the vision and generous support that made the program possible, with a longstanding commitment to advancing interreligious understanding and leadership formation.

At the academic core of the program stands the Pontifical University of St. Thomas Aquinas, one of Rome's leading pontifical universities. Administered by the Dominican Order, the Angelicum continues a centuries-old tradition of theological and philosophical scholarship. It offers programs in Theology, Philosophy, Canon Law, and Social Sciences to students from more than 100 countries, creating a uniquely international and intellectually vibrant environment. Within its Faculty of Theology, Fellows engaged deeply with courses in ecumenism and interreligious dialogue, developed in accordance with the principles of the Second Vatican Council and official Church guidelines. The university's global partnerships and research centers – including the John Paul II Center itself – further enriched the academic and formative experience.

Through this collaboration of vision, scholarship, and global engagement, the Russell Berrie Fellowship has left a lasting legacy. It has formed leaders who not only understand the importance of interreligious dialogue but actively live it – building bridges, fostering peace, and contributing to a more just and harmonious world.

Jewish studies resided at the heart of the formation of the Fellows of the John Paul II Center for Interreligious Dialogue at the Pontifical University of Saint Thomas Aquinas (Angelicum). Engagement with Jewish thought, texts, and lived tradition constituted the primary intellectual pillar of the entire program. The Center's vision of interreligious dialogue – deeply rooted in the legacy of *Nostra Aetate* – mandated that Christians and Muslims encounter Judaism not as an abstract precursor, but as a living, interpretive, and internally diverse tradition. This encounter was facilitated through a rigorous collaboration with leading Jewish scholars and institutions, most notably the Shalom Hartman Institute in Jerusalem.

The formation of the Fellows was shaped by the conviction – articulated by Rabbi Jack Bemporad and Professor Adam Afterman – that authentic interreligious dialogue must rest on intellectual rigor and textual literacy. Rather than treating Judaism as a historical artifact, Fellows were immersed in its living methodologies, including *hevruta* study, close textual reading, and direct engagement with rabbinic interpretation.

Distinguished scholars such as Professor Israel Knohl of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and the Hartman Institute, along with Professor Menachem Lorberbaum of Tel Aviv University, exposed Fellows to critical biblical scholarship and the philosophical foundations of Jewish law and ethics.

Both professors taught regular courses at the Angelicum for many years, providing a stable academic framework for these studies. This sustained engagement with Jewish studies had a transformative impact. Christian participants revisited the Jewish roots of their own tradition with renewed theological depth, while Muslim Fellows encountered Judaism as a dynamic partner within the Abrahamic family. In both cases, Jewish learning functioned as a mirror that challenged existing assumptions and deepened self-understanding. The integration of these elements was further ensured by Professor Adam Afterman, who coordinated the Rome- and Jerusalem-based academic components, including workshops. Furthermore, the program hosted prominent figures such as Professor Marshall J. Breger, who contributed perspectives on law and religious freedom; Professor Moshe Idel; Professor Mona Siddiqui, who offered specialized interreligious courses; and Professor Burton Visotzky from the Jewish Theological Seminary.

Rabbi Noam Zion and Rabbi Dr. Shraga Bar-On from the Hartman Institute led hevruta sessions and textual courses that emphasized interpretive depth and the constructive role of disagreement. Many of these teachers continued to engage the Fellows during annual academic workshops in Israel, which highlighted key theological topics shared by Jews and Christians. These efforts culminated in several international academic conferences and workshops initiated by the Center and led by Professor Afterman in partnership with Professor Gavin D'costa and Professor Fr. Hyacinthe Destivelle, O.P. from the Ecumenical Institute at the 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.















The Fellows

Fr. Mak Caesar Abagna (Ghana)

Fr. Mak Caesar Abagna is Parish Youth Chaplain at St. Theresa Parish in Tongo, Ghana, where he leads initiatives in youth formation and interreligious engagement. Inspired by his upbringing in a multi-religious environment, he founded an annual interfaith youth program that brings together hundreds of young people from diverse backgrounds. His ministry focuses on fostering peace and harmony through dialogue.

Mr. Baltazar Jr. Mahilum Acebedo (Philippines)

Baltazar Acebedo is a former Instructor of Moral Theology and Social Philosophy at the University of Santo Tomas in Manila. With a background in theology and philosophy and experience in interreligious engagement, he works to develop approaches to teaching ethics across diverse religious perspectives. His focus is on addressing contemporary moral issues while promoting dialogue and peace.

Rev. Francis Adedigba (Nigeria)

Fr. Francis Adedigba is a priest of the Archdiocese of Ibadan, Nigeria, where he has led interreligious initiatives as chair of the diocesan commission for dialogue. He trains clergy and lay leaders and teaches courses on evangelization, Islam, and interreligious dialogue. His work centers on building practical frameworks for dialogue between faith communities.

Fr. Emmanuel Ikechukwu Aguiyi (Nigeria)

Fr. Emmanuel Aguiyi is a priest of the Diocese of Umuahia. His pastoral and academic work spans Nigeria and Australia, with a strong focus on interreligious and intercultural engagement. He combines teaching, writing, and ministry to promote peaceful coexistence among diverse faith communities.

Fr. Christopher Akongnwi (Cameroon)

Fr. Christopher Akongnwi serves in the Diocese of Bafia, Cameroon, as Secretary of the Commission for Ecumenism and Interreligious Dialogue and Vice Principal of SABAYA Bilingual College. His experience spans Africa and Southeast Asia, where he engaged closely with Buddhist and Muslim communities. His work focuses on fostering dialogue in multi-faith educational and pastoral settings.

Ms. Berliana Ali (Indonesia)

Berliana Ali is a biblical scholar formed at the Pontifical Biblical Institute and currently pursuing further studies with a focus on interreligious dialogue. She has served as a student representative for Asia and is committed to teaching and biblical ministry. Her work aims to equip Christians with the knowledge and mindset necessary for meaningful interfaith engagement.

Fr. Richard James Babao (Philippines)

Fr. Richard James Babao is Parish Priest in Manila and serves in multiple roles, including Assistant Minister for Ecumenical and Interfaith Affairs in the Archdiocese of Manila. He also teaches ecumenism and interreligious dialogue at San Carlos Seminary and serves as Vicar Forane. His ministry is shaped by firsthand experience of Christian–Muslim relations in conflict-affected communities.

Fr. Kurian Benoy Ambazhathinal (India)

Fr. Kurian Benoy Ambazhathinal serves in the Syro-Malabar Catholic Eparchy of Great Britain, providing pastoral care to a multicultural diaspora community. With advanced studies from the Angelicum, he integrates theology and pastoral practice in promoting interreligious dialogue, especially in Christian–Hindu contexts. His work bridges academic research and community engagement.

Fr. Sebastian Chukwuma Anokwulu (Nigeria)

Fr. Sebastian Chukwuma Anokwulu is Director of the Ecumenical and Interreligious Office of the Onitsha Ecclesiastical Province and Professor of Ecumenical Studies at major seminaries in Nigeria. He leads formation programs on religious freedom and dialogue and founded the Masdevan Foundation to support youth development. His work combines academic leadership with grassroots peacebuilding.



Mr. Kashif Anthony (Pakistan)

Kashif Anthony is a human rights defender and Secretary of the Catholic Commission for Interreligious Dialogue and Ecumenism in the Archdiocese of Karachi. He is actively involved in national and international interfaith initiatives, promoting religious harmony and minority rights. His work also includes youth formation, writing, and collaboration with diverse faith communities.

Sr. Geraldine C. Anugwem (Nigeria)

Sr. Geraldine Anugwem is a member of the Handmaids of the Holy Child Jesus and recently completed her doctoral studies at the Lateran University. She has pastoral and charitable experience, including collaboration with Caritas in Milan, and focuses on promoting awareness as a path to interreligious peace. She is currently seeking opportunities to serve the Church through education and dialogue initiatives.

Gloria S. Guisbert Aramayo (Bolivia/USA)

Gloria Guisbert Aramayo is completing a Master of Theological Studies at the University of Notre Dame, focusing on liberation and decolonial theology. Her work engages interreligious dialogue, social justice, and the experiences of marginalized communities, particularly in Latin America. She plans to pursue doctoral studies and a vocation in teaching and research.

Gianluca Avanzato (USA)

Gianluca Avanzato is a writer, teacher, and Student Experience Coordinator at SUNY Oneonta, where he supports interfaith initiatives on campus. With a background in theology and interreligious studies, he develops programs, workshops, and creative practices that integrate spirituality and the arts. His work centers on fostering dialogue and personal transformation through creative expression.

Halil Avci (Germany)

Halil Avci is a PhD student in Theology and Religious Studies at Georgetown University. His research focuses on interreligious encounters from a comparative Islamic perspective, with attention to culture, politics, and language. He combines academic study with a broader interest in how religious traditions are expressed in diverse contexts.

Most Rev. John Bogna Bakeni (Nigeria)

Bishop John Bogna Bakeni is Auxiliary Bishop of the Diocese of Maiduguri, Nigeria, and a leader in interreligious dialogue in the region. He chairs the Christian Association of Nigeria (Borno State) and directs a center for interfaith engagement. His ministry focuses on peacebuilding, education, and collaboration across religious communities.

Anna Veres (Hungary)

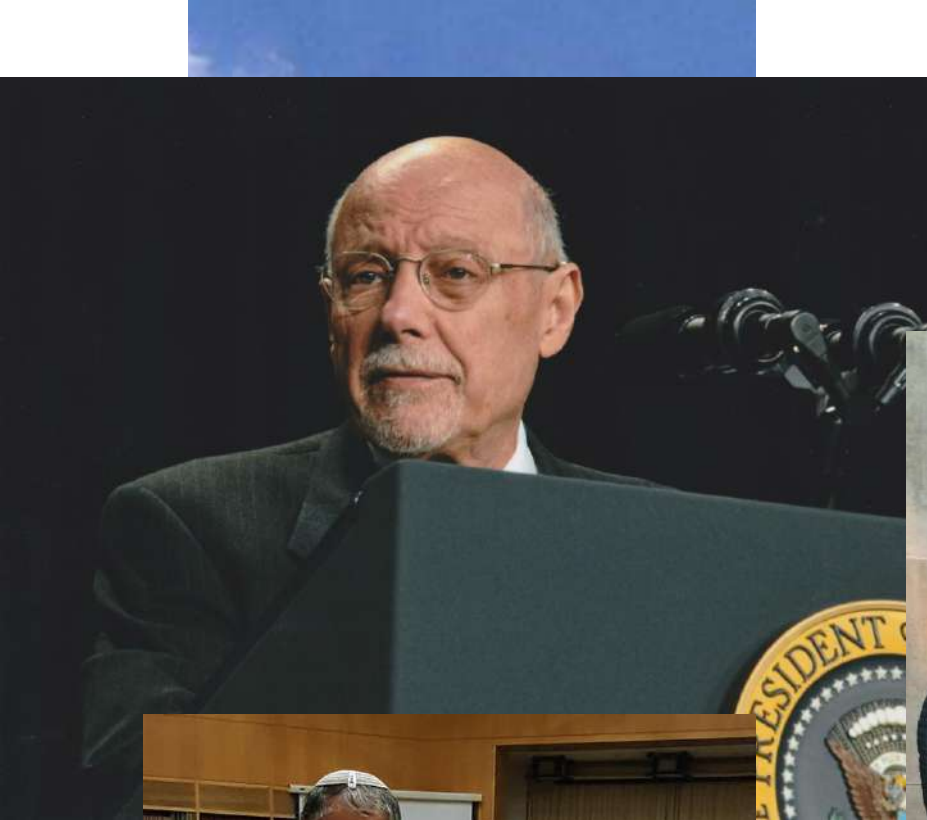
Anna Veres is a Reformed pastor based in Budapest and currently studying pastoral counseling at Semmelweis University. She has served in Hungary and Germany, with a strong emphasis on ecumenism in her ministry. She now leads initiatives such as family-oriented worship and prayer groups for mothers.

Fr. Herbert Banda (Zimbabwe)

Fr. Herbert Banda is a priest from Zimbabwe with extensive pastoral experience, including parish ministry and leadership in Catholic associations. He has been actively involved in ecumenical collaboration and peacebuilding initiatives with other Christian communities. He seeks to expand his work into interreligious dialogue and reconciliation efforts.

Ms. Lidiia Batig (Ukraine)

Lidiia Batig is a journalist specializing in religious affairs and interreligious dialogue in Ukraine. She has worked with the “Spiritual Greatness of Lviv” platform and collaborates with dialogue initiatives such as Libertas. Her work focuses on fostering understanding and cooperation among different faith communities.



Dr. Paola Bernardini (Italy/USA)

Paola Bernardini is an educator based in Miami, currently working at Carrollton School of the Sacred Heart. She previously served as Associate Director for Research at the “Contending Modernities” initiative at the University of Notre Dame. Her work focuses on interfaith education and global understanding.

Ms. Anna Marie Bninski (USA)

Anna Marie Bninski works in communications for the Knights of Columbus in the United States. With a background in interfaith engagement and education, she has contributed to dialogue initiatives and taught religious diversity in academic settings. Her work continues to promote understanding and social justice across communities.

Prof. Andrew James Boyd (USA)

Andrew J. Boyd directs the International Fellows Programme at the King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz International Centre for Interreligious and Intercultural Dialogue (KAICIID) in Lisbon. A former theology professor in Rome, he specializes in ecclesiology, ecumenism, and interreligious dialogue. He is an international trainer and consultant, collaborating with global religious and academic institutions.

Elyse Brazel (Canada)

Elyse Brazel is Community Connector with the Calgary Interfaith Council, where she fosters collaboration across diverse communities. With a background in pastoral leadership and interreligious studies, she has led dialogue and inclusion initiatives across Canadian campuses. Her work focuses on building relationships for the common good.

Asst. Prof. Val Galagate Brillo (Philippines)

Val Galagate Brillo is Assistant Professor at the University of Santo Tomas Institute of Religion and a core member of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines' Commission on Interreligious Dialogue. He is actively engaged in academic, ecclesial, and regional peacebuilding initiatives. His work promotes interfaith dialogue and religious understanding in Southeast Asia.

Ali Chamseddine (Lebanon/USA)

Ali Chamseddine is Lead Chaplain at Gillette Children's Hospital in St. Paul, Minnesota, and an Advanced Practice Board Certified Chaplain. He also teaches courses on religion, spirituality, and healthcare, integrating interreligious dialogue into clinical and academic settings. His work focuses on spiritual care, healing, and dialogue in diverse and high-intensity environments.

Sarah Katherine Chamseddine (USA)

Sarah Chamseddine is a Campus Minister at the University of St. Thomas in Minnesota, where she leads ecumenical and interfaith initiatives. She designs and manages faith-based programs and supports collaboration among diverse religious groups on campus. She also contributes to national efforts in campus ministry formation.

Sr. Purobi Chiran (Bangladesh)

Sr. Purobi Chiran is a member of the Religious of Notre Dame of the Missions and serves in Bangladesh, teaching seminarians at the major seminary in Dhaka. She promotes interreligious dialogue through education and initiatives focused on women's formation. Her ministry is rooted in lived experience of dialogue among Muslim, Hindu, and Christian communities.

Ms. Rebecca Theresa Cohen (USA)

Rebecca Cohen is Program and Research Specialist at the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops' Secretariat for Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs. She supports Catholic-Jewish relations and participates in national and international dialogue initiatives. She is also pursuing doctoral studies in religion and culture.

Marija Corusa (Bosnia and Herzegovina)

Marija Corusa works at the John Paul II Center for Interreligious Dialogue at the Pontifical University of St. Thomas Aquinas (Angelicum) in Rome. With academic training in Islam and interreligious studies, she focuses on fostering dialogue in post-conflict contexts. Her work is shaped by her personal experience of the Balkan war.

Rev. Charles Cortinovis (USA)

Fr. Charles Cortinovis is a priest of the Archdiocese of Washington and has served as Executive Director of the Office of Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs. He has also worked closely with Church leadership as secretary to the Archbishop. His ministry includes promoting interfaith understanding among clergy and laity.

Ms. Emily Kathleen David (USA)

Emily Kathleen David is engaged in theological formation and pastoral ministry, with a focus on youth, interfaith relations, and holistic health. Her experience includes campus ministry, pilgrimage leadership, and research on migration and spirituality. She aims to integrate pastoral care with health counseling in diverse communities.

Sr. Anie Deepa Nedumkallel (India)

Sr. Anie Deepa Nedumkallel is a member of the Franciscan Clarist Congregation and serves as an educator and formator in India. She teaches ecumenism and theology of religions in seminaries and formation centers and serves on the diocesan liturgy commission in Thamarassery. Her work promotes interreligious collaboration, peace, and unity through teaching and pastoral formation.

