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*Interreligious Guidelines for the
Archdiocese of San Francisco*
(Eighth Draft January 1989)
(Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs)

INTERRELIGIOUS GUIDELINES
For The Archdiocese of San Francisco

Introduction

1. The term "interreligious" refers to the relationship that the Roman Catholic Church has with religions that are not a part of the Christian tradition. (1)

2. In 1965, Roman Catholic bishops gathered at the Second Vatican Council and they published an important document entitled, Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions (Nostra Aetate). This document acknowledges that Non-Christian religions not only search for answers to the "mysteries of the human condition" but they also understand there is a "hidden power" directing them to do what is good and right. The following positive statement is made by the bishops in this document:

The Catholic Church " looks with sincere respect upon those ways of conduct and of life, those rules and teachings which, though differing in many particulars from what she holds and sets forth, nevertheless often reflect a ray of that Truth which enlightens all men" (N.A. 1 & 2) (2)

3. Tribal, Hindu, Buddhist, Jewish and Islamic religious traditions are specifically mentioned. However, the document points out that a special relationship exists between Christians, Jews and Muslims a relationship based on a common belief in God revealed through Abraham, the Patriarchs, the prophets and Jesus Christ.

Interreligious Dialogue In General

4. The Secretariat for Non-Christians (now designated the Pontifical Council for Dialogue among Religions) was established in 1964 to promote dialogue and communication with all world religions so "that non-Christians come to be known honestly and esteemed justly by Christians, and that in turn non-Christians can adequately know and esteem Christian doctrine and life." (3) In dialogue, Catholics must never compromise on the uniqueness and the fullness of God's divine revelation in Jesus Christ.

5. The motive and ultimate aim of interreligious dialogue is to foster a respect for and an understanding of the richness and the integrity of other religious traditions. "In such a task," Augustin Cardinal Bea cautions, "we must proceed with prudence, but also with mutual trust and with charity". (4)

6. The final result of such dialogue is the elimination of discrimination against men and women or harassment of them because of their race, color, condition of life or religion. (NA, 5) In effect, it becomes a vital tool in helping "all peoples" realize that they are "a single community" - one in origin, one in destiny. (NA.1) (5)

7. True interreligious dialogue always appreciates the differences between the religions, and it repudiates the blending of diverse traditions into a uniform religious experience (homogenization). To dialogue does not mean to give up or dilute the fundamental teachings of the Christian tradition in a humanistic philosophy; nor does it mean demoting Christianity from the status of a universal faith to a "culture religion" relevant only in its own cultural and historical situation.

8. Dialogue is not debate. In dialogue, both partners must listen to each other as openly and sympathetically in an attempt to understand the other's position as precisely as possible. (6)

9. Dialogue is an attempt to heal relationships. This implies, then, that a high priority is placed on knowing important sensitive issues. A lack of an appreciation about these sensitivities can greatly inhibit the growth of trust and friendship .

10. Following the guidance of the Second Vatican Council, the Secretariat for Non-Christians and the personal leadership of Pope John Paul II in Assisi, October 27, 1986, and in Los Angeles, September 16, 1987, the Commission for Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs for the Archdiocese of San Francisco encourages dialogue with other religions in the Bay Area. (7)

Interreligious Dialogue in the Archdiocese.

11. This Archdiocesan Ecumenical Commission maintains contact with local non-Christian religions through the Office for Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs located at the Chancery. This Office makes special efforts to maintain close ties with local Jewish, Islamic, Buddhist and Hindu communities.

12. The Ecumenical Commission is an advisory body of fifteen members, who together with the Commission Chair are appointed by the Archbishop and directly answerable to him. The Ecumenical Office is responsible on a full-time basis for all matters of ecumenical and interreligious activities, information and research, as well as problems pertaining to ecumenical and interreligious activities within the Archdiocese, subject to the Archbishop.

