



Human Solidarity

Religious Solutions proposed to defend the Holy Places

I thank the State of Qatar for convening this meeting that is part of a very consolidated process. Every year we have this reference in Doha. Let us hope we can work and give ideas to have religious solutions to defend the Holy Places.

Most of the human beings give great importance to have a faith. Billions of people are motivated by religious faith. This has happened since the beginning of humanity. Although secularism is important in many parts of the world, religion continues to be also very important.

Who has not asked himself what awaits us in the afterlife, who built up this world, are we supposed to adore the Creator?...

Many people think that different faiths have negative consequences. They think they have a vocation of exclusivity that provokes conflicts, they want to expand and they do not care about the harm they can do. They only see pathological consequences in being religious.

The fact is that most religious people show in their lives the positive consequences of being religious, not only for the afterlife, but in their passage through the world. This has a big interest in international relations. We can consider non violence, solidarity, human rights, aid for development, generosity, leaving apart one's selfishness... as a positive help for peace. Human rights are universal and they apply to all people at all times and in every place. Religious people have worked fairly well in accomplishing the United Nations Millenium Development Goals to reduce poverty and advance development. We have more and more multifaith societies.

Different faiths do not live only in the societies or cultural traditions where they began. They expand and are intertwined with others. There are several different cultural ways of being muslim as there are of being christian.

We see there is an important religious revival in our societies. Secular societies need to define in a more positive way religious questions. We need an open and tolerant idea about religion. We have to stress that every person should be free to have a religion, to do not have a religion or to change of religion; this is pure human rights.

Faith is for ever, it is not going to disappear from the face of the earth. Revelation is the basis of faith, linked to it there are very important symbols. There is a need to reflect in particular places or objects the mystery of Revelation. The Holy Land is the most important example of this, regarding the Bible, the Torah or the Koran. All this helps to live one's faith and becomes intertwined to one's conscience and life.

The Holy Places cannot be submitted to a changing sovereignty. Free access has to be allowed for all, whether they are believers or not or of this or another nationality. Freedom of religion, which is a fundamental human right, means freedom of access. A very particular place is Jerusalem as Holy City with several Holy Places for the three religions. No one should be forbidden to arrive there. We want to acknowledge the work of the Council of Religious Institutions to reach a fair solution. Maybe we can talk about it these days. We cannot forget the Canadian initiative or the Geneva initiative or also the ruling of the UN in the moment of the partition of Palestine.

The religious communities, with the help of other entities, have to be able to guarantee the absence of incidents, the free access, the convening of religious ceremonies, the respect that is linked to these questions.

Good practices have to be followed. We have scores of examples of them. We have plenty of them in the West where any religion can be practised freely and religious communities organise themselves without interference of public powers.

We need a big general compromise. All faiths should be concerned about these questions and cooperate among them. What happens in one part of the religious world has importance in another.

Mutual knowledge is very important for this question. It is impossible to find religious solutions to these problems if one knows nothing about other faiths. We have to learn more about other faiths and ways of live. Ignorance is the best way to lack of confidence and from there on to provoke tensions or to stop working together. Interfaith initiatives are also very important for increasing knowledge and trust, and for developing a stronger defence of these points of view.

Peace among nations needs peace among religions, and for that we need more dialogue. There is no clash of civilisations but clash about intolerant people with tolerant people.