Ms. Elena Dini (Italy)

Elena Dini is a communications specialist and interreligious dialogue expert, currently pursuing a joint PhD between the Pontifical Gregorian University and the Catholic University of Lyon. She serves as liaison with Muslim communities for the Italian Bishops' Conference in Lazio and leads international dialogue training initiatives. Her work combines research, writing, and practical engagement in interfaith relations.

Rev. Vincent George Dissanayake (Sri Lanka)

Fr. Vincent Dissanayake is Parish Priest in Trincomalee and Diocesan Director for Interreligious Dialogue and Ecumenism. With decades of ministry in multi-religious contexts, he also serves with national interfaith initiatives and has been recognized for his peacebuilding efforts. His work focuses on fostering harmony among diverse ethnic and religious communities.



Rev. Dr. Mother Nozipho Dlodlo (Zimbabwe/USA)

Mother Nozipho Dlodlo is a priest in the Episcopal Diocese of Wisconsin, USA. With a background in pastoral ministry, chaplaincy, and interfaith engagement in Southern Africa, she works to address interreligious conflicts and promote community harmony. Her ministry integrates academic training with practical dialogue and reconciliation efforts.

Matthew Doeing (USA)

Matthew Doeing is a community leader based in Pennsylvania, where he founded a young adult Catholic group to support spiritual formation. He currently works as a department manager while contributing to Catholic publications and local faith initiatives. His interests include promoting ecumenism and interreligious dialogue at the grassroots level.

Mr. B. Kim Dolan (USA)

Kim Dolan has served in Catholic campus ministry and interreligious engagement, including as Director of Campus Ministry at Northern Michigan University. He also led Urbs Sacra, supporting pilgrims in Rome. His work focuses on fostering dialogue and spiritual formation in academic and pilgrimage contexts.

Fr. Manoj Rasanjana Angodage Don (Sri Lanka)

Fr. Manoj Rasanjana Angodage Don is a priest and pastoral minister in Sri Lanka. His work focuses on spiritual formation, community outreach, and promoting faith-based responses to social challenges. He emphasizes dialogue, service, and compassionate leadership in his ministry.

Dr. Taras Dzyubansky (Ukraine)

Dr. Taras Dzyubansky works with the Collins Center for Abrahamic Heritage in Rome and serves as an advisor on interreligious and social issues. He founded the Libertas Center in Lviv and has organized numerous dialogue initiatives in Ukraine. His work focuses on fostering interfaith cooperation and addressing societal challenges.

Mr. Peter Joseph Dziedzic (USA)

Peter Dziedzic is completing his PhD in Comparative Religion at Harvard University and serves in multiple academic teaching roles. His research focuses on Sufism, interreligious dialogue, and pilgrimage as a space of encounter. He integrates scholarship and teaching to advance interfaith understanding.

Rev. Celestine Ezemadubom (Nigeria/Italy)

Fr. Celestine Ezemadubom is chaplain to the Nigerian Catholic community in Modena, Italy. His work centers on interfaith dialogue and the “healing of memories,” a theme of his doctoral research and publications. He leads seminars and initiatives promoting reconciliation and peaceful coexistence.

Mr. Derek Clinton Farmer (USA)

Derek Farmer is a lay ecclesial minister with a background in naval intelligence, political campaigns, and pastoral formation. His work is shaped by engagement with religiously diverse and spiritually seeking communities in the United States. He focuses on promoting interreligious dialogue and evangelization among the religiously unaffiliated.

Fr. Caetano Joaquim Fernandes (India)

Fr. Caetano Fernandes is Pastor of Holy Family Church in Porvorim, Goa, and leads ecumenical and interreligious initiatives in the Archdiocese of Goa and Daman. He also teaches courses on ecumenism and dialogue in the seminary. His ministry focuses on fostering harmony among diverse religious communities.

McKenzie Flowers Fergus (USA)

McKenzie Flowers Fergus is a scholar of theology and interfaith dialogue with a Master of Divinity from Yale Divinity School. She is pursuing a vocation in ministry and human rights, with a focus on social justice and global engagement. Her work integrates academic research, interfaith dialogue, and service.

Philip Lajo Fuentes (Philippines)

Philip Lajo Fuentes is Associate Professor of Theology at the University of Santo Tomas and an active leader in interreligious dialogue initiatives in the Philippines. He contributes to national ecclesial commissions and research projects on theology, migration, and religious studies. His work combines academic scholarship with pastoral and interfaith engagement.

Fr. Floyd Kanongi Gatana (Papua New Guinea/Australia)

Fr. Floyd Gatana is a Marist priest serving in the Diocese of Parramatta, Australia. He is involved in parish ministry and serves on the diocesan interfaith commission. His work focuses on fostering dialogue and collaboration among different religious communities.

Fr. Richard Emmanuel Gokum (Nigeria)

Fr. Richard Emmanuel Gokum is CEO of the Veritas University Endowment Foundation in Nigeria and a lecturer in theology. He specializes in interreligious dialogue and has extensive pastoral experience in Christian–Muslim contexts. His work promotes peacebuilding, education, and cooperation between faith communities.

Ms. Courtney Hartmann (USA)

Courtney Hartmann is an educator and Catholic ministry leader engaged in multiple apostolates promoting spiritual formation. She has extensive experience teaching across educational levels and fostering interfaith awareness. Her work focuses on helping laypeople grow in faith and engagement with the wider world.

Rev. Kwan Ho Edward “Eddie” Hsueh (Hong Kong)

Fr. Eddie Hsueh teaches ecumenism at Holy Spirit Seminary in Hong Kong and is a member of the diocesan ecumenical commission. With decades of experience in dialogue and social work, he is also engaged in research and international interfaith initiatives. His ministry promotes unity and understanding across religious traditions.



Meilia Irawan (Indonesia)

Meilia Irawan is a researcher and educator specializing in interreligious dialogue in Indonesia. She works with the InMind Institute and contributes to initiatives promoting tolerance and mutual understanding. Her work combines research, teaching, and youth engagement in interfaith cooperation.

Mr. Peter Ivanecky (Slovakia)

Peter Ivanecky is a project manager in the food processing industry with a strong academic background in philosophy and theology. He has taught at universities in Chile and completed a PhD focused on epistemology and judgment. His work reflects an ongoing interest in philosophy, religion, and intellectual dialogue.

Fr. Janusz Edmund Janoszka, S.A. (Poland/UK)

Fr. Janusz Janoszka is Rector of Sant'Onofrio al Gianicolo in Rome and a member of the Friars of the Atonement General Council. He provides pastoral care and hospitality to international pilgrims and collaborates with the Missionaries of Charity. His ministry is shaped by extensive experience in interfaith engagement and service to migrant communities.

Rev. Dr. Jackson Johnson (India)

Fr. Jackson Johnson is a priest and scholar specializing in biblical theology and Jewish-Christian relations. He is currently pursuing advanced doctoral research focused on sensitive theological themes in interreligious dialogue. His work integrates academic research with pastoral engagement in multi-religious contexts.

Dr. Sr. Josmy Jose, FMA (India)

Sr. Josmy Jose is an Adjunct Professor at the Pontifical Faculty of Educational Sciences Auxilium in Rome. She teaches courses on world religions, catechesis, and interreligious dialogue while contributing to academic and pastoral formation. She is also a member of the Dicastery for Interreligious Dialogue's Interreligious Women Network.

Sr. Lucy Joseph (India)

Sr. Lucy Joseph is a Franciscan Missionary with extensive experience in education, pastoral work, and religious formation in India. She has worked in marginalized communities and formation programs within her congregation. Her ministry focuses on fostering dialogue and empowering youth across religious and cultural boundaries.

Dr. Sr. Vimal Jyothy Joseph (India)

Sr. Vimal Jyothy Joseph is a physician, professor, and director of ISHOMS Trust, supporting marginalized communities in India. Her work integrates healthcare, social activism, and interreligious engagement. She promotes holistic human development and dialogue across religious and social divides.

Fr. Baiju Julian (India)

Fr. Baiju Julian is a priest and former professor of moral theology with extensive academic and pastoral experience in India. He has led interreligious initiatives and seminars within his diocese and contributed to theological scholarship. His work focuses on promoting dialogue and social development through interreligious understanding.

Emily Lauren Judd (USA)

Emily Judd is Senior Communications Specialist at the Zayed Award for Human Fraternity in Abu Dhabi. She leads global communications initiatives, including interfaith programs and international events. Her work bridges journalism, religion, and global dialogue.

Melsen Kafilaj (Albania)

Melsen Kafilaj is a scholar of philosophy, theology, and interreligious dialogue, currently studying at the University of Heidelberg. He has published widely and presented internationally on intercultural and interfaith topics. His work explores dialogue through historical, philosophical, and theological perspectives.

Christos Kalaitzidis (Greece)

Christos Kalaitzidis is a philosophy graduate specializing in comparative religious studies and interreligious dialogue. His work focuses on Christian thought and Muslim-Christian relations. He aims to pursue an academic career fostering dialogue through teaching and research.

Olena Komisarenko (Ukraine)

Olena Komisarenko is an intercultural mediator with the Community of Sant'Egidio and a recent PhD graduate from the Angelicum. Her work focuses on interreligious dialogue and migrant integration, particularly supporting Ukrainian refugees. She combines academic research with practical mediation and social engagement.

Ashin Mandalarlankara (Myanmar)

Ashin Mandalarlankara is a Theravada Buddhist monk and international peace activist engaged in interfaith dialogue. He teaches, trains, and speaks globally on religion, culture, and reconciliation. His work focuses on promoting peace and harmony across religious communities.

Andrew Mixson (USA)

Andrew Mixson is a graduate student in Peace Studies with a focus on religion and conflict. His background in philosophy and interfaith engagement informs his work on dialogue and global peacebuilding. He promotes interreligious understanding as a foundation for resilient communities.

Rev. Clement Wykliffe Karathi (Kenya)

Fr. Clement Karathi is Parish Priest of Holy Spirit Catholic Parish in Gilgil, Kenya, and a part-time lecturer in religious studies at Laikipia University. His work integrates pastoral ministry with academic teaching. He promotes interreligious dialogue as a key dimension of evangelization.

Rev. Karikoga Tawanda Hope (Zimbabwe)

Rev. Karikoga Tawanda Hope is a pastor and legal advocate in Zimbabwe. His work focuses on promoting religious freedom, human dignity, and peaceful coexistence among faith communities. He integrates law and theology to address interreligious tensions.

Fr. Nigel Joseph Karam (Dominica)

Fr. Nigel Karam is a priest from Dominica engaged in teaching and pastoral ministry. He contributes to formation programs, including the permanent diaconate, with a focus on ecumenism and interreligious dialogue. His work promotes unity and harmony in diverse communities.

Ms. Elena Kariofylidou (Greece)

Elena Kariofylidou is an Orthodox theologian and canonist specializing in interreligious studies. Her research focuses on scriptural interpretation across Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. She is committed to advancing dialogue that respects both difference and faith identity.

Bogdana Katarzhuk (Ukraine)

Bogdana Katarzhuk is a lawyer in Ukraine working on interreligious and legal issues. She is actively involved in youth formation and dialogue initiatives, including through the Plast scouting movement. Her work focuses on inclusion and cooperation across religious communities.

Elizabeth Ann Langan (USA)

Elizabeth Langan is Deputy White House Liaison in the United States government, where she works on personnel and policy implementation. With a background in religious liberty advocacy and Catholic institutions, she supports initiatives protecting freedom of belief. Her work connects public service with interreligious and legal concerns.

Mr. Carlos Roberto Latin (USA)

Carlos Roberto Latin is a theologian engaged in pastoral and interreligious initiatives in the United States. He has been involved in Jewish-Christian dialogue and academic collaboration. His work focuses on theological education and interfaith engagement at the community level.



Claudia Leal Luna (Chile)

Claudia Leal Luna is Professor of Fundamental Theology at the Pontifical John Paul II Theological Institute in Rome and Consultor to the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith. With a background in theology and philosophy, she teaches and researches in areas related to religion and ethics. Her work contributes to academic and ecclesial dialogue.

Ms. Christine Cheng Kim Lim (Malaysia)

Christine Lim is from Malaysia, a highly diverse multi-religious and multi-ethnic society. Her experience of living in a plural context has shaped her conviction that interreligious dialogue is essential for peace and social harmony. She emphasizes that true religious tolerance requires understanding the beliefs and worldviews of others, as these shape attitudes, actions, and ways of life. For Christine, dialogue is rooted in friendship and mutual recognition, grounded in the belief that humanity shares a common divine origin and vocation to serve others through the gifts received from God.

Ms. Samantha Anne Lin (USA/Canada)

Samantha Lin is Director of Growth and Student Recruitment for the Cristo Rey Network, a system of 41 Catholic college-preparatory schools integrating academics with professional work experience for students from low-income families. She is active in interreligious dialogue and Catholic lay leadership, having participated in Vatican-sponsored initiatives such as the 2023 Emerging Leadership Conference and the 2018 Pre-Synodal Meeting for Young People.

A former Russell Berrie Fellow, she holds a Licentiate in Sacred Theology in Judaic Studies and Jewish-Christian Relations from the Pontifical Gregorian University and graduated magna cum laude from Georgetown University's School of Foreign Service.

Fr. Norbert Lis, O.P. (Poland)

Fr. Norbert Lis is a Dominican priest, theologian, and academic specializing in missiology and interreligious dialogue. He holds doctorates in Theology (University of Warsaw) and Missionary Sciences (Urbaniana University, Rome), with a focus on interreligious dialogue. He teaches in Krakow and Warsaw and previously directed the Studium Dominicanum in Warsaw. His current research examines human dignity as the foundation of interreligious dialogue in post-Holocaust Christian-Jewish relations, with a focus on post-Vatican II ecclesiology and responsible dialogue in contemporary society.

Sr. Teresa Avila Tran Ngoc Minh Sa (Vietnam)

Sr. Teresa Avila Tran Ngoc Minh Sa is a Dominican Sister specializing in sacred and liturgical music, with academic formation in Rome. She works at the intersection of interreligious dialogue, music, and peacebuilding. Raised among diverse ethnic communities in Vietnam, she developed an early sensitivity to religious diversity. Inspired by liturgical experiences in Rome, she promotes sacred music as a tool for unity and interfaith encounter. She currently serves in the Dominican Sisters' Justice and Peace network in Europe.

Diana Marinescu (Romania)

Diana Marinescu is a Romanian Orthodox theologian and researcher specializing in church history, missions, and ecumenical relations. She studied in Cluj and Rome and is currently a PhD candidate at Babeş-Bolyai University and a post-graduate fellow in Rome. Her research focuses on Jesuit and Franciscan missions in Eastern Europe and their relationship with Orthodox Christianity. She also translates theological works and aims to promote ecumenical reconciliation and overcome religious stereotypes between Orthodox and Catholic communities in Romania.

Fr. Naqash Azam Masih (Pakistan)

Fr. Naqash Azam Masih is a Catholic priest and educator working for peacebuilding and interreligious harmony in Pakistan. He serves as Diocesan Director of the Archdiocese of Lahore and is a board member of the National Commission for Interreligious Dialogue and Ecumenism. He designs educational programs promoting peace education, tolerance, and social cohesion in schools and communities. He is also Rector of St. Mary's Seminary in Lahore, forming future priests as leaders of peace in a religiously diverse society.

Bernadette Mary McGonigle (Ireland)

Bernadette McGonigle is a legal aid lawyer specializing in refugee and family law, with academic training in Peace Studies and Biblical Studies. She has worked in conflict and humanitarian contexts including Mindanao (Philippines),

Syria, and Lebanon, supporting refugee resettlement and interfaith peace initiatives. She has served in leadership roles with Pax Christi Ireland and Amnesty International Ireland, focusing on religion, human rights, and interreligious dimensions of forced migration.

Rev. Fr. Kevin Que Medilo, SM (Philippines)

Fr. Kevin Medilo is a Marist priest and major superior of the Society of Mary in the Philippines. He has extensive pastoral experience in the Philippines, Thailand, and Australia, particularly in ministry with migrants and marginalized communities. He completed a Licentiate in Interreligious Dialogue at the Angelicum in Rome. His work focuses on education, interfaith engagement, and pastoral care among Buddhist and Muslim-majority communities, especially in contexts of migration and poverty.

Rev. Bovas Mathew Meloott (India)

Fr. Bovas Mathew Meloott is an Indian priest engaged in youth ministry, social apostolate, and interreligious education. He previously directed the Youth Apostolate of the Major Archdiocese of Trivandrum and now serves in diocesan leadership roles. He works in education, youth employment, and interfaith formation, managing large-scale programs involving Hindu, Muslim, and Christian youth. He also teaches courses on Vatican II documents related to ecumenism and interreligious dialogue and serves as editor of a diocesan publication.