13. The San Francisco Bay Area has a relatively large representation of non-Christian religions. There are many opportunities for Catholic parishes, schools, retreat centers and hospitals to encounter these religious communities. Membership in local interreligious (interfaith) councils, which consider specific social and environmental issues confronting society today, is recommended.

14. The Ecumenical Commission, through its office, is available to provide help and resources to all Catholic institutions in the Archdiocese preparing interreligious programs. It must be recalled that great care should be taken when preparing such programs.

15. The advice of the Ecumenical Commission/Office should be sought whenever plans for formal or informal agreements/contracts are made by a Catholic institution either to rent or to lend their facilities to other religions. Special care should be taken that these facilities are not used by other religious groups to seek new members.

16. A practical moment for interreligious dialogue in Archdiocesan parishes occurs when a Catholic and a non-Christian wish to marry. Those who are helping to prepare such a wedding ceremony should be sensitive to the religious convictions and customs of the non-Christian party. On the other hand, the responsibilities of the Catholic Party should be clearly communicated to the non-Christian Party so that both parties realize conflicts from differing religious commitments may arise.

17. A practical moment for interreligious dialogue in Catholic schools occurs when courses about different religions are offered. It is recommended that informed persons of other religions, be invited to speak

concerning their religious traditions. Because young are impressionable in a world alive with a variety of religions, Catholic Schools must at the same time prepare parallel courses not only to show the uniqueness of the message of Christ, but also to teach the Roman Catholic appreciation of Non-Christan religions. Catholic educators should be prepared to speak positively about their own Christian convictions by seeking reciprocal invitations to speak in local elementary and secondary educational systems of Jews, Muslims, Buddhists, etc.

18. Catholic retreat centers and hospitals, in providing spiritual care for non-Christians, should be prepared to share the healing message of Jesus Christ whenever the opportunity gently presents itself.

Catholic - Jewish Relations:

19. San Francisco has the oldest and one of the most influential Jewish communities in California. The Archdiocese of San Francisco has long enjoyed a deep sense of mutual friendship with a variety of Jewish organizations such as the Northern California Board of Rabbis, the Jewish Community Relations Council (JCRC), the American Jewish Congress and the B'nai B'rith Anti Defamation League (ADL). Contact is also maintained with the local office of National Conference for Christians and Jews (NCCJ).

20. Because of common spiritual roots, Catholic-Jewish relations have been given high priority by the Church. The Council Fathers urge clergy and scholars to foster "mutual understanding and respect which is the fruit above all of biblical and theological studies and of brotherly dialogues" (NA,4). In 1974, guidelines for implementing the Council's Declaration (8) were published and the following areas for dialogue were outlined: appreciation of common liturgical life; better understanding of Judaism through education and joint social action. To help educators with further suggestions and ideas, "Notes on the Correct Way to Present Jews and Judaism in Preaching and Catechesis in the Roman Catholic Church" (1985) and "Guidelines for the Catechetical Presentation of Jews and Judaism in the New Testament" (1987) were published. (9)

21. Catholics in dialogue with Jews should be aware of the following sensitive issues, which, although not all inclusive, often greatly influence any dialogue with the Jewish Community:

a. The Holocaust: The mass murder of six million Jews by the Nazis which Hitler and his Nazi planners called "The Final Solution"- words indicating an intent to annihilate Jews world-wide.

b. The State of Israel: For many American Jews, Israel is not "their country", but they see the Israelis as part of "their people";

c. Anti-Semitism: "Indeed, the Church reproves every form of persecution (and) deploras all hatreds, persecutions, displays of anti-Semitism leveled at any time or from any source against Jews." (NA.4)

d. Proselytizing: Efforts that portray Judaism as an "incomplete faith" or that suggest God has revoked his Covenant with the Jews are equally and totally unacceptable; whenever one's faith in Jesus Christ is expressed in the presence of Jews, Catholics should avoid any form of action that could denigrate Jewish religious beliefs.

e. Interfaith Marriages: Jews, as a small minority, are concerned with preserving a distinct living faith, and they see such marriages as a silent drain on their ancient heritage.

