



Ecumenism and Interreligious dialogue

Dear Sisters,

The planet seems to be getting smaller and smaller, the countries closer and closer, and globalisation, migration and our vocation to communion mean that we need to enter more deeply into the ecumenical phenomenon and into dialogue with people of other religious denominations. The world is aware of religious wars, intolerance and fundamentalism which have caused incomprehensible suffering and death, and which have not yet been overcome in some places. And although today war “in the name of God” may seem inexplicable and absurd, we continue to meet new martyrs for the faith, to pray for the persecuted Church and to learn, from time to time, of new situations of religious fanaticism that cry out to heaven.

After quite dark times in past history, the Catholic Church has embarked on new searches and new paths, with specific gestures of reaching out, communion and peace, promoting ecumenism and inter-religious dialogue. Recent Popes have done their best to lead with humility and sincerity the just recognition of “other religions” as legitimate expressions of the constant search for God in human beings, of their openness to Transcendence, and of the longing “for more” in their hearts. They have strongly affirmed religious freedom as a sacred and inalienable right of every person. A large number of official documents and speeches on the subject have been published. Institutions have been created, and frequent meetings are held, which are steps on the road to closeness and understanding.

In this issue of INFO, we offer you testimonies of welcome and respect for different faiths, which build small oases of communion based on the same dignity that makes us equal as human beings. Beyond the different religious denominations, there are families who want to live in peace, children who want to play with their peers, people who want to share with their neighbours. Peaceful coexistence is possible in the diversity of beliefs, respect for those who pray differently and friendship with those who have other dogmas of faith than ours. It is possible, and necessary, for all efforts of tolerance and understanding to be made without anyone trying to convince the other of their truth, either directly or veiled, and without anyone having to give up what they believe out of fear, or to be welcomed and accepted.

As we have done in previous issues, in the section **Going Deeper** this time we remember Sister María Antonia Velasco (1916-2009), a Spanish sister who left important testimonies of her dedication until the end of her life. She lived open to the new winds of the Council, opened apostolates and communities, and promoted changes and renewal of the style of religious life at that time. Her missionary spirit led her to promote the missionary expansion of the Spanish Province in Paraguay, Zaire, and Lisbon. With simplicity and joy, she embodied the values of the spirituality of the Sacred Hearts and is remembered today by those who knew her with gratitude and admiration. May her example encourage us, and her intercession accompany us.

With affection,