Ms. Lynda Kay Middleton (USA)

Lynda Middleton is a Catholic chaplain with a background in United Methodist ministry and hospital pastoral care. She previously managed a homeless shelter and now works in healthcare chaplaincy serving patients of diverse religious and non-religious backgrounds. She is interested in interreligious dialogue in clinical settings, particularly mental health, and plans to develop interfaith pastoral support programs for healthcare workers and patients grounded in spiritual traditions of care and healing.

Rev. James Eroni Miriago (Kenya)

Rev. James Eroni Miriago is a Kenyan Pentecostal minister committed to ecumenical dialogue and Christian unity. Formed at the Ecumenical Institute of Bossey, he focuses on fostering cooperation, justice, and reconciliation across Christian traditions. His ministry reflects a strong dedication to intercultural engagement and shared Christian witness. He represents a new generation of Pentecostal leaders engaged in global ecumenical efforts.

Fr. Koumakpai Noukpo Moise (Benin)

Fr. Koumakpai Moise is a Catholic priest of the Diocese of Porto-Novo, serving as Pastor Dean of the Holy Family Parish in Adjara. He is Diocesan Director of the Pontifical Missionary Works and actively engaged in ecumenism and interreligious dialogue, particularly with Islam. His pastoral and academic work bridges Christian, Muslim, and traditional religious communities in West Africa. He also promotes social integration initiatives, especially among youth and migrants.

Rev. James Malloy Morrison (USA)

Rev. James Malloy Morrison is a Catholic deacon preparing for priestly ministry in the Archdiocese of Washington, D.C. His formation emphasizes interreligious dialogue rooted in pastoral experience and relationships across faith traditions. He seeks to contribute to Catholic engagement with other religions through ministry and theological work. His approach highlights the importance of trust and encounter in faith-based dialogue.

Fr. Celestine Muonwe (Nigeria)

*Fr. Celestine Muonwe is a Catholic priest with extensive experience in interreligious dialogue, particularly in West Africa. He studied Islamic-Christian relations in Mali and Rome and is the author of *Islam Beyond Extremism: A Perspective*. His work focuses on fostering understanding between Christians and Muslims and addressing religious extremism. He is especially engaged in promoting peace in contexts affected by religious conflict.*

Rev. André Mujiyambere (Rwanda)

Rev. André Mujiyambere is a Rwandan priest and biblical scholar currently pursuing a doctorate in Biblical Theology at the Angelicum. A Russell Berrie Fellow, he specializes in Scripture and interreligious formation. He also serves as an educator, contributing to theological training in Africa. His research supports the integration of biblical studies into dialogue and reconciliation efforts.

Rev. Ryan Austin Muldoon (USA)

Fr. Ryan A. Muldoon is a priest of the Archdiocese of New York, serving as Director of the Office of Ecumenical and Interreligious Dialogue and Priest-Secretary to Cardinal Timothy Dolan. He is also an adjunct professor and an award-winning scholar in Catholic-Jewish studies. His work centers on advancing interfaith dialogue at both academic and pastoral levels. He is actively involved in national and international initiatives for Catholic-Jewish relations.

Prof. Vladimer Narsia (Georgia)

Prof. Vladimer Narsia is a theologian and canon lawyer specializing in Orthodox, Catholic, and Anglican legal traditions. A recipient of Georgia's Presidential Scientific Award, he pioneered canon law studies in his country. His international academic work promotes dialogue between Eastern and Western Christian traditions. He continues to contribute to global scholarly collaboration in theology and law.

Renata Anna Nehring (Poland)

Renata Anna Nehring is a Polish theologian and active ecumenist engaged in Catholic, Jewish-Christian, and interchurch dialogue. She holds advanced degrees in theology and ecumenical studies and is pursuing further specialization at the Angelicum. Her work focuses on building bridges between religious communities in Europe. She is particularly involved in grassroots initiatives that foster mutual understanding and cooperation.



Fr. Vinh Hoang Nguyen (Vietnam)

Fr. Vinh Hoang Nguyen is a Dominican priest engaged in interreligious dialogue, particularly within the Asian context. His formation includes studies in multiple religions and participation in regional Dominican programs on dialogue. He aims to teach theology and promote interfaith formation in Vietnam. His work reflects a commitment to dialogue with Buddhism and other religious traditions in his region.

Fr. Jan James Nowotnik (United Kingdom)

Fr. Jan James Nowotnik is a priest of the Archdiocese of Birmingham with experience in parish ministry and school chaplaincy. He recently completed studies in ecumenical and interreligious dialogue and is beginning doctoral research in the field. His work explores the relationship between evangelization and dialogue in contemporary ministry. He seeks to apply his research to pastoral practice in the United Kingdom.

Evans Nyamadzawo (Zimbabwe)

Evans Nyamadzawo is a Zimbabwean scholar and interfaith practitioner focused on peacebuilding and conflict transformation. His work is shaped by firsthand experience of Christian-Muslim violence in Nigeria, leading him to promote dialogue and social cohesion. A Russell Berrie and KAICIID Fellow, he has contributed to major global interfaith platforms. He actively facilitates dialogue initiatives aimed at fostering tolerance and reconciliation.

Sr. Mary Ogeyi Odey (Nigeria)

Sr. Mary Ogeyi Odey is a religious sister of the Congregation of the Sisters of Jesus the Good Shepherd in the Diocese of Abakaliki. She is engaged in ecumenical and interreligious dialogue, shaped by her experience of religious tensions in Nigeria. Her academic formation and pastoral work focus on promoting peaceful coexistence among diverse communities. She is committed to developing practical initiatives for dialogue at diocesan and regional levels.

Fr. Anthony Oguejiofo Okolo (Nigeria)

Fr. Anthony Okolo is a Catholic priest and academic specializing in comparative religion and interfaith dialogue. He has served as a lecturer and Acting Dean of Studies, with a focus on training clergy and students in interreligious engagement. Currently serving in parish ministry in the United States, he continues to promote dialogue through teaching and pastoral initiatives. His work bridges academic formation and practical interfaith outreach.

Sr. Jisha Jacob Olikkara (India)

Sr. Jisha Jacob Olikkara is a Franciscan Clarist sister engaged in social and interreligious work in India. Serving in rural communities, she promotes human dignity through education, social programs, and outreach among predominantly Hindu populations. Her mission integrates faith-based service with interfaith engagement and community development. She is dedicated to fostering peace and dialogue through grassroots initiatives.

Rev. Fr. Louis Taiwo Omojola (Nigeria)

Fr. Louis Taiwo Omojola is a Catholic priest, scholar, and Director of Interreligious and Ecumenical Commission in the Diocese of Ekiti, Nigeria. He is also a university lecturer and member of the Nigerian Interreligious Council (NIREC). His work focuses on fostering dialogue among Christians, Muslims, and adherents of African Traditional Religion through both academic and pastoral initiatives. He is the author of several introductory texts on interreligious studies and ecumenism in Nigeria.

Fr. Joseph Origbo (Nigeria)

Fr. Joseph Origbo is a Catholic priest engaged in missionary work and interreligious dialogue in Nigeria. He previously served as Diocesan Director of the Pontifical Mission Societies, where he gained practical experience in interfaith engagement. He aims to establish structures for ecumenism and dialogue within his diocese and collaborate with national Christian bodies. His work focuses on strengthening interreligious cooperation in missionary contexts.

Xavier Kanatt Ouseph (India)

Fr. Xavier Kanatt Ouseph is a Catholic priest with extensive pastoral experience in Mumbai. He is actively involved in promoting interreligious and social harmony through educational programs and youth formation. His work includes training initiatives in schools and colleges aimed at fostering dialogue and mutual understanding. He continues to support interfaith engagement through grassroots pastoral outreach.

Rev. Gianpaolo Pagano, O.P. (Italy)

Fr. Gianpaolo Pagano, O.P., is a Dominican friar and pastor of the Sanctuary of Madonna dell'Arco near Naples. He is engaged in interreligious dialogue, particularly with Islam, and contributes to theological and ecumenical scholarship. He has published works on interfaith and ecumenical themes in academic journals. His ministry combines pastoral leadership with intellectual engagement in dialogue.

Sophie Palopoli (United States)

Sophie Palopoli is a medical student with a strong commitment to integrating interfaith dialogue and holistic care. Her background includes service in education, healthcare, and community outreach, including work with Native American communities. She promotes a vision of healthcare grounded in human dignity, spirituality, and accompaniment. She seeks to bridge medicine and interfaith understanding in her future medical practice.

Nataliia Pavlyk (Ukraine)

Nataliia Pavlyk is a scholar and interfaith leader, Founder of the Oriental Studies Circle (Ukraine) and President of the Georgetown Interfaith Society. She is a PhD candidate in Theology and Religious Studies at Georgetown University and has extensive experience in international dialogue initiatives. Her work spans peacebuilding, refugee support, and interreligious cooperation across Europe and beyond. Her research focuses on comparative religion and the role of spiritual practices in fostering dialogue.



Rev. Dr. Maria Michael Peters, C.PP.S. (India)

Rev. Dr. Maria Michael Peters, C.PP.S., is a Precious Blood missionary priest, theologian, and expert in interreligious dialogue. He has served in leadership roles within his congregation and as National Executive Secretary for the Family Commission of the Catholic Bishops of India. His academic and pastoral work integrates Catholic theology with interfaith engagement, including comparative studies with Hindu traditions. He continues his ministry as Director of Mission House in Goa, combining teaching, writing, and dialogue.

Dr. Ana Petrache (Romania)

Dr. Ana Petrache is a political philosopher and theologian teaching at the Angelicum in Rome. Her research focuses on political theology, interreligious dialogue, and the relationship between religion and politics in modern Europe. She has held international fellowships and served as an advisor on religious affairs for the Romanian government. Her work bridges academic research and public policy in the field of religious freedom and dialogue.

Dr. Mariia Petrova (Russia)

Dr. Mariia Petrova is a scholar of interreligious studies and lecturer at St. Petersburg State University. Her research focuses on Eastern religions in Russia and their interaction with Orthodox Christianity. She has conducted international research on religious persecution and interfaith relations and published widely in the field. Her teaching promotes dialogue and mutual understanding among students of diverse religious and cultural backgrounds.

Teresa Maria Piacentini (Italy)

Teresa Maria Piacentini is a theologian and spiritual guide specializing in interreligious studies and human formation. She holds a PhD in Theology from the Angelicum and has extensive formation in biblical studies and comparative religion. Her work focuses on spiritual accompaniment, family systems, and fostering harmonious relationships within communities. She is dedicated to promoting a vision of integrated human and spiritual development.

Dr. Rafiqur Rahman (USA)

Dr. Rafiqur Rahman is a theologian and advocate for interreligious dialogue, social justice, and human dignity. His work is shaped by personal experience of social and religious marginalization in South Asia. He seeks to promote ethical leadership and religious freedom through academic teaching and research. His approach integrates theology with a strong commitment to social inclusion and justice.

Rev. Ioan Robert Reikli (Romania)

Rev. Ioan Robert Reikli is a Catholic priest engaged in pastoral ministry and interreligious initiatives in Europe. He currently serves in the Archdiocese of Corfu and leads Caritas Corfu. His work combines charitable service with interfaith engagement in a diverse cultural context. He is committed to fostering dialogue through both pastoral and social outreach.

Fr. Randolph Romero (Philippines)

Fr. Randolph Romero is a Catholic priest, educator, and formator involved in seminary formation in the Philippines. He serves as Prefect of Discipline and teaches interfaith dialogue as a guest professor. His work focuses on forming future clergy in openness to dialogue with other religions. He promotes interreligious understanding as an essential dimension of priestly formation.

Late Michal Sadowski (Poland)

Fr. Michal Sadowski was a Catholic priest and theologian with extensive pastoral and academic experience across Europe. He specialized in interreligious dialogue, particularly between Christianity and Islam, and pursued doctoral research in Trinitarian dialogue. He served as a seminary formator, lecturer in dogmatic theology, and diocesan chaplain. His work contributed to theological education and ecumenical engagement.

Rukmal Salgado (Sri Lanka)

Rukmal Salgado is an academic and educator specializing in interreligious dialogue and social harmony. She has taught in diverse theological and academic settings, including as the first female resident faculty member at the Theological College of Lanka. Her work emphasizes dialogue, tolerance, and the empowerment of women in religious contexts. She is committed to fostering interfaith understanding through education and research.



Mr. Omar Sillah (Gambia)

Mr. Omar Sillah is a scholar of interreligious dialogue. He is the founder of the Center for Interreligious Dialogue, Tolerance, Reconciliation, and Conflict Resolution (CITREC) in The Gambia. His work focuses on promoting peace through dialogue and education in both academic and community settings. He aims to advance interreligious studies and teaching in his home country.

Mr. Nazar Sloboda (Ukraine)

Nazar Sloboda is a scholar of theology and interreligious dialogue and a faculty member at Georgetown University and Canisius University. His work is shaped by academic formation at the Angelicum and international experience in Europe and the United States. He has been actively involved in interreligious initiatives in the United States, particularly within ecclesial and academic contexts. His research and teaching focus on bridging Eastern and Western Christian perspectives alongside engagement with Judaism.

Mr. William John Stainsby (Ireland)

William John Stainsby is a lecturer, author, and Director of the Centre for Faith & Culture in Ireland. He has collaborated with Vatican institutions and contributed to major ecclesial and cultural initiatives. His work explores the relationship between faith, culture, and interreligious dialogue in contemporary Europe. He promotes dialogue as a key to integrating faith and reason in modern society.

Nay Myo Swe (Myanmar)

Nay Myo Swe is a community leader from Myanmar engaged in civic initiatives promoting social cohesion and dialogue. His work focuses on grassroots development, education, and public service in diverse cultural contexts. He is committed to fostering cooperation and mutual understanding within local communities. His initiatives emphasize practical solutions to social challenges through collaboration.

Nadiia Sybira (Ukraine)

Nadiia Sybira is an interfaith practitioner and educator engaged in promoting dialogue and mutual understanding across religious traditions. Her formation includes studies in ecumenism and interreligious dialogue, as well as international experience in Europe and Asia. She has worked in education, cultural exchange, and interfaith initiatives at both local and global levels. Her work focuses on building bridges between communities through dialogue and lived experience.

Annamaria Szalma (Hungary)

Annamaria Szalma is a theologian and social educator with experience in interreligious and intercultural engagement. Her work spans research in Jewish and Islamic traditions as well as social issues such as marginalization and extremism. She has contributed to faith-based community work within healthcare and education settings. Her approach emphasizes understanding difference and fostering meaningful connections across traditions.

Rev. Rafal Maciej Szweda (Poland/Scotland)

Fr. Rafal Maciej Szweda is a Catholic priest serving in Scotland with a strong focus on ecumenical and interreligious dialogue. His formation includes studies at the Pontifical Scots College and the Angelicum in Rome. His ministry is shaped by engagement in multicultural and multireligious contexts. He seeks to support dialogue and pastoral outreach in increasingly diverse societies.

Ms. Elena Tadiello (Italy)

Elena Tadiello is President of the Comunità Abramo and works in the Secretariat of the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem. She is actively engaged in interreligious dialogue through pastoral, social, and humanitarian initiatives. Her work includes outreach to migrants, prisoners, and marginalized communities across religious backgrounds. She promotes dialogue through both grassroots engagement and international collaboration.

Ms. Linda Schappals Taggart (USA)

Linda Schappals Taggart is an adjunct professor of Hebrew Scriptures and Interreligious Studies and a leader in Jewish-Catholic dialogue. She has developed numerous academic courses and contributed extensively to research and public engagement in interfaith studies. She also serves in diaconate formation and institutional leadership roles. Her work focuses on educating and forming leaders for interreligious dialogue.

Dr. Matthew John Paul Tan (Australia)

Dr. Matthew John Paul Tan is Dean of Studies at Vianney College Seminary and an academic in theology and philosophy. He has held teaching and research positions internationally and is involved in ecumenical and interfaith commissions. His work explores the intersection of theology, culture, and social issues, including migration. He promotes interreligious dialogue as a tool for addressing contemporary societal challenges.

Fr. Michael Thangaraj (India)

Fr. Michael Thangaraj is a Catholic priest of the Diocese of Vellore and a specialist in ecumenism and interreligious dialogue. He has served as Secretary for the diocesan Commission for Interreligious Dialogue and Ecumenism for over a decade. His work combines pastoral ministry, academic research, and leadership in promoting interfaith harmony. He continues to contribute through teaching, publications, and advisory roles in both ecclesial and legal contexts.

Tran Van Thien, O.P. (Vietnam)

Deacon Tran Van Thien, O.P., is a Dominican seminarian and theologian in formation at the Angelicum in Rome. His work focuses on interreligious dialogue in the Vietnamese context, particularly engagement with Buddhism. He combines academic study with pastoral formation, including teaching catechists and religious communities. He aims to integrate dialogue into evangelization and theological education.