22. If dialogue between Catholics and Jews is to be thorough and significant, it must also include grassroots exchanges between Catholic and Jewish congregations at various times of the year, such as the Easter-Passover season or Thanksgiving. It is suggested that priests and rabbis meet in dialogue to prepare for a congregational exchange, taking careful note of the following basic pastoral needs:

a. Selectivity in Scripture Texts: It is important to remember that, while the entire Hebrew Scripture, or Old Testament, is part of the Catholic tradition, the New Testament is not part of the Jewish tradition and should not be used for liturgical services or joint scripture study;

b. Liturgical Interchange: This would consist of attendance at either a Catholic or a Jewish worship service. Perhaps, a joint prayer service could be cooperatively organized;

c. Trinitarian Formulas: Prayer to the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the One God of Creation is part of the Catholic experience; Catholic prayers referring to the Trinity or to Jesus as Lord are foreign to the Jewish experience;

d. Correct Use of Seder Service: The Seder Service can be an enriching experience if it is conducted according to the authentic Jewish experience. Care must be had in not turning it into a Last Supper Meal. Perhaps it can be planned on another day of Holy Week besides Holy Thursday;

e. Correct Awareness of Holy Days: Parallel holydays must be understood in the context of each faith tradition so that Hanukkah does not become a Jewish Christmas nor Passover a Jewish Easter;

f. Centrality of the Person of Jesus Christ: Because Jews may be shocked at the centrality of Christ in the faith-life of Catholics and because Catholics may be shocked when exposed to Judaism in which Christ plays no role, priests and rabbis should prepare their congregations accordingly.

23. The religious experience connected with the pastoral sacraments and rites of Baptism, Marriage, Confirmation, Bar Mitzvah, and Burial should be explored. The ability to express appropriate sentiments on these occasions is one of the basic signs of authentic understanding and respect.

24. The following points may be helpful when preparing a Catholic and a Jew who are planning to get married:

a. The Jewish community is officially opposed to mixed marriages. This concern should be shared with the couple who should also know that the Catholic Church does not encourage such marriages; (10) Catholic/Jewish mixed marriages are not encouraged because of:

- extra stress placed upon the couple to adhere to the tenants and the customs of two religious traditions;

- apprehension over a tendency either to become indifferent to all religious practices or to actually convert to the other person's religion;
 - anxieties concerning the children's religious training and education. Even when parents separate, the courts often rule that a child must attend a religiously neutral school.
- b. If the priest or deacon is still asked to assist, after sharing the above, the following avenues may be pursued:
- A priest may officiate at the wedding of a Catholic and a Jew in the church sanctuary or another part of the Church, or in any suitable building with the permission of the local Ordinary, the Ecumenical Commission Chairman, or the local pastor, and with a dispensation from the impediment of disparity of worship;
 - A dispensation from the Catholic form of marriage may be sought so that the Catholic party may marry in a religious ceremony before a Rabbi in a synagogue or another private place;
 - If neither of the above is possible, the Ordinary may dispense the Catholic Party from the Catholic form of marriage so that a public ceremony which is civilly valid will be accepted by the Catholic Church as licit and valid.
- c. Jews may be admitted as public and official witnesses and attendants at a marriage ceremony in a Catholic Church. Catholics may also act as witnesses and attendants at the wedding of friends who are Jews.
- d. If a priest or a deacon is invited to participate in the marriage ceremony of two Jews conducted by a Rabbi, he may offer prayers for the couple or invoke God's blessing on them;
- e. If a Rabbi is invited to participate in the marriage ceremony of two Catholics conducted by a priest, he may be seated in the sanctuary, offer prayers and invoke blessings upon the couple.

Catholic-Islamic Relations

25. Only since the visit of Pope John Paul II to San Francisco in 1987 have official contacts been made with local Islamic leaders. A large number of Muslims have settled in San Jose and San Leandro. A mutual friendship has been established with several organizations such as the United Muslim Association, (San Francisco) the Islamic Information Center (San Jose) and the National Association of Arab Americans (NAAA). It is estimated that by the year 2000, the Muslim Community will equal or outnumber many religious communities in the United States.

