



Ecumenical/Interfaith Committee Walking Together

by Anne Mulqueen, OFS

Dear sisters and brothers,

I am writing this article in mid-September, and God alone knows what will be happening in the world when you read this article in TAU-USA.

A sampling of the news headlines today reads as follows:

- UN chief urges nations to “act decisively” on Islamic State
- Chief rabbi says French society has turned indifferent to anti-Semitism
- Suicide car bomber kills three foreign troops in Afghanistan capital
- Israel says mortar fired from Gaza is the first since August 26 truce
- Coptic Christians clash with police in Egypt

Although this may sound like a JPIC article it is, in fact, an Ecumenical-INTERFAITH plea and a prayer for understanding and respect for people of all faiths, in the hope that a society will emerge in which everyone is safe and free from violence in the name of religion. These headlines show alarming breakdowns in relationships among the three major Abrahamic religions—Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Because we believe *nothing is impossible for God*, we pray for an end to violence and hatred in the name of religion.

Since times are so uncertain and greatly in need of God’s intervention, I feel it is appropriate to reproduce the *Assisi Decalogue for Peace* in this article. In the year 2002, 200 faith representatives took part in an interfaith prayer service in Assisi. Each representative read the following ten commitments—not commandments—in his or her native tongue. Thereafter, a copy of the *Decalogue* was sent to all heads of state throughout the world. Pope John Paul II—now St. John Paul II—stated in his letter that humanity must choose between love and hatred. Twelve years have passed and the choice remains—love or hate. In Article 4 of the OFS Rule, Secular Franciscans profess to ... *observe the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, following the example of St. Francis of Assisi who made Christ the inspiration and the center of his life with God and people*. If we are faithful to our profession as Secular Franciscans, we must choose love.

Decalogue of Assisi for Peace

1. We commit ourselves to proclaiming our firm conviction that violence and terrorism are incompatible with the authentic spirit of religion, and, as we condemn every recourse to violence and war in the name of God or of religion, we commit ourselves to doing everything possible to eliminate the root causes of terrorism.
2. We commit ourselves to educating people to mutual respect and esteem, in order to help bring about a peaceful and fraternal coexistence between people of different ethnic groups, cultures and religions.

3. We commit ourselves to fostering the culture of dialogue, so that there will be an increase of understanding and mutual trust between individuals and among peoples, for these are the premise of authentic peace.
4. We commit ourselves to defending the right of everyone to live a decent life in accordance with their own cultural identity, and to form freely a family of his own.
5. We commit ourselves to frank and patient dialogue refusing to consider our differences as an insurmountable barrier, but recognizing instead that to encounter the diversity of others can become an opportunity for greater reciprocal understanding.
6. We commit ourselves to forgiving one another for past and present errors and prejudices, and to supporting one another in a common effort both to overcome selfishness and arrogance, hatred and violence, and to learn from the past that peace without justice is no true peace.
7. We commit ourselves to taking the side of the poor and the helpless, to speaking out for those who have no voice and to working effectively to change these situations, out of the conviction that no one can be happy alone.
8. We commit ourselves to taking up the cry of those who refuse to be resigned to violence and evil, and we desire to make every effort possible to offer the men and women of our time real hope for justice and peace.
9. We commit ourselves to encouraging all efforts to promote friendship between peoples, for we are convinced that, in the absence of solidarity and understanding between peoples, technological progress exposes the world to a growing risk of destruction and death.
10. We commit ourselves to urging leaders of nations to make every effort to create and consolidate, on the national and international levels, a world of solidarity and peace based on justice.

As Franciscans, we are called to live among people of other faiths without fear or suspicion. It is our charism, our gift from God to be instruments of peace. Now is the time to remember the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, *Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give it to you. Do not let your hearts be troubled or afraid* [John 14:27].



The Ecumenical-Interfaith Committee is dedicated to intercessory prayer for peaceful resolutions to all faith-generated conflicts that inflict pain and suffering on people throughout the world. We invite you to join us.

Wishing you peace and all that is good,
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Chair, Ecumenical-Interfaith Committee