Rev. Quan Dinh Tran (Vietnam/USA)

Fr. Quan Dinh Tran is a Catholic priest of the Diocese of Orange, serving as Parochial Vicar at Christ Cathedral and Episcopal Vicar for Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs. He is also Secretary for the Pastoral Provision and founder of the Fullness of Grace ministry. His work focuses on fostering collaboration between Christians and other religions in pastoral contexts. He promotes dialogue as essential for building relationships and serving the common good.

Rev. Fr. Humphrey Uche Udechukwu (Nigeria)

Fr. Humphrey Uche Udechukwu is a Catholic priest of the Diocese of Ogoja with extensive pastoral and formation experience. He has served as seminary formator, parish priest, and cathedral administrator. His work in interreligious dialogue is shaped by firsthand experience of religious conflict in Nigeria. He is committed to promoting peace, reconciliation, and education for coexistence.

Rev. Michael Ufok Udoekpo (Nigeria/USA)

Fr. Michael Ufok Udoekpo is a priest, biblical scholar, and professor of theology at Veritas University Abuja. He has served as a faculty leader and academic dean, with extensive teaching experience in Africa and the United States. His research and publications focus on Scripture and interreligious dialogue. He contributes actively to academic and ecclesial formation in these fields.



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

Fr. Ambrose Ezenwa Ukaonu, C.M.F., is a Claretian priest specializing in interreligious dialogue and comparative religion. He has served as Director of Interreligious Dialogue for his congregation and as an instructor in seminaries. His work includes organizing dialogue initiatives between Christians and Muslims in Nigeria. He continues to contribute through teaching and national-level ecclesial service.

Fr. Cyrille Uwizeye (Rwanda)

Fr. Cyrille Uwizeye is a Catholic priest of the Kabgayi Diocese in Rwanda and an advocate for Christian-Muslim relations. He serves as parish priest, vice-chairman of the Bible Society of Rwanda, and leader of diocesan ecumenical initiatives. His work focuses on promoting dialogue and awareness in post-conflict contexts. He is committed to fostering reconciliation and unity through faith-based engagement.

Sr. Gracy Joseph Peechanavelil Vadakara, D.C. (India)

Sr. Gracy Joseph Peechanavelil Vadakara, D.C., is a religious sister, educator, and leader in interreligious dialogue. She has served as Provincial Superior and continues to work in education, youth formation, and grassroots dialogue initiatives. Her work includes establishing interreligious programs and promoting peace through schools and community outreach. She is actively involved in international ecumenical collaboration and formation and is a member of the Joint Working group with the Vatican Dicastery for promoting Christian Unity.

Fr. Marco Valentini (Italy)

Fr. Marco Valentini is a Catholic priest serving in the Diocese of Chur, Switzerland, with extensive international pastoral experience. He has been active in organizing interreligious initiatives and contributing to liturgical and architectural projects. His academic formation includes advanced studies in liturgy and interreligious dialogue. His ministry integrates pastoral service with intercultural and interfaith engagement.

Fr. Ladislav Varga (Slovakia)

Fr. Ladislav Varga is a Catholic priest of the Diocese of Košice engaged in ecumenical and interreligious dialogue. He serves as a parish vicar, school chaplain, and member of an ecumenical community. His formation includes advanced studies in ecumenism at the Angelicum. His work emphasizes contextual understanding and identity in fostering dialogue.

Rev. Peter Vu Van Vuong (Vietnam)

Rev. Peter Vu Van Vuong is a Catholic priest engaged in pastoral ministry and interreligious formation in Vietnam. His work focuses on interfaith families, catechesis, and youth formation. He promotes dialogue as essential for building harmonious communities in a multireligious society. He aims to teach interreligious studies and support formation within his archdiocese.

Ms. Shu Chin Gabrielle Yang (Malaysia)

Shu Chin Gabrielle Yang is an interfaith practitioner focused on education and dialogue in Malaysia. Her work is motivated by the need to foster mutual understanding and respect among diverse religious communities. She emphasizes building relationships grounded in trust, dignity, and shared humanity. She aims to work with youth to promote ethical and interreligious awareness.

Rabbi Allyson Zacharoff (USA)

Rabbi Allyson Zacharoff is Associate Director of Interreligious Affairs at the American Jewish Committee (AJC). She has extensive experience in international interfaith initiatives, fellowships, and conflict resolution programs. Her work focuses on designing and leading global interreligious projects and partnerships. She is a leader in Jewish engagement with other religious traditions.

Rev. Marco Zara (Italy)

Fr. Marco Zara is a Catholic priest and military chaplain in Italy, serving as Director of Social Pastoral Care and Labour for the Military Ordinariate. His work includes teaching, academic research, and engagement in interreligious dialogue. He is currently pursuing a PhD in Comparative Theology. His ministry integrates pastoral service with intellectual and interfaith engagement.

Roksolana Zarytska (Ukraine)

Roksolana Zarytska is an interfaith practitioner engaged in social and ecumenical initiatives in Ukraine. She has contributed to projects addressing education, ethics, and social responsibility through the Ecumenical Social Week. Her work focuses on overcoming stereotypes and fostering dialogue among diverse communities.

Rev. Joseph M. Zwosta (USA)

Fr. Joseph M. Zwosta is a Catholic priest of the Diocese of Brooklyn and Academic Dean at Pope St. John XXIII National Seminary. He has served in leadership roles in ecumenical and interreligious affairs and holds a doctorate in the field. His teaching and research focus on dialogue with Islam and intercultural engagement. He contributes to the formation of future clergy in interreligious dialogue.

Scan to Read Full Bios





From Formation to Action

Fellows' Projects and Initiatives

The Post-Fellowship Program of the John Paul II Center for Interreligious Dialogue was created to sustain, accompany, and amplify the work of former Russell Berrie Fellows after the completion of their academic formation at the Angelicum. Recognizing that interreligious dialogue is not only an academic discipline but a long-term vocation rooted in lived experience, the program provides ongoing support to alumni as they continue their service in diverse religious, cultural, and institutional contexts around the world.

Through this initiative, former Fellows – now part of the global JPPII Leaders Network – remain connected to a vibrant community of practitioners dedicated to peacebuilding and dialogue. The program fosters continued collaboration, peer learning, and

professional development, while also encouraging the sharing of best practices and resources across regions. Regular meetings, thematic workshops, and international exchanges help sustain the intellectual and spiritual momentum begun during the Fellowship years.

The impact of this post-Fellowship engagement is significant. JPPII Leaders are active in parishes, universities, seminaries, NGOs, and public institutions across approximately 40 countries. Together, they have reached and influenced thousands of individuals and communities through teaching, public dialogue, pastoral initiatives, academic publications, and grassroots peacebuilding efforts. Their work contributes directly to strengthening social cohesion, promoting mutual understanding, and building trust across religious boundaries.

In an era marked by increasing polarization, the resurgence of antisemitism, and various forms of religious prejudice and misunderstanding, the role of these leaders has become even more essential. The Post-Fellowship Program equips them to respond to these challenges with intellectual rigor, pastoral sensitivity, and practical engagement. By fostering informed dialogue and encouraging respectful encounter, they help counter narratives of division and exclusion with those of cooperation and shared humanity.

The program also serves as a platform for interdisciplinary growth. Alumni continue to deepen their expertise in fields such as theology, philosophy,

anthropology, biblical studies, canon law, moral theology, and spirituality, applying these disciplines in real-world contexts. This integration of academic formation and lived experience allows them to address complex social and religious issues with depth and nuance.



***Anthology of Essays to Honor Tatay Bido of the Philippines
(Philip L. Fuentes) – Philippines***

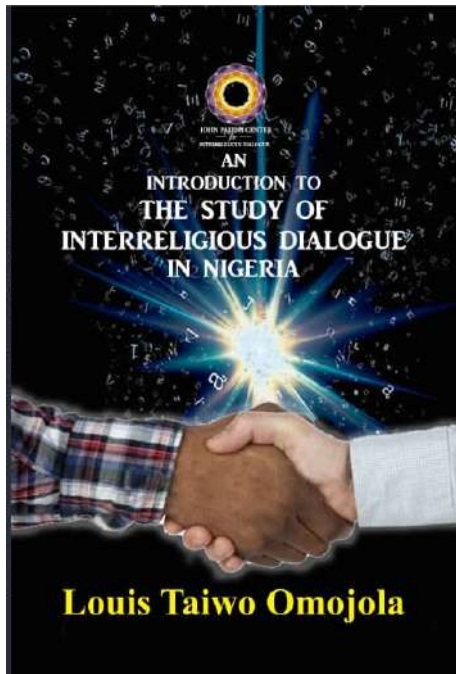
In celebration of the 500th anniversary of the Christianization of the Philippines in 2021, the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines (CBCP) dedicated the year 2020 as the Year of Ecumenism, Interreligious Dialogue, and Indigenous Peoples.

In light of this, this anthology is a contribution to the celebration of the 500th year of Christianity in the Philippines by publishing an anthology book on interreligious dialogue by highlighting the vision, thoughts, and life of Bishop Bienvenido S. Tudtod. It is hoped that through this anthology, the CBCP will officially declare Bishop Benny as the Father of Interreligious Dialogue in the Philippines from the Catholic tradition. Bishop Benny or Tatay Bido ("tatay" is a Filipino term for "father") as he is affectionately called by his flock and friends had pioneered the interreligious dialogue movement in the Philippines in response to the Vatican II's call for the promotion of the culture of dialogue particularly in the sphere of religion.

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Book dissemination: Promoting the Study of Interreligious Dialogue Among Seminary Students in Nigeria (Father Louis Taiwo Omojola) – Nigeria



Access online



Around the world there exists a negative narrative that violence is associated with religious populations. In response to this, Father Louis Omojola authored a book offering all people, including Nigerians, an alternative way of resolving religious conflicts outside of violence: interfaith dialogue. The book – titled “An Introduction to the Study of Interreligious Dialogue in Nigeria” – aims to provide introductory material for the study of interreligious dialogue for those interested, especially those at Catholic theological institutes and seminaries in Nigeria – to complement limited textbooks on interreligious studies in these institutions. The grant enabled Father Louis to provide hundreds of copies of the book to theology students in seminaries in southwestern Nigeria. Altogether, 750 copies have been printed and distributed. The first chapter presents an understanding of interreligious dialogue and the forms of dialogue: dialogue of life, action,

theological exchange, and religious experience. The second chapter examines the need for interreligious dialogue, while the third chapter looks at requirements for interreligious dialogue. The fourth chapter points to possible reasons for lack of interest in interreligious dialogue. The fifth chapter addresses Nostra Aetate – a Declaration by the Catholic Church on the Relation of the Church with Non-Christian Religions – while the sixth and final chapter proffers proposals for the sustenance of peaceful coexistence among Muslims, Christians, and adherents of African Traditional Religion in Nigeria.

“I wish to state categorically that these books will contribute to our all-round integral formation as a community” – From a letter of appreciation received from the Seminary of all Saints, Uhuile, Nigeria.

- *750 printed copies distributed.*

*Coexister's Interfaith World Tour and Interfaith Espresso Workshops
(JPPI Center Network in partnership with Coexister and
KAICIID Dialogue Centre) – Global / Ukraine*



In tandem with the Interfaith World Tour initiative launched by French organization Coexister, and with the support of the KAICIID Dialogue Centre, this initiative aimed at targeting specific JPPI Center Leaders and their projects to gain visibility in the media and global interreligious dialogue platforms. It also included

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practical webinars to teach alumni how to create more exposure for their interreligious dialogue projects.

The aim of the Interfaith Espresso Workshops was to bring representatives of the three Abrahamic Religions together to organize workshops for seminarians and future priests. Over 60 young leaders participated in the workshops organized in five locations in western Ukraine.

The objective of the Interfaith World Tour program was to identify interfaith initiatives that contribute to peace, and then promote and connect the initiatives. The first three Interfaith Tour teams studied 80 countries and identified over 1,200 interfaith initiatives.



- *60+ young leader participants*
- *5 locations in western Ukraine*

These meetings led to the production of 140 videos and nearly 900 interviews with citizens, social entrepreneurs, community activists, political and religious leaders, and engaged students.

“Thanks to the interfaith initiatives and support of the John Paul II Center, I was able to meet with the Coexister’s Interfaith World Tour travelers as well as to gain skills and knowledge about interfaith dialogue during the Interfaith Espresso Workshops in Lviv.” - Participant



*Conference on the History and Contribution of Greek Jews in Corfu Society
(Fr. Robert Ioan Reikli) – Greece (Corfu)*



Serving as a vice-parish priest in the Roman Catholic Cathedral of Sts. Janes and Christopher in Corfu town, Father Robert is charged with the pastoral care of the Catholic communities on the mainland Preveza and Ioannina. He is also head of the Caritas Corfu which is the charity organization of the local Catholic Church.

Access online



The history and the contribution of the Greek Jews in Corfu society and the relation between the communities (Greek Orthodox – Roman Catholics and Jews) from the past until our days is very rich. The project will enlighten the past and the present relation between

our communities in everyday life. Hopefully, the result will be a better understanding of common history that will promote collaboration between the communities which have formed the present society of Corfu Island.



*Conference on the North American Interfaith Tradition of Coexistence
(Paola Bernardini) – Italy (Rome)*



**North American Pluralism
and Abrahamic Religions**

LUISS

May 4th, 2017 - 6pm-8pm:
*US Immigration and Naturalization
Policies: Impact on Religious Pluralism
and Interfaith Relations*

Speakers:
Samuele Sangalli, Paola Bernardini,
Georgette F. Bennett, Antonella Piccinin

LUISS University (viale Romania 32),
Room A204

May 11th, 2017 - 3pm-5pm:
*Separation of Church and State in the US:
Implication for Religious Pluralism
and Interfaith Relations*

Speakers:
Paola Bernardini, Antonella Piccinin

LUISS University (via Parenzo 11),
Room 3

May 9th, 2017 - 1 pm-4 pm:
*Halal Metropolis: Mosques, Markets
and Interfaith Activism in Detroit*

Speaker:
Sally Howell

LUISS University (viale Romania 32),
Room A201

May 11th, 2017 - 6pm-8pm:
*Lessons to Learn: Comparing Policies
and Interfaith Practices In the US
and Europe*

Speaker:
Roberta Ricucci

with the participation of all the speakers

LUISS University (viale Romania 32),
Room A204

Speakers:
Samuele Sangalli, LUISS University - Italy
Georgette F. Bennett, President and Founder of the
Tanenbaum Center for Interreligious Understanding - USA
Paola Bernardini, Holy Cross College at Notre Dame - USA
Sally Howell, University of Michigan-Dearborn - USA
Roberta Ricucci, University of Turin - Italy
Antonella Piccinin, LUISS University - Italy


JOHN PAUL II CENTER
for Interreligious Dialogue


FONDAZIONE
SINDERESI
pratica e politica

Paola Bernardini organized this conference in Rome, Italy to share the best practices of the North American interfaith tradition of coexistence. An overview of the North American tradition of pluralism for interfaith coexistence was presented at the conference from a multi-disciplinary perspective: historical, theological, philosophical, legal and sociological. It offered perspectives to counter actions by European governments which have established closed border policies and tightened citizenship laws due to the recent influx of migrants and refugees (mostly Muslim) into their countries. These policies have created an atmosphere of intolerance and interfaith tensions.



Access online



The seminar was co-sponsored by the Fondazione Sinderesi and attended by 50 students enrolled in the Global Governance through Interreligious Dialogue Program at LUISS University in Rome (Italy).

Georgette Bennett, President and Founder of the Tanenbaum Center for Interreligious Understanding was one of the key-speakers. An excerpt of the lectures was published in a collected volume entitled “La Strada Giusta. L’Equità come Pratica,” by Luiss University Press (2017).

Course on Religious and Cultural Diversity for Teachers and Catholic Educators (Elena Dini and Elena Tadiello) – Italy (Rome)

In the Spring 2017 at the Sacred Heart Basilica in Rome, Elena Dini and Elena Tadiello, taught a course aimed at providing religion teachers and Catholic youth educators with tools to teach students and youngsters about

religious and cultural diversity. The course was organized in partnership with the parish and the office of the Vicariate of Rome in charge of the teaching of Catholic religion in schools.

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50 teachers attended three seminars. The first focused on Judaism with Rabbi Jack Bemporad from Angelicum as the main speaker, the second focused on Islam with Prof. Adnane Mokrani from the Gregorian University and the Pontifical Institute for Arabic and Islamic Studies (PISAI), and the third focused on the issue of migrants and refugees with Lawyer Andrea Pecoraro from the United Nations High Commission on Refugees.