26. Because of a common spiritual patrimony - a belief in the one God whom Muslims worship through prayer, almsgiving and fasting, identifications with Abraham and the prophets, and a reverence for Jesus and Mary -- Catholic-Islamic relations are greatly esteemed by the Church. The Council Fathers urge Christians and Muslims "to forget the past and to strive sincerely for mutual understanding" (NA 3). The book, Guidelines for a Dialogue Between Muslims and Christians, (11) has been published by the

Secretariat for Non-Christians to promote further interest.

27. Catholics in dialogue with Muslims should be mindful of the following sensitive issues, which, although not all inclusive, often greatly influence any dialogue with the Islamic community:

- a. The Palestinian Issue: This issue concerns both a knowledge of the Palestinians' desire to have a sovereign state with secure borders and an awareness of the Palestinians' demand for human and civil rights.
- b. Adaptation: How much does Islam have to adapt within a modern democracy where there is separation of church and state?
- c. Internal Islamic Issues: Despite internal schisms, Islam projects a united religious front. Religious intolerance to all other religions in some Muslim countries is a concern. Many younger Muslims feel a challenge to their religious practices from materialism, sectarianism, and the place of Islam in a modern socio-political world.
- d. Prejudice: The press and the film industries have often stereotyped Muslims as brutal, ignorant, fostering "Holy Wars", lacking in cleanliness, and many more obvious false accusations. This kind of anti-semitic prejudice is also often extended specifically to Arabs whether they be Muslims or Christian.

28. Contact with Muslims in the Bay Area is infrequent at present. However, if a dialogue is to develop between Catholics and Muslims, it should be encouraged at the grassroots level among the local congregations. A list of Archdiocesan parishes and neighboring mosques is available from the Ecumenical Office at the Chancery. Excellent topics for dialogue suggested by the Council Fathers include "a common cause of safeguarding and fostering social justice, moral values, peace and freedom" (NA, 3) and a study of Islamic beliefs, holydays and practices.

29. The following pastoral considerations should be considered when in dialogue with Muslims:

- a. Islam does not have an ordained clergy. The person, who teaches explains the teachings of Islam and who serves as a leader of prayer is called "Imam";
- b. Friday is the principal day of worship with public prayer at a certain hour generally in a mosque. If invited, Catholics may participate in this prayer (taking care to remove shoes), but not actively reading from the Quran which Muslims see as their prerogative;
- c. The use of Trinitarian formulas at prayer may also cause offense.
- d. "Mohammedans" is an inaccurate and highly offensive word which should never be used;
- e. "Islamic" and "Arabic" are not synonymous terms. Islam encompasses a wider scope of ethnic, racial, national and cultural differences. Arabs are a specific people of Semitic origin who are either Muslim or Christian.

30. Detailed information on Catholic-Islamic marriages has been developed by the Archdiocese of Los Angeles. A copy can be had by writing or calling the San Francisco Ecumenical Office at the Chancery.

31. All mixed marriages between Catholics and those who are not baptized fall under the general provisions of existing Church law.

Catholic-Buddhist Relations

32. Chinese and Japanese Buddhist communities have been established in San Francisco for over 100 years. In the last ten years, the Buddhist population has increased with people coming from several Southeast Asian countries.

33. Two major Buddhist traditions are represented in the San Francisco area. They are the Theravada Tradition (Thailand, Sri Lanka, Burma, Laos, Kampuchea and the Mahayana Tradition (China, Japan, Tibet, Korea, Vietnam, Mongolia). Within the past five years, the Archdiocesan Ecumenical Office has established and maintained relations with two Japanese Buddhist Churches: The Buddhist Church of America (BCA) and the Rissho Koseikai. Contact has also been made with a Zen Buddhist group that has a number of American adherents.