Each seminar provided time for



- *3 seminars conducted*
- *50 participants engaged*

frontal lessons, question and answers sessions and practical time for discussing and experiencing educational dynamics.



*Dialogue Fellowship Program for Emerging Leaders
(Taras Dzyubanskyy) – Ukraine*



Access online



The Libertas Center for Interreligious Dialogue, in partnership with the Center for Interreligious Understanding and the Institute for Religion and Society of the Ukrainian Catholic University, launched its Dialogue Fellowship – a unique training

program aimed at emerging community and religious leaders to learn about interfaith dialogue and cooperation.

Led by Dr. Taras Dzyubanskyy, Director of the Libertas Center for Interreligious Dialogue, aims at supporting individuals who demonstrate special interest in the theme of dialogue and the social doctrine of the Church and who want to further develop their leadership skills. It also aims to educate leaders of the Ukrainian society to confront contemporary challenges and strengthen their capacity for dialogue by empowering representatives of religious groups of the population, leaders of the civil society and representatives of the cultural field to work together and develop values-based approaches. The Dialogue Fellows will use networking that builds on faith and trust for transformative action in their communities.

“In addition to providing an opportunity to implement a music project, the dialogue program strengthened the feeling that each of us, living in our ‘bubbles’ in this turbulent world, is not alone. The program brings together talented, bright people, leaders with different backgrounds, to promote peace in a world which is getting scary.” – Oleksandra Somysh.

The Dialogue Program is modeled on the examples of the best programs in the field of dialogue and communication, both Western and Eastern, taking into account the Ukrainian context and realities.

Greek Translation of The Inner Journey: Views from the Jewish Tradition (Elena Kariofyllidou) – Greece

Μια νέα ματιά στο Βιβλίο του Ιώβ

Ραββίνος Jack Bemporad

Διευθυντής του Κέντρου Διαθρησκειακής Κατανόησης, Englewood, New Jersey, USA

(Η διάλεξη διεξήχθη στο Centro Pro Unione, στη Ρώμη, την Πέμπτη 13η Ιανουαρίου 2011)

Εισαγωγή

Το Βιβλίο του Ιώβ αναγνωρίζεται παγκοσμίως ως ένα από τα μεγάλα λογοτεχνικά και θρησκευτικά κομμάτια όλης της λογοτεχνίας – είναι ένα ποιητικό δράμα. Ξεκινώντας με έναν διάλογο γραμμένο σε πεζό λόγο (κεφάλαια 1 και 2), συνεχίζεται μέσα από τρεις κύκλους ομιλιών μεταξύ του Ιώβ και των τριών φίλων του, Ελιφάζ, Βαλδάδ και Σωφάρ (κεφάλαια 3-31). Η ομιλία του Ελιούς (κεφάλαια 32-37), η ανάκριση του Θεού και η απάντηση του Ιώβ (κεφάλαια 38-42:6) και κλείνει με έναν επίλογο (κεφάλαιο 42:7 μέχρι το τέλος).

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The initiative aims at filling the existing gap of missing contemporary Jewish literature and rabbinic thought in the modern Greek language. The Greek society had always had friendly bonds and relations with the

Jewish communities, and this was especially important during the World War II when many Jews found refuge and protection in Greece.

Among the translated works there are some articles written by Rabbi Jack Bemporad, as well as parts of his book *The Inner Journey* (Views from the Jewish Tradition). Having translations of these works in Greek will make an important effect in developing a positive dynamic of the Jewish and Christian Orthodox relations on the academic, as well as popular level once the publications will become available to the wider public.

- *10 articles/book chapters/excerpts translated into Greek*

***Holistic Approach of Standing Together for Peace Amid Global Pandemic /
Interreligious Dialogue Conference and Free Medical Check-ups and
Preventive Healthcare for Underprivileged Population
(Sr. Dr. Vimal Jyothy Joseph) – India (Andhra Pradesh)***

After almost two years of the world coping with the coronavirus pandemic, Sister Vimal Jyothy '17-a practicing physician in India – organized the conference titled “Holistic Approach of Standing Together for Peace Amid Global Pandemic,” targeting doctors, nurses, teachers, and youth in Andhra Pradesh, India. Held on October 9, 2021, the interreligious dialogue conference created great impact on the community and personal levels, especially in building fruitful relationships among the diverse religious and interfaith groups, resulting in solidarity and unity for humanitarian activities and healing services. Participants included Catholic archbishop the Most Reverend Prakash Maluvarappu, Hindu scholars, clergy, academics, and students – who shared their positive feedback about benefiting greatly from the conference and gaining the feeling of being united as a family, facing societal issues together. Sister Jyothy continued her project to provide medical check-

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ups to underprivileged populations, an initiative she started in 2017.

“This conference has unique importance because during this trying time of the coronavirus pandemic, we came together physically from diverse religions to dialogue, discuss and interact on the themes of global peace and the methods to implement it – in the family, society, and world at large” – Archbishop Most Rev. Prakash Maluvarapu Of Visakapatnam

- *110 participants*
- *6 medical camps*
- *200 people served*

*Intensifying and stabilizing Interreligious Harmony through motivated
pastoral workers and BCC (Basic Christian Community)
leaders (Baiju Julian) – Kerala, India*



Access online



The Diocese, located in Kerala, India, covering a significant area, faced challenges such as unchecked population growth and diminishing marine resources leading to poverty and its associated issues. Despite these hardships, the community held a

rich religious heritage, and the project aimed to address the need for spiritual and social upliftment.

The Diocese covered a substantial population, including Catholics living alongside Hindu and Muslim communities. The need for peaceful harmony among these religious traditions was evident. Despite occasional violence and riots, there existed a strong tradition of mutual respect and help among families. However, the rise of religious fundamentalism and fanaticism posed threats to religious harmony, especially following political shifts.

In response to these challenges, the project aimed to motivate and animate people toward interreligious dialogue, religious harmony, spiritual renewal, and



cultural training of community leaders.

The focus was on proper orientation, mobilization, and development of human resources, with programs targeting leaders engaged in the promotion of faith.

The Diocese implemented the project, with guidance from the Bishop and support from the expert team at Quilon Social Service Society (QSSS).

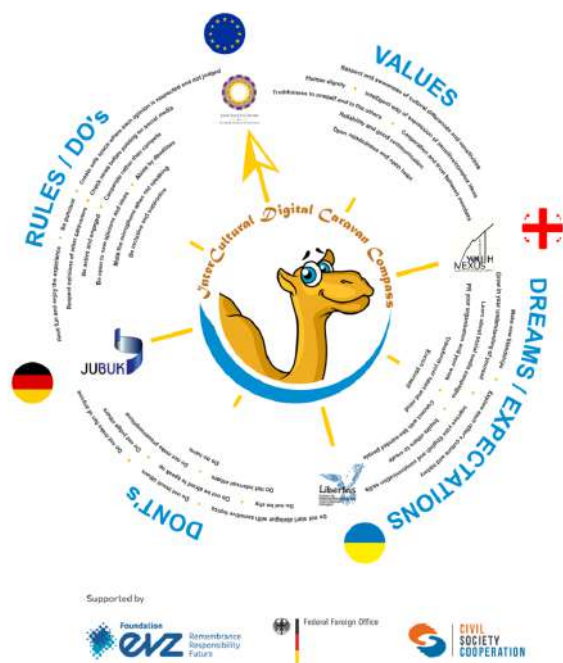
The project utilized systematic class arrangements, incorporating group games, skits, video shows, and voluntary programs. Advanced knowledge for animation, mobilization, motivation, and training programs were provided to leaders involved in faith promotion. Selected readings from the sacred scriptures of Hindus, Muslims, and Christians were shared to foster mutual understanding. The project's beneficiaries included Sunday School teachers, catechists, animators of Basic

Communities, nuns, priests, and other pastoral workers. Specialized programs were designed for pastoral workers, BCC leaders, and laity leaders to enhance their capacity for spiritual and social upliftment.

In conclusion, the project successfully contributed to the Diocese's mission of intensifying faith, promoting interreligious harmony, and empowering community leaders to address the unique challenges faced by the Catholic population in the region.



*Intercultural Digital Caravan (Dr. Taras Dzyubanskyy; Libertas Center /
Institute of Religion and Society, JuBuk, Caynex consortium) –
Ukraine, Germany, Georgia*



Access online



In August 2021, the Intercultural Digital Caravan was launched with the support of the John Paul II Center and German organization, EVZ Stiftung. This initiative was a continuation of the Interfaith Digital Caravan, initiated in 2020 by the John Paul II Center Leaders in Interreligious Dialogue Network. Seven John Paul II Leaders participated in the project.

Participants met online to share inspiring stories and moments in history and best practices and expertise in the times of crisis. Each participant then worked on creating a social media campaign related to dialogue, culture, and religion, as well as intercultural and interreligious coexistence.

The campaigns included: mental health during the COVID-19 pandemic; identity, stereotypes and prejudices; essential elements of one's individual and collective identity; soft power of intercultural and interreligious dialogue; resilience and persistence; and women's empowerment.

“Culture and religion promote order in society because they seeks to define all aspects of human existence and social ties. The radicalization of either religion or culture can lead to violence, followed by political and technical support for violence and, ultimately, terrorism or involvement in armed conflicts around the world.” – Olena Komisarenko, participant.



Leaders engaged:

7 JPIL, 25+ social media

Campaigns launched:

From Ukraine, Georgia, and Germany

- 30 participants,
- 35,000 social media users reached in over six months

Interfaith Art Exhibition “Civilization of Love” and Seminar “Dialogue in Times of War” (Bogdana Katarzhuk) – Ukraine



On February 18, 2023 seven Ukrainian artists – Myroslav Yasynskyi, Rustem Skybin, Yevgen Kotlyar, Violetta Terlyha, Vadym Koltun, Lyubov Yakimenko and

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Oleg Omelchenko – were represented at an interfaith art exhibition titled “Civilization of Love,” curated by JPPII Leader Bogdana Katarzhuk. The event opened with a seminar, “Dialogue in Times of War,” in which three invited speakers, JPPII Center leaders – Olena Komisarenko, Vladimer Narsia, and Nataliia Pavlyk (Cohort XII, Ukraine) – were involved in a conversation around war, art, and interfaith dialogue. The seminar was moderated by Taras Dzyubansky, Senior Alumni Advisor to the JPPII Center. The event was hosted at the Pontifical Ukrainian College of St. Josaphat and funded by the John Paul II Center Grants Program.



“Civilization of Love” Interfaith Art Exhibition Opened with “Dialogue in Times of War” Seminar in Rome. In this seminar, Olena Komisarenko presented an intervention entitled “Interreligious and interconfessional collaboration in the times of war in Ukraine.”

Nataliia Pavlyk: “I was excited to share how art and creativity can contribute to inter- and intra-religious peacebuilding in times of war when other means of dialogue are not so efficient.”

Taras Dzyubansky: “The tragic anniversary of the full-scale war against Ukraine should remind Western society of the tragedy and grief of our people who, despite all the suffering, remain a people of freedom and resilience. Educational, cultural and social processes are continuing, and for this we owe much to the role of churches and religious organizations. Intellectual discussions continue and we are confident that this is a great contribution to the victory in the

fight against the forces of evil.”
 “This exhibition of Ukrainian artists from three different religions testifies to the soaring human spirit, even in the darkest times. Some of the artists daringly break traditional iconographic boundaries to express the solidarity – and hope – of inter-religious aspirations in a time of war.” – *Gavin D’Costa, Emeritus Professor of Catholic Theology, University of Bristol; Visiting Professor of Interreligious Dialogue, Pontifical University of St Thomas Aquinas, Rome.*
 “Interreligious dialogue and comparative theology often choose textual analysis as their starting point- readers choose a Christian text, a non-Christian text, and then seek to highlight the points of contact and the differences between the two



traditions. As our culture becomes increasingly visual, however, it is high time to experiment with different approaches for dialogue, and the visual arts provide one such framework. This exhibition and the interreligious coloring book show how the visual, artistic encounter between traditions opens up new horizons for interreligious understanding.” - Thomas Cattoi, Associate Professor of Christology and Cultures, Graduate Theological Union, Berkeley, USA (Visiting Professor at the Angelicum, Spring 2023).

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Access online



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Interfaith Café series on “Changing the Frame: Empowering Youth Leaders in Interreligious Dialogue” (Samantha Lin) – Italy (Rome)



Samantha Lin developed an academic year-long interreligious dialogue program with emerging young leaders in order to facilitate connections among the Catholic Church and local religious (Muslim, Christian) communities in Rome. The rationale for the project was to change the dynamic of interreligious dialogue from static to dynamic and from academic to

lived, while simultaneously shifting the traditional nodes of power away from entrenched religious leaders to younger, upcoming student leaders. It also aimed to introduce a broad range of interfaith topics to the Roman community through conversations with experts in the subjects. The target audience were college students from Israel and the United States studying in Rome.

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The project was implemented in collaboration with the Lay Centre at Foyer Unitas and several sessions were supported by the by the United States Embassy of the Holy See Programming included a session entitled “Religion in Dialogue From the Local to the Political” in which 40 students and interested individuals gathered for an evening of conversation.



INTERFAITH CAFÉ SERIES ON EMPOWERING YOUTH LEADERS IN INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUE | SAMANTHA LIN

COMPASSION IS POWERFUL

My year-long Interfaith Café series brought together people from all over the world and bound them together through compassion and inspiration

COLLABORATION WITH STAKEHOLDERS



- Partnered with international stakeholders to offer unique programming with unconventional topics.
- Partners such as the Lay Centre at Foyer Unitas and the U.S. Embassy to the Holy See
- On example is the event "Religion & Politics" with Kieran Ramsey, FBI Legal Attaché to the US Embassies to Italy, Malta, San Marino and the Holy See

LIVED EXPERIENCE V. ACADEMIC THEORY



- Focused on both academic perspectives and lived-experience of interfaith dialogue.
- One example was an event with Victoria Martin, founder of Foro Abraham, & Fearghas O'Seara, Adviser to the Vice President & Secretary General of the European Parliament.
- "Our hope for interfaith dialogue is different. We do not want to formulate a common doctrine... The hope is, rather, that we can be friends in difference." - Fr. Felix Körner, SJ

COMPASSION CULTIVATES PEACE



- Week-long visit by the Cambridge Muslim College with conference "Witnessing to a Culture of Tenderness."
- The L'Arche Community in Rome & Dr. Atif Imtiaz of the Cambridge Muslim College.
- "This training in loving deeply the other, delighting in them and their gifts, is built on a trust, confirmed by experience, that doing so enriches and deepens our faith, and gives our heart stronger roots and a larger home." - Michael Dreissen

"O, SURELY THERE IS SOMETHING WRONG/ WITH YOUR IDEAS OF GOD/ IF YOU THINK/ OUR BELOVED WOULD NOT BE SO/ TENDER." - HAFEZ

Emerging Leaders Conference “Fostering Interfaith Dialogue in Middletown, Connecticut” – (Allyson Zacharoff) – United States



In today’s societal atmosphere of discord, interfaith dialogue has only become more critical as an example of how to engage respectfully across lines of difference. For this project, Allyson Zacharoff explored different ways to support and expand interfaith dialogue in a community in the United States – specifically in Middletown, Connecticut. The big event took place in March 2018 at Wesleyan University, and presented an opportunity for local

community members, clergy, and students to gather for a dinner and dialogue facilitated by Allyson. Around 60 people attended this opening event, and attendees showed a great deal of excitement for the opportunity to engage with their neighbours on such a meaningful level. Out of this event, a desire to strengthen local clergy relations emerged, and so in May 2018 a clergy luncheon was held locally to foster interfaith clergy relationships.

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Allyson Zacharoff: *“The greatest achievement was the impact the dialogue had on several key individuals who attended. Their excitement and joy, and genuine interest in the discussions was incredibly obvious throughout the night.”*



Interfaith Dialogue on Pilgrimage and the Right to Religious Liberty (Taras Dzyubanskyy) – Glasgow, United Kingdom



On May 19, 2025, the Collins Center for Abrahamic Heritage hosted an inspiring interfaith gathering in collaboration with AUGB Glasgow and Interfaith Scotland, with support from the Acton Institute, the Russell Berrie *Access online*



Foundation, and the John Paul II Center for Interreligious Dialogue.

The event, Shared Horizons: Walking Together in Faith, Hope, and Freedom, brought together voices from different religious traditions to reflect on the timeless practice of pilgrimage. Pilgrimage, with its unique rituals and sacred destinations, connects people to faith, hope, and the divine – while reminding us of the shared humanity that unites us across traditions.

A central theme of the evening was the fundamental human right to religious liberty: the freedom to believe, to practice, and to embark on journeys of faith without fear or

restriction. Through dialogue, participants explored how Christianity and Islam understand pilgrimage, and how hope and freedom serve as common values guiding believers in their spiritual lives.

Speakers and Reflections

- Muhammad Haikal Adzmir (Interfaith leader, Malaysia) shared from the Islamic tradition about the profound spiritual meaning of the Hajj and Umrah. He noted how pilgrimage brings Muslims into a deeper awareness of both their own spiritual journey and their unity with others.
- Rev. Andriy Chorenko (Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Church) spoke movingly about the Ukrainian experience of pilgrimage, particularly in times of war. He emphasized how pilgrimage becomes not only a spiritual journey but also an act of resilience, hope, and solidarity for those seeking peace amidst suffering.
- Dr. Taras Dzyubanskyy (Collins Center for Abrahamic Heritage) highlighted the universal character of pilgrimage across traditions, framing it as both an outward and inward journey. He spoke on the importance of religious liberty as a foundation for peaceful coexistence, underscoring how the freedom to walk one's path of faith enriches the whole human family.
- Rev. Fr. Anthony Canon Gallagher (Roman Catholic Church, Glasgow) reflected on Christian pilgrimage, especially to sites connected with the lives of saints. He reminded participants that pilgrimage is not just about movement, but about transformation. *"A true pilgrimage is not measured in miles walked but in hearts changed. We go to holy places not simply to arrive there, but so that when we return, we carry that holiness into our daily lives and communities."*

- Rev. Mark Mitchell (Orthodox tradition) offered insights on pilgrimage as a practice of humility, repentance, and transformation. He reminded participants that pilgrimage is not just about reaching a sacred destination, but about being changed along the way – growing closer to God and to one another.
- Dr. Larysa Zhadankina (educator and interfaith scholar) spoke about the values of hope and freedom as unifying forces across faiths. She emphasized the importance of interfaith dialogue as a form of pilgrimage itself – a shared journey toward understanding, friendship, and peace.

SHARED HORIZONS:
WALKING TOGETHER IN FAITH,
HOPE, AND FREEDOM

Pilgrimage is a timeless expression of faith, connecting individuals to sacred places, traditions, and the divine. While each faith has unique rituals and destinations, the shared experience of embarking on a journey for spiritual enrichment highlights the universal nature of human devotion.

At the heart of pilgrimage lies the fundamental human right to religious liberty - the freedom to believe, practice, and journey in faith without restriction or fear. This event seeks to explore the concept of pilgrimage within Christianity and Islam, while reflecting on the virtues of hope and freedom as unifying forces across our traditions.

DATE AND TIME:
MAY 15, 2025
17:30-19:30

VENUE:
UKRAINIAN CLUB
79A AIN STREET, GLASGOW
Light refreshments will be available

REGISTRATION:

SPEAKERS:

- MUHAMMAD HAKAL ADZMI
- REV ANDRIY CHORNIENKO
- DR. TARAS DZYUBANSKY
- REV FR ANTHONY CANON GALLAGHER
- REV MARK MITCHELL
- DR. LARYSA ZHADANKINA

Interfaith Digital Caravan (JPPI Leaders Network) – Global

As the global coronavirus pandemic closed borders and reduced mobility, many people became confined to their homes with less interaction. The Interfaith Digital Caravan – launched shortly after the outbreak of COVID-19 – was an initiative of the John Paul II Center for Interreligious Dialogue Leaders Network, a global community of 120+ religious and lay members committed to promoting interreligious dialogue and understanding.

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The idea of the Interfaith Digital Caravan came from the recognition that religion, culture, and spirituality are bridges that can unite human beings across differences. Furthermore, technology can connect millions of people and advance human development and inspire the search for higher meaning in the lives of people. From this standpoint, the Interfaith Digital Caravan was launched as a creative approach to the COVID-19 crisis.

At the core of the project is the concept of using interreligious dialogue and culture as a tool for social cohesion and for strengthening solidarity. Through sharing inspiring stories and moments throughout history to

detailing best practices and expertise in times of crisis, the JPPI Center Leaders hoped to promote the common good and spark hope in some of the most vulnerable communities in our world today.

In a series of online webinars, participants of the Interfaith Digital Caravan met inspiring speakers and lecturers who shared best practices and tips on how to overcome and cope with hardships, with the help of religious traditions and interreligious dialogue.

“Participating in the Interfaith Digital Caravan a few months after the start of the coronavirus pandemic – a time when feelings of despair and isolation were common – gave me a sense of hope and connection, and the opportunity to learn from people of different religions and in different countries” – Emily Judd.

- *10 speakers from partnering organizations*
- *6 webinars and 2 artistic performances*
- *12 JPPI Center Leaders engaged*
- *400+ views on Vimeo*
- *350+ attendees*
- *550+ registrations*
- *2,300+ likes, shares, comments and posts on social media*

***Interfaithing Humanity: A Colouring Book About Interfaith Dialogue,
Tolerance, and Co-existence (Nataliia Pavlyk; co-developed with Taras
Dzyubanskyy) – Ukraine / Global***

Throughout the pages of the “Interfaithing Humanity” Colouring Book readers are introduced to characters of different religious, spiritual, and non-religious traditions from various geographies and historical times – all interacting in daily life situations.

Each scene allows the recipient to colour in the mosaic of our diverse world, while being inspired by the stories of the characters that represent different cultures, traditions, and values.

Interfaithing Humanity promotes reflection on interreligious tolerance and solidarity with

people across closed borders, in a time of social distancing. It promotes self-motivation and creativity, as well as connecting civil society, academia, and religious communities.

The idea and content of the book was developed by JPPII Leaders Nataliia Pavlyk and Taras Dzyubanskyy, alongside Vasyl Sych and Ruslan Khalikov. The book was illustrated by Kseniia Stoianova. Partners of the project included the John Paul II Center for Interreligious Dialogue, the Oriental Studies Circle, Risovali Art Studio, the Libertas Center for Interreligious Dialogue, and Ruslan Khalikov Publisher House.

The colouring book is available both online and in hardcopy and can be ordered or downloaded for free on the website:

<https://readymag.com/u3205323031/interfaithinghumanity/getbook>

Over 35 Religious and Spiritual Traditions Presented

48-Page Book | 2,500+ Readers

“This unique resource opens our eyes, hearts, and minds to the boundless riches of our irreversibly interreligious world.” – Peniel Jesudason Rufus Rajkumar, Faculty Member at Ripon College Cuddesdon

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*Interreligious Conference “Love as a Commitment”
(Lidiia Batig) – Ukraine*



The Interreligious Conference “Love as a Commitment,” masterfully organized by Lidiia Batig, unfolded as an enlightening and culturally diverse event, successfully delving into the profound significance of love, friendship, parenthood, and their relevance within the context of Jewish, Christian, and Muslim traditions. This transformative conference, hosted at the prestigious Basilica of Santa Sofia in Rome, Italy, and Pontificio

Istituto Teologico Giovanni Paolo II per le Scienze del Matrimonio e della Famiglia, while also being accessible online, provided a platform for rich dialogue and introspection.

The conference, curated throughout the month of February of 2023, sought to explore the enduring values of love and commitment in a world that is ever-changing. It provided a unique forum for individuals of

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varying ages to navigate the complexities of relationships in the modern era, all while drawing from the wisdom and experiences of those who have embarked on the journey of family life.

The last meeting took part on May 5th, 2023 because the organizer of project Lidiia Batig was invited to have a speech about the Jewish notion of marriage and family during the presentation of book “Famiglie alla ricerca di Dio: Orientamenti teologici e pastorali per il tempi nuovi” (author – Philippe Bordeyne).

In general, Lidiia’s project was structured into three sessions, each dedicated to one of the Abrahamic traditions: Jewish, Christian, and Muslim. The participants of the events embraced interfaith perspectives and a shared experience of an interfaith communication.

*Interreligious Dialogue Conference – University of Santo Tomas,
Manila (Val Brillo, Fr. Richard Babao, Philip Fuentes) – Philippines (Manila)*



This was a joint project organized by three JPPI Center Leaders from the Philippines, Val Brillo, Fr Richard Babao and Philip Fuentes. The conference had been organized in coordination with the faculty of the Institute of Religion of the University of Santo Tomas, Manila.

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The event explored the philosophy of interreligious dialogue as well as featured a panel discussion with academic and religious representatives from different faiths.

The audiences attending included the diplomatic and academic communities, religious organizations, clergy, students and grassroots leaders Val, Fr Richard and Philip have organized the conference as a preamble to establishing the John Paul II Center for Interreligious Dialogue of the Philippines which will work to promote interreligious dialogue in the country and surrounding Asian countries. The Center will prepare and coordinate conferences, forums and will collaborate with the John Paul II Center in Rome. Their vision is that the center will forge linkages with different religious centers and organizations across the Philippines and Asia to establish a cohesive ground work for interreligious dialogue.



Interreligious Library Project – Jyothidhara School (Sr. Gracy Joseph Vadakara) – India (Kerala)



Nata in un contesto multireligioso, suor Gracy Joseph Vadakara, della congregazione delle Figlie della Chiesa, ha fatto dell'antiradicalismo al dialogo un tratto distintivo della sua missione nelle scuole in India. Attraverso diverse iniziative, come una piccola biblioteca interreligiosa e concorsi a premi, educa gli studenti al confronto e all'importanza della conoscenza reciproca.



di ELENA GUARISELLI

Ancora, storie e campagne di scuola di religione intesa e incarnata, ma è per la sua famiglia di fede cristiana a sempre stato punto la spiritualità di suor Gracy, oggi insegnante delegata in India della congregazione delle Figlie della Chiesa. Suor Gracy Joseph Vadakara è cresciuta in un contesto multireligioso, con la fede di una famiglia che vive al dialogo interreligioso della sua missione. È cresciuta, infatti, presso uno di diversi gruppi domestici della scuola dell'India, dove ha visto le storie della sua congregazione, come una piccola biblioteca interreligiosa e concorsi a premi, risulta agli studenti per educare nel clima della diversità.

«Il dialogo interreligioso è un mio duty, perché sono stata in India, spiega la religiosa. Il suo percorso iniziato a un'età di nove anni, quando era bambina, da un episodio la partecipazione a una settimana interreligiosa, che è la consuetudine del suo istituto di appartenere questa missione. Dopo la chiamata alla vocazione è stata una congregazione delle Figlie della Chiesa, dove suor Gracy si è dedicata agli studi, insegnando e dedicando un'ora al dialogo ad ogni lezione. È insegnante di Religione e di studi interreligiosi nella linea di

suoi, storia e campagne di scuola di religione intesa e incarnata, ma è per la sua famiglia di fede cristiana a sempre stato punto la spiritualità di suor Gracy, oggi insegnante delegata in India della congregazione delle Figlie della Chiesa. Suor Gracy Joseph Vadakara è cresciuta in un contesto multireligioso, con la fede di una famiglia che vive al dialogo interreligioso della sua missione. È cresciuta, infatti, presso uno di diversi gruppi domestici della scuola dell'India, dove ha visto le storie della sua congregazione, come una piccola biblioteca interreligiosa e concorsi a premi, risulta agli studenti per educare nel clima della diversità.



destinati sono i più piccoli. Tre anni fa nella regione del Kerala, nel sud dell'India, è nata così la prima biblioteca interreligiosa, in una delle scuole della congregazione delle Figlie della Chiesa. Dopo l'ingresso dei suoi e la situazione materiale delle equine culturali, suor Gracy si è attivata per mettere alla prova la funzione delle diverse religioni, per far diventare l'interreligioso un dialogo che rimanga a memoria, ma anche dagli insegnanti, soprattutto quando i

Conoscere e all'abitudine suoi, e protagonisti di progetti, di fedeltà, di dialogo, hanno potuto affrontare e scoprire nuovi aspetti della loro vita. Hanno partecipato a una scuola per la partecipazione, che ha contribuito a creare una interreligiosa, nel momento di formazione. «Credo fermamente», afferma la suora, «che una biblioteca interreligiosa sia un luogo di incontro per gli studenti che appartengono a diverse religioni. È un luogo per crescere, ma è potuto sempre essere lo spirito che ha dato alla scuola interreligiosa». Nella vita di questa prima iniziativa, come parte più alta progettata, come un concorso di dialogo, nel nome «Unità nella diversità» per gli studenti, a cui gli insegnanti prestano attenzione con la scrittura di un saggio sull'argomento. Alla fine dell'anno scolastico, è stata organizzata, inoltre, una giornata di incontro interreligioso per gli insegnanti, per discutere della loro missione e di come per loro, nel loro insegnamento, della scuola di appartenenza, «che è la stessa la stessa la stessa», senza mai sentire e interpretare con ciò che sanno.

The school of Jyothidhara – Valillapuzha, run by the sisters of Daughters of the Church, started in 1989 with few students. At present it is constituted of five hundred students with 26 staff from different religious background such as Muslims, Hindus and Christians. This is a perfect place to practice interfaith dialogue. As superior of the school, Sr. Gracy is blessed to have the opportunity to meet personally

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and dialogue with every student of her school. This is also an occasion for her to promote and build up a harmonious life in order to become peacemakers in the world at an early age. The students are from the age group of 4 to 14 years. The aim of her project is to provide the

students with a well furnished library and promote them to study about the richness of the other religious beliefs in order to coexist peacefully and become peace builders of the society, nation and the world at large.

Jerusalem Interreligious Dialogue Educational Booklet (Italian Edition) (Elena Dini; with contributions from Allyson Zacharoff) – Italy / Jerusalem focus



The project “Practices of dialogue from the Holy Land” is a follow-up of the training course “How to teach religious and cultural diversity”. This project aimed at producing a small booklet to support teachers of religion and educators who are willing to introduce their students to interreligious encounters and dialogue.

The project is two-fold: on one hand, it presents dialogue initiatives involving Jewish, Christian and Muslim communities or individuals, particularly in Jerusalem, through a short presentation of the concrete actions undertaken by different organizations and the structure proposed for each activity so that the teacher/instructor may be inspired and learn from these best practices. On the other hand, the

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ESPERIENZE DI INCONTRO A GERUSALEMME



Un progetto finanziato da



Giusto Davini, E. Ceresa,
Dottorato di Ricerca in Scienze

Edito da: Elena Dini

booklet also wants to be a resource offering more academic reflections on some topics at the heart of these interreligious experiences (some possible topics are: prayer, service, support of the neediest ones, youth, study of Scriptures etc.) to provide some food for thought and knowledge about either the three faith traditions or even just one or two of them.

*Kindle and Connect: An Interfaith Gathering of Women Leaders
(Allyson Zacharoff & Elyse Brazel) – North America / Global*



Women of all ages came together during the online conference, “Kindle and Connect: An Interfaith Gathering of Women Leaders,” organized by Allyson Zacharoff (USA) and Elyse Brazel (Canada). Participants from across North America (and a few beyond) met on June 16, 2021, with the goal that each participant would learn something new, meet someone

new, and take something meaningful away from the conference.

There was a significant degree of diversity among the participants, with many backgrounds



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represented including Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, Jewish, Muslim, non-religious, pagan, Sikh, and Zoroastrian. Participants hailed from over 30 U.S. states and 5 Canadian provinces.

The half-day conference boasted a robust and varied program with over twenty sessions including a keynote address given by Dr. Diana L. Eck of the Pluralism Project at Harvard University; affinity

groups offering the opportunity to meet others with similar identities; workshops on a great variety of topics; musical performances; and a closing panel with national leaders on the topic of women's leadership. The conference led to the creation of a Facebook group, allowing participants to foster a



growing network of female leaders committed to dialogue across lines of difference.

*Women's Interfaith Leadership:
Seven Amazing Revolutions (Keynote)*

June 26, 2021 / 1:15-3 PM EDT / 10:15-12 AM PDT



DR. DIANA LECKIE CHRISTIAN
DIRECTOR
THE PLURALISM PROJECT AT
HARVARD UNIVERSITY

We are in the midst of the most profound revolutions in human history: as women take leadership in their own religious traditions and reach across the historic divisions of religion to work with one another. This is not just about replacing the people from formerly at the top in leadership positions, what Carolyn used to call, "British rule without the British," but about real revolutions—transforming the structure of power, transforming our consciousness, our ethics, our entire worldview. I want to look at seven revolutions that have taken place in my own lifetime, sometimes so gradual I couldn't see them, sometimes so sudden they took my breath away. Joining the energies of profound change and connecting with the lives and energies of one another is essential to the creation of our common future. I don't wait to know and connect with you!

Register now! bit.ly/interfaithwomenleaders

- 150 registered participants
- 20+ sessions
- 30+ US States and 5 Canadian Provinces represented

“What a delight to bring together the voices of powerful women leaders from so many different traditions. We started a network and developed friendships – who knows where it may lead?” – workshop participant.

Workshop: Creating Safer and More Inclusive Classrooms

June 16, 2021 / 2-3 PM EDT / 11 AM-12 PM PDT



PRITHPAL KAUR, PHD (SIKH)
EDUCATION DIRECTOR
THE SIKH COALITION

Learn how the Sikh Coalition is working to dismantle hate and xenophobia against religious minorities through their education work. This session will introduce the myriad of issues facing students from religious communities, and how they can be addressed at the policy level, and also at the grass roots level by students, teachers and local communities.

Register now! bit.ly/interfaithwomenleaders

Muslim-Christian Dialogue Seminar in Nigeria (Humphrey Udechukwu) – Nigeria



In March 2023, a group of 45 participants consisting of Muslim and Christian clergy, leaders, and

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youth gathered in Obudu, in southeastern Nigeria, for a seminar around interreligious dialogue and understanding. With the support of a JPPII Leader Grant, Fr. Humphrey Udechukwu organized this two-day seminar aimed at educating local leaders of Muslim and Christian communities “on the need to promote peaceful co-existence among adherents.”

Fr. Humphrey, a Catholic priest in Nigeria, was interested in focusing on interreligious dialogue in light of a key tenet expressed in both Islam and Christianity: love of neighbor. The resulting seminar, which came together with collaboration from the Christian Association of Nigeria and the local Muslim community, sought to address religious intolerance and violence in Nigeria.

In organizing the event, Fr. Humphrey faced hesitance from both Christian and Muslim



communities, some of whom were wary of engaging in such a dialogue.

However, by the end of the program, Fr. Humphrey notes, both the Christian and Muslim participants “were all edified and appreciated our common heritage in God. They now have a positive approach to one another.”

Fr. Humphrey also notes that, since the project, the Imam of the local mosque has visited his parish twice. “This was conceived as a taboo before the execution of the project,” he explains, “I hope that this new understanding will foster growth and peaceful co-existence among both adherents.”

***National Catholic University of Nigeria Interfaith Conference
(Fr. Michael Udoekpo) – Nigeria***



The conference, the first of its kind in Nigeria, presented an opportunity for more than eleven speakers to shape the dialogue and conversation around the central theme, cognizance of the current

violent, divisive state of the nation of Nigeria. Among the presenters there were clergy, Bishops, Rabbis, Imams, Scholars of religions and John Paul II Leaders.

“I learned that ideas and dialogue govern the world. Creativity and innovation are important. The nation is so excited that something like this took place for the first time in Nigeria, and on the campus of the National Catholic University” – Father Michael Udoekpo

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Old City of Jerusalem Interfaith Educational Tour (Allyson Zacharoff) – Jerusalem



For this project, Allyson Zacharoff gathered a group of twenty-five other Jewish peers to take a tour of the Old City of Jerusalem to learn more about the Christian and Muslim connections to the land.

The tour was led by an experienced interfaith guide, who introduced the participants to the Church of the Holy Sepulcher and Al-Aksa Mosque. The group also met with a Catholic priest and a Palestinian professor to get first hand perspectives on living in the Old City and concluded the afternoon with a group lunch. Participants found the experience very educational and meaningful.

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***Peace Clubs Initiative in Nigerian Secondary Schools –
Maiduguri Diocese (Rev. John Bakeni) – Nigeria***

Father Bakeni's project established Peace Clubs in five selected secondary schools in the Maiduguri Diocese to enhance interaction between Muslim and Christian students as well as help them exchange knowledge about each other. In this way, the initiative broke the barriers of

ignorance, distrust and mutual suspicion among the student bodies and will further contribute to developing common interfaith activities, building a peaceful and cohesive society. This project was implemented in collaboration with the Justice, Development and Peace Commission of the Diocese.

ReStart Interfaith Spiritual Rehabilitation Program (Taras Dzyubansky), Ukraine

With the full-scale invasion of Ukraine by Russia, thousands of families from Christian (including Catholic, Orthodox, and Protestant), Jewish and Muslim communities suffered great losses in housing and their loved ones. Families and individuals, afflicted by the ongoing armed clashes in Ukraine came together for ReStart, an interfaith rehabilitation training, facilitated by Libertas Center for Interreligious Dialogue.

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Many of the participants had spent over two months in bunkers seeking shelter from bombing and violent conflict.

The participants shared how the ReStart Interfaith Rehabilitation Programme was an uplifting experience that enabled them to “taste life again” after a long period of isolation. ReStart involved Christian, Islamic, Jewish, spiritual meditative, socio-psychological, art therapeutic, and gastro-therapeutic practices.

Most of the speakers and trainers were women and they took the lead in facilitating inspiring sessions to convey messages of hope and perseverance.

- 40 participants
- 30 hours of training
- 15 trainers, lecturers and speakers engaged
- 11 stories-testimonies of participants recorded and published



School of Interreligious Journalism (Lidiia Batig) – Ukraine



Lidiia Batig developed this initiative to equip journalists with skills and tools to cover interfaith issues and portray religion accurately in the media. Its goal was to promote dialogue and fight propaganda and fake news in the media.

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In the time of war and conflict in Ukraine, this project stood out as a greatly needed, innovative and timely initiative to consolidate the society in the times of crisis and unrest. The project offered a series of 10 lectures to religious journalists and young professionals writing on religious themes in Ukraine. They also learned about the differences between religious and secular journalism – especially in moral



and ethical terms.

During the meetings, participants discussed problems and perspectives of religious journalism and different themes. Students held presentations and took part in round table discussions.

In recognition of this outstanding project, Lidiia received a prestigious “Intercultural Achievement Award 2018” from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Austria. This project was selected as an exemplar of innovation out of hundreds of other initiatives that were nominated from around the world.

- *10 lectures conducted*
- *8 speakers and lecturers from the Abrahamic communities engaged*
- *50+ registrations with 40 full-time participants*
- *5 video-recordings*

Shared Horizons: An Interfaith Event Held at the Cathedral of the Holy Family in London (Taras Dzyubansky, Jan Nowotnik) – United Kingdom (London)



On February 20, 2025, religious leaders, scholars, and members of local communities gathered at the Ukrainian Catholic Cathedral of the Holy Family in London for the interfaith event "Shared Horizons: Walking Together in Faith, Hope, and Freedom."

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The event, organized by the Acton Institute's Collins Center for Abrahamic Heritage, provided a platform for reflection on pilgrimage, religious freedom, and the enduring power of faith and hope in challenging times.

Among the distinguished participants was Bishop Kenneth Nowakowski, Eparch of the Ukrainian Catholic Eparchy of the Holy Family in London and Apostolic Visitor for Ireland and Northern Ireland. The gathering brought together voices from Christianity, Judaism, and Islam, including Rabbi Jonathan Wittenberg, Elizabeth Harris-Sawczenko, Imam Monawar Hussain, and Father Jan Nowotnik, fostering a rich dialogue on the meaning of pilgrimage as both a spiritual and societal experience. The discussions explored the spiritual dimensions of pilgrimage, emphasizing that it is not merely a physical journey to a sacred site but also a universal act of seeking and renewal. Pilgrimage has historically provided individuals and communities with resilience in times of uncertainty, offering a tangible expression of faith that transcends divisions. The event also focused on the true meaning of freedom for religious communities, underlining the importance of religious liberty in an era of increasing challenges to faith expression.

Participants shared personal experiences and historical perspectives on sacred journeys, reflecting on where people of faith find hope amid war, division, and suffering. A central theme throughout the discussions was the role of faith as a source of strength and interfaith dialogue as a means to foster peace, understanding, and resilience.

Student Summit of Religions on Climate Justice in India



In 2020 – one of the warmest years on record according to NASA – around 100 emerging leaders came together in Kerala, India, for a three-day summit on climate justice, organized by Father Bovas Mathew '12. Participants were between the ages of 15 and 25 years old and from the countries of Australia, Bangladesh, Canada, India, Sri Lanka, and Nepal.

The event aimed to draw awareness to, and promote, the protection of nature and fostering of religious harmony among youth, for a more peaceful world. The event activities included meditation sessions on holy scriptures, panel discussions, field trips to natural sites in India, and a poetry writing competition. Participants heard from distinguished keynote speakers, namely: His Eminence Cardinal

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Baselios Cleemis, member of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, and environmental activist Kehkashan Basu, founder of the Green Hope Foundation and a recipient of the 2016 International Children's Peace Prize. Father Bovas organized the event alongside Dr. Abraham Asia.

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Karickam, Secretary-General of the United Religions Initiative (URI) Asia.

"It was a golden opportunity to become a part of the 'Climate Justice' program. The interactions with the representatives of different countries aroused curiosity and enthusiasm to protect earth for better survival" - Nadiya Thaha, Program participant

- *3 days of lectures, seminars and presentations*
- *150+ participants engaged*
- *6 countries represented*



Tamil Nadu Interreligious Dialogue Seminar Program (Fr. Michael Thangaraj) – India (Tamil Nadu)



Fr. Michael conducted several seminars in the period of six months. The encounters, held in six various districts (dioceses) in India, promoted Interreligious Dialogue and Collaboration in Tamil Nadu and they targeted clergy, priests and religious, catechists, as well as volunteers.

A total number of attendees – approximately 140 people – noted the significance of such programs in promoting dialogue and

understanding, diminishing intolerance towards representatives of other religions.

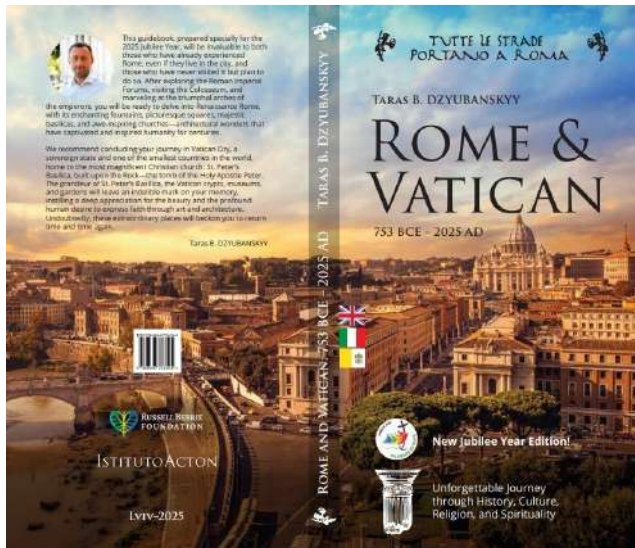
“With the introduction of such educational seminars, our diocese received a fresh boost for promoting interfaith understanding and dialogue.” - Father Michael Thangaraj.

- *4 districts covered*
- *140 + attendees*

Access online



The Jubilee Year Guidebook of Rome and the Vatican (Taras Dzyubansky) – Italy (Rome & Vatican City)



Rome and Vatican: 753 BCE – 2025 AD is a Jubilee Year guidebook that traces the remarkable journey of the Eternal City from its legendary founding in 753 BCE to the Holy Year of 2025. It situates Rome at the crossroads of ancient civilization, imperial power, and Christian faith, showing how the city evolved from the heart of the

Roman Republic and Empire into the spiritual center of the Catholic Church. Through historical milestones, cultural achievements, and pivotal moments of transformation, the guidebook presents Rome as a living tapestry where antiquity and Christianity meet.

The guidebook gives particular attention to the Vatican's emergence as a unique spiritual and sovereign entity.

Access online



From the martyrdom of St. Peter and the early Christian communities to the construction of St. Peter's Basilica and the development of the Papal States, readers are guided through the formation of the Holy See and Vatican City. It highlights the continuity of the papacy across centuries of upheaval, reform, renaissance, and renewal – culminating in the global mission of the Church in the modern era.

Prepared especially for the Jubilee Year 2025, the volume serves both pilgrims and scholars. It offers historical context, theological insights, and practical orientation for those walking through the Holy Doors and visiting the major basilicas. By weaving together 2,700 years of history, Rome and Vatican: 753 BCE – 2025 AD invites readers to see the Jubilee not merely as an event, but as part of a much larger story of faith, resilience, and hope that continues to unfold in the heart of Rome.

Beyond its focus on the Vatican, the guidebook embraces Rome's broader religious landscape. It includes dedicated sections on the ancient Jewish community of Rome – one of the oldest continuous Jewish presences in the world – and on the Great Synagogue, which stands as a symbol of endurance and dialogue. It also highlights the Grand Mosque of Rome, one of the largest in Europe, reflecting the city's contemporary religious diversity. In doing so, the book underscores Rome's enduring role as a meeting place of the Abrahamic faiths and a living laboratory of interfaith encounter.

*The Role of YOUth in Interreligious Dialogue (Rev. Jan Nowotnik;
moderated by Dr. Taras Dzyubanskyy) – London, United Kingdom*



Youth leaders and religious leaders came together in London to build interfaith relations and discuss how youth can engage in interfaith activities. Learning how interfaith dialogue can occur online – whether via social media or other virtual spaces – was also a topic of discussion, facilitated by Rev. Jan Nowotnik and Dr. Taras Dzyubanskyy.

“The diversity within the John Paul II Center Leaders Network provides a chance and an opportunity for dialogue and interaction” – Jan Nowotnik.

- 40+ registrations
- 500+ online engagements, posts, likes, or shares
- 18 participants

Access online



Training Program on Interreligious Dialogue for Female Graduate Students in Bangladesh (Sr. Purobi Paschalina Chiran) – Bangladesh



Bangladesh is Muslim Majority nation with Islam. The minorities have always been under threats of the majorities' voices in Bangladesh.

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Be it religious minority their voices are always unheard and are left behind in several sectors. Even in church lifestyle, as a Patriarchal-hierarchical model of the church and society in Bangladesh, women are still undervaluing. Many women suffer in silence in their cultures, church and society.





In these circumstances, through IRD training Program for the Female Catholic students, Purobi Paschalina Chiran organized a course to empower women to build bridges the Catholics and Muslims and to foster understanding and peace between different religious traditions.

The project received international recognition by the Austrian Ministry of Foreign Affairs which selected the initiative for the Intercultural Achievement Award.

***Walking Together (“Camminiamo Insieme”)
(Father Richard Gokum Emmanuel) – Nigeria***



together, with the intention of fostering friendship in Malumfashi and its surrounding towns. This area which is part of Sokoto diocese Nigeria has a history of religiously motivated violence. The 2022 Conference was a follow up of the 2021 Conference to access the fruit of the 2021 Conference which participants requested for a follow up.

The highlight of the project was a friendly visit of Shia Muslims to

Access online



Caminniamo Insieme (Walking Together) is a bilateral dialogue opportunity for Christian and Muslim religious leaders to come



some churches during the Christmas of 2021 which is one of the fruits of the 2021 conference. “The fact that this Conference generated a lot of discussion on the social media, shows how important this kind of events goes in generating the discussion about religious intolerance” – Stephen Ojapah, the Director of IRD & Ecumenism of Sokoto diocese “Events like this contribute to making the work of security agents less cumbersome. The need for

dialogue as a panacea for incessant religiously motivated violence that has made the work of policemen and women within that area very difficult” – Conference speaker

“We received reports that some Muslim groups (Shia Muslims) had visited some churches to celebrate Christmas festivities: one of the fruits of the 2021 conference. This demonstrates that initiatives like this can contribute to the building of peaceful coexistence” – Richard Gokum, Program organizer

- *100+ Christian and Muslim participants*
- *5 speakers*
- *3 areas of Sokoto Diocese represented*

Workshop for Young Jews, Christians and Muslims in Rome on Practical Tools for Dialogue (Elena Dini) – Italy (Rome)



In the heart of Rome, against the backdrop of ancient history and cultural diversity, Elena Dini organized a project that aimed to

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bridge the gaps between young Italians of Jewish, Christian, and Muslim backgrounds. The initiative unfolded in the form of a two-day residential workshop, held on two separate Sundays, designed to equip the youth with practical tools for fostering meaningful dialogue.

The workshop brought together a diverse group of about fifteen Italian youths, each representing the rich tapestry of their respective religious affiliations. The project's collaborative spirit was evident in its partnership with influential organizations such as the Italian Catholic Bishops' Conference, the local branch of the Jesuit Refugee Service, the youth arm of the Italian Jewish-

Christian Friendship Federation,
and a couple of local Muslim
communities.

The project kicked off with a series
of immersive experiences aimed at
introducing the participants to
various dialogue tools. The
facilitators, handpicked for their
expertise in interfaith
communication, guided the young
minds through activities that
ranged from active listening to
Scriptural Reasoning. The intention
was clear – to not just expose them
to these tools but to ensure they
internalized the practices, enabling
them to replicate, adapt, and
critique them in different contexts.



“Daily Reflections” Social Media & Booklet Project (Psalms and Prophets Initiative) (Christine Lim and Gabrielle Yang) – Malaysia

Now, more than ever, there is a need for greater tolerance, understanding, and acceptance of other religions. In recognition of this need, Christine Lim and Gabrielle Yang produced the video “Our Elder Brothers.” The video, as well as research on the relationship and commonalities among the Abrahamic religions from the perspective of peace and humanity, was shared to a varied

audience interested in interfaith dialogue.

The audience was participating in an interfaith pilgrimage organized in commemoration of the 800th anniversary of the Damietta meeting between Saint Francis of Assisi and the Sultan of Egypt Al-Malik Al-Kamil, the nephew of Saladin the Great. The historic meeting is hailed as the beginning of interreligious dialogue at the top levels of societies. Organized by the Custody of the Franciscan Friars, the pilgrimage brought together young people from different faiths to the cities of Istanbul, Cairo, Alexandria, Damietta, Sinai, Hebron,

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Bethlehem, Jerusalem, Nazareth, and Acre.

The production of the “Our Elder Brothers” video promoted interfaith dialogue and publicized the Russell Berrie Fellowship program and the John Paul II Center for Interreligious Dialogue.

- *30 young adult participants of various religious backgrounds*
- *17-minute video produced*
- *10 locations around the world: distribution of publication and video*

“Interfaith Dialogue: Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow” Publication – Ukraine



Writing on religious themes in Ukraine might be quite challenging, taking into consideration the complex history and the communist past. This initiative was co-funded by the KAICIID Center and included a series of articles and interviews on dialogue by some of the religious leadership in Ukraine. The booklet also contains their reflections on IRD in Ukraine, challenges and prospects for interreligious collaboration. It also includes information about IRD

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achievements and main IRD initiatives by the Libertas Center for Interreligious Dialogue in the last five years. The goals of this initiative are to raise awareness of the importance of IRD, to establish partnerships for future collaboration, to help religious leaders to communicate effectively in the public sphere, and to stimulate ecumenical and interfaith dialogue in seminaries, monasteries and houses of formation.

- *500 copies of the booklet have been printed and distributed.*
- *8 authors and religious leaders engaged*

*Interfaith symposium on drug abuse and domestic violence
(Father Herbert Banda) – Zimbabwe*



With the support of a JPPI Center Leader Grant, Fr. Herbert Banda (Cohort VIII, Zimbabwe) initiated an interfaith symposium on drug abuse in his home country of Zimbabwe. In collaboration with

Access online



Evans Nyamadzo (Cohort XIV, Zimbabwe), Fr. Banda organized this event to be hosted at his home parish of Our Lady Queen of Peace (OLQOP) in Entumbane.

Fr. Banda, parish priest of OLQOP, opened the Interfaith Symposium on Drug Abuse with a welcome address. Held on February 4, 2023 in Entumbane, this symposium aimed to address the growing concern of drug abuse within local suburbs as well as on a national level – a concern common to many communities in Zimbabwe.

“This project brought together experts and officials – from the Christian and Muslim religions – to give lectures on the topics of substance abuse and domestic violence among their

communities,” explains Fr. Banda, “and how to build bridges through dialogue to counter these issues.”

The symposium engaged a variety of voices from the local community: from social workers and psychiatrists to police officers and religious leaders. Drawing from the Gospel of John, Fr. Elvis Gwangwava, Assistant Parish Priest of OLQOP, offered a lecture on the Christian approach to drug abuse that drew upon scripture. Sheikh Ronald Mugayi gave a Muslim perspective on drug abuse, quoting from the Qur’an. “We are saying no to stigmatization to those who are into drug abuse,” said Sheikh Mugayi, “instead let us bring them closer to us for counseling/advising, for they have the power to be the leader of tomorrow.”

After a day of diverse and comprehensive talks and workshops, Fr. Banda outlined a threefold “Way Forward” to address drug abuse in Entumbane: the creation of local “Safe Spaces” for youth in the community; the facilitation of open dialogues on drugs at local churches; and an approach of social inclusion to welcome those struggling with drug abuse into the local community.

“This was the beginning of establishing this platform in my township,” shares Fr. Banda, who is hopeful about continued interfaith collaboration around local and national issues in Zimbabwe.

Jewish-Christian Relations in Georgia: St. Sidonia as the first Jewish saint for the Georgian Orthodox Church (Vladimir Narsia) – Georgia

This project resulted in the creation and publication of a bilingual brochure in Georgian and English, as well as the production of a short animated film centered on a revered Jewish figure within the Georgian Orthodox tradition – Saint Sidonia. According to ancient Georgian Christian tradition, Sidonia was a first-century Jewish woman who became associated with the earliest proclamation of Christianity in Georgia and is venerated as one of the first saints of the Georgian Orthodox Church. By presenting her story in both print and visual formats, the project made this powerful yet often overlooked narrative accessible to a broader local and international audience.

The initiative sought to highlight the deep historical roots of Jewish–Christian relations, tracing their interconnectedness from the apostolic era to the present day. By emphasizing the Jewish identity of Saint Sidonia and her place within the life of the Georgian Church, the project illuminated the indispensable role of Jewish people in the origins and development of Christianity. The bilingual format ensured outreach beyond Georgia, fostering greater international awareness of this shared heritage and encouraging respectful dialogue grounded in historical truth and theological appreciation. In addition to the publication and animation, a public lecture

lecture dedicated to the life and significance of Saint Sidonia was organized. The lecture brought together clergy, scholars, students, and members of both Jewish and Christian communities to reflect on the broader implications of her witness for contemporary interfaith relations. Through discussion and engagement, participants explored how rediscovering shared figures and shared histories can strengthen mutual respect today. Altogether, the project contributed meaningfully to the promotion of Jewish-Christian understanding and offered a creative model for interreligious education rooted in local tradition and global relevance.



*Christian and Muslim Youth in Dialogue for Conflict Prevention in Ghana
(Father Mak Caesar Abagna) – Ghana*

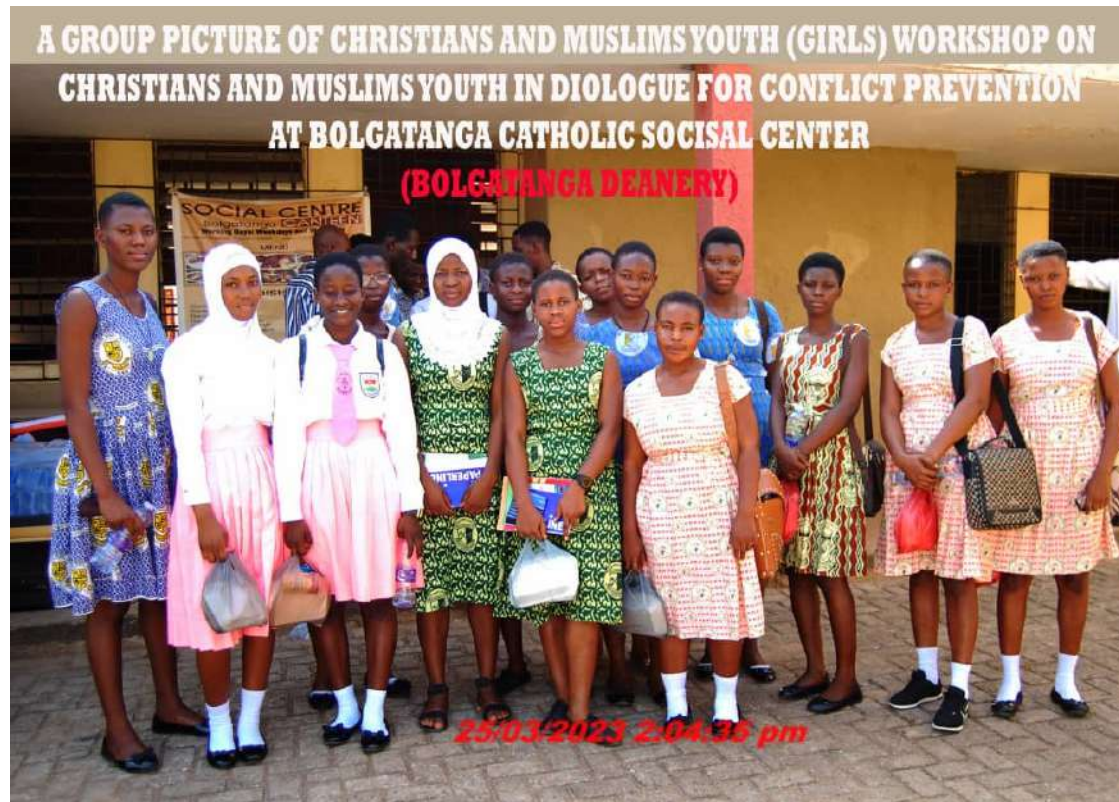
The project “Christian and Muslim Youth in Dialogue for Conflict Prevention in Ghana,” led by Father Mak Caesar Abagna, was implemented as a teaching and sensitization workshop for 150 young people drawn from Christian and Muslim communities across the region. The initiative responded directly to growing concerns about the potential eruption of religion-based violence in Ghana, particularly following public statements by the Government of Ghana warning citizens of an impending threat and urging vigilance. Recognizing that extremist and terrorist groups often target young people for recruitment, especially in vulnerable communities,

the project was designed as a proactive and preventive intervention. Rather than reacting to violence after it occurred, the workshop sought to address the root causes of radicalization by equipping youth with knowledge, critical awareness, and practical tools to resist manipulation. The program brought together Christian and Muslim youth in a shared learning environment that fostered dialogue, trust-building, and mutual understanding. Through structured sessions, participants were introduced to the warning signs and recruitment strategies commonly used by extremist groups. Facilitators examined how such groups exploit religious language, socio-economic

frustrations, identity crises, and misinformation to attract young people into their networks. Particular emphasis was placed on helping participants recognize subtle forms of indoctrination and resist narratives that promote division, hatred, or violence. The workshop also highlighted the importance of interreligious solidarity as a safeguard against conflict. By engaging openly with one another, Christian and Muslim participants were encouraged to see themselves not as competitors, but as partners in promoting peace and social stability within their communities. Dialogue sessions enabled them to share personal experiences, dispel stereotypes, and develop a deeper appreciation for one another's faith traditions. To ensure the program's effectiveness and broad impact,

four facilitators with diverse areas of expertise – including religious leadership, peacebuilding, youth development, and security awareness – guided the sessions. Their multidisciplinary approach allowed for a comprehensive exploration of both theological and socio-political dimensions of religiously motivated violence. The initiative was implemented in collaboration with two key partners: the local Catholic Diocese and the regional Imam's Office. Their joint support symbolized a united religious front against extremism and reinforced the message that faith communities in Ghana stand together in rejecting violence carried out in the name of religion. Overall, the project served as a timely and strategic effort to strengthen resilience among youth, promote interfaith

cooperation, and contribute to long-term peacebuilding in the region. By investing in young leaders and empowering them to resist radicalization, the initiative helped lay the groundwork for a more stable and harmonious future in Ghana.



Webinar “Challenges of Mixed Marriages” (Nadiia Sybira) – Ukraine & Global

On January 31, 2025, Nadiia Sybira presented the webinar “Challenges of Mixed Marriages,” an in-depth exploration of the spiritual, cultural, and practical dimensions of interfaith and intercultural unions. The event brought together religious leaders, scholars, and individuals with lived experience to reflect on both the opportunities and the complexities that arise when partners come from different faith traditions.

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The webinar aimed to move beyond stereotypes and simplistic narratives by offering a balanced examination of the pros and cons of mixed marriages. It portrayed interfaith marriage not merely as a challenge to be managed, but as a potential source of mutual enrichment – a living model of dialogue, respect, and shared growth. Participants were invited to consider how such marriages can deepen personal spirituality, foster maturity, and cultivate freedom from external social pressures. A central focus of the discussion was the real-life experience of couples navigating differences in religious practice, family expectations, and cultural traditions.

Particular attention was given to sensitive areas such as raising children in a multi-faith environment, approaches to common prayer, and the celebration of religious holidays. Through testimonies and expert insights, the webinar highlighted both the tensions and the creative possibilities that emerge in these contexts.

Importantly, the event emphasized the values of tolerance, non-judgmental engagement, and conscious decision-making. Rather than framing mixed marriages solely as theological or institutional problems, the webinar approached them as relational journeys that require dialogue, empathy, and intentional support from religious communities. By bringing together diverse perspectives and lived experiences, the webinar also

sought to create a network of individuals and leaders committed to continued collaboration in the field of interfaith dialogue. In this way, “Challenges of Mixed Marriages” served not only as an academic discussion but as a practical platform for building bridges across traditions and strengthening families navigating religious diversity.

*International symposium on Fratelli Tutti in Cameroon
(Chris Akongwi) – Cameroon*

February 4th, 2022 was the day a twin celebration took place in the history of the Church in Cameroon. The day is officially known to be the International day for Human Fraternity. It was jointly celebrated with the first anniversary of the encyclical ‘Fratelli Tutti’ of Pope Francis on “Fraternity and Social Friendship” on the theme: “Interfaith reception of “Fratelli Tutti” of Pope Francis in Cameroon.” During the celebration, the different speakers of the day from seven religious groups: Catholic, Muslim, Jewish, African Traditional Religion, Protestant, Orthodox and the New Religious Movements, presented, analyzed and discussed fraternity and social friendship. The speakers proposed different interreligious

approaches to hospitality of the other in tune with our times.

“Coming together as leaders of our respective Faith Communities, we break down the neat, sturdy and somewhat invisible walls that divide us. In the absence of such walls, we can truly become brothers and sisters to one another, irrespective of our ethnic, religious, or political backgrounds. Whether in the presence or in the absence of one another, do we think, speak and act respectfully and lovingly in relation to members of one Faith Community or another. This to me seems to be the starting point of us truly becoming brothers and sisters to one another” – Mons. Abraham KOME, Bishop of Bafang.

#WithMe: An Interfaith Discussion Club for Women (Lidiia Batig) – Italy (Rome)

An interfaith discussion club for women, #WithMe, was launched by Lidiia Batig as a space for women to share their experiences and engage in discussions on how to overcome challenges and stereotypes and grow a network of women leaders. The initiative focused on women involved in interfaith dialogue among the three Abrahamic religions: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. The discussions and meetings took place in Rome, Italy, with a total of 10 organized events (including classes, webinars, and excursions), both in-person and virtually during the time period of December 2020 to December 2021.

“The most valuable thing during the implementation of my project Interfaith Women Club ‘#WithMe’ was the possibility to learn from different women and men about their interfaith and intercultural experiences; their spiritual journeys; and the ways they were growing as individuals and professionals. This project was an opportunity to reflect on our spiritual challenges as human beings and young interfaith leaders, from different religious backgrounds, various heritages, and traditions” – Lidiia Batig

- *10 meetings over 1 year*
- *20 participants engaged*

10th Anniversary Berrie Alumni Video Interview Project (Elyse Brazel, Lidiia Batig, Matthew Doeing) – Global

Launched in preparation for the Russell Berrie Fellowship Program's 10th anniversary, the project's goal was to visit and interview John Paul II Center Leaders and produce a series of biographical articles and videos that highlight the work of the Russell Berrie Fellowship Alumni post-fellowship. The end results have been shared with the rest of the RBF Family around the world to help Leaders

learn more about each other's work. It is further hoped that through this project Leaders will feel encouraged to reach out and collaborate on future initiatives.

- *20+ JPPII Leaders met*
- *14 JPPII Leaders from 8 countries (Ukraine, Poland, Greece, England, India, Italy, USA & Canada) video interviewed*
- *3 videos produced*

Access online





Angelica Berrie is President of the Russell Berrie Foundation. Through her leadership, the Foundation has made transformative contributions to major initiatives, including the Naomi Berrie Diabetes Center at Columbia University, the Russell Berrie Nanotechnology Institute at the Technion–Israel Institute of Technology, and the John Paul II Center for Interreligious Dialogue at the Pontifical University of St. Thomas Aquinas (Angelicum) in Rome. A committed leader in Jewish and interfaith philanthropy, she serves as Chair of the Shalom Hartman Institute in Jerusalem, a center for transformative study and pluralistic thought. Most recently, she co-authored *A Passion for Giving: Tools and Inspiration for Creating a Charitable Foundation* with Peter Klein.



Taras Dzyubanskyy is a theologian and expert in interreligious dialogue, serving as a Religious Liberty Fellow at the Collins Centre for Abrahamic Heritage/Acton Institute and for many years has served as Senior Advisor to the John Paul II Center for Interreligious Dialogue in Rome. Founder of the award-winning Libertas Center in Lviv and lecturer in Italy, Ukraine and Poland, his work bridges faith, ethics, and social transformation, with a strong focus on engaging emerging leaders in dialogue. Taras holds a PhD from the Pontifical University of St Thomas Aquinas. Author of four books, Taras is strongly committed to promoting interfaith dialogue and understanding.