34. The Catholic-Buddhist dialogue is still in its infancy. Excellent international and national discussions/conferences can help local dialogues become a reality. (12) Because there are more and more opportunities to meet Buddhists in the Bay Area, due to an increase in their numbers the following sensitive points should be noted:

a. Buddhist monks of the Theravada Buddhist Tradition are celibate and wear an orange colored robe. Married priests of the Mahayana Tradition are typical of Japan only and (not all Japanese lineages). Gray stoles, half-coats or full robes are worn by Chinese and Japanese monks/priests. Tibetans and Mongolians wear maroon.

b. Statues of the Buddha are revered images of Gautama, the founder of Buddhism who is shown in an enlightened state of meditation.

c. The many schools or sects within the Buddhist Traditions accept the teachings of the Buddha according to different cultural interpretations determined by history, ethnic background and authoritative teachers. Some of these schools have formally established themselves as "churches"; others are less formal and are called "centers". Their chief priests are addressed either as "bishop" or abbot."

35. Some general concepts may help in establishing a framework for dialogue and discussion:

a. Buddhism "in its multiple forms acknowledges the radical insufficiency of this shifting world"; (NA. 2);

b. "It teaches a path by which men and women, in a devout and confident spirit, can either reach a state of absolute freedom or attain supreme enlightenment by their own efforts or by higher assistance" (NA. 2).

c. Buddhists have developed deep insights concerning a respect for all life (human and non-human), a credible monastic tradition, and sophisticated contemplative and meditative techniques. (13)

d. Buddhism has been a source of spiritual strength to many Chinese and Japanese affected by racial injustices in this country.

Catholic-Hindu Relations

36. Although the Hindu population within the San Francisco area is small, the Archdiocesan Ecumenical Office maintains friendly relations with the Vedanta Society for the past several years.

37. Dialogue with Hindus is also in its infancy and no attempt has been made in this regard by the Ecumenical Commission or Office. However, mutual cooperative efforts have been made through programs concerning world peace and religious harmony supported by the World Conference for Religion and Peace (WCRP).

38. To establish a framework for future dialogue, the following points should be noted:

a. Hindus look upon their teachers as religious personalities, thus addressing them with titles of reverence such as swami, sri, guru, etc.;

b. Hindu systems of belief and practice are many and varied, and their terminology is very difficult expressing deep devotion and love. Hindus, in general, "contemplate the divine mystery and express it through myths and philosophical inquiry" and they "seek release from the anguish of our (human) condition through ascetical practices, deep meditations or a loving, trusting flight toward God" (NA, 2).

c. The rich spiritual heritage of India acknowledges not only the historical development of Buddhism from Hinduism, but also the encounter of other religious faiths like the Jainists, the Sikhs, the Muslims and the Christians (14)

d. In San Francisco, the Krishna Consciousness sponsors annual festival processions to the sea called Gunapati and the Integral Yoga Institute offers advance graduate work in Hinduism and in spiritual forms of yoga.

Other Religions

39. Along with the above major religious traditions, explanations of other religions can be found in Handbook for Interreligious Dialogue, (2nd edition) prepared by the National Association for Diocesan Ecumenical Officers (NADEO). This handbook briefly examines Native American tribal traditions, Japanese Shinto, and Chinese Confucianism. It also suggests topics for discussion and presents a glossary for reference, a list of recommended speakers and a current bibliography prepared by scholars familiar with each religion. (15)

40. Anyone interested in the many holy days of these religions can consult an annual interreligious calendar published in Canada. (16) For further information contact the San Francisco Ecumenical Office.

41. Facts concerning various "New Age Religions" and cults in the Bay Area are being investigated. The paper entitled, Vatican Report on Sects, Cults and New Religious Movements of May, 1986, is recommended. (17)

FOOTNOTES

- (1). The general outline and development of these guidelines has been gratefully adapted from the 1987 Interreligious Guidelines of the Archdiocese of Los Angeles. These guidelines are designed to be helpful pastoral hints not another set of laws.
- (2). "Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to non-Christian Religions", The Documents of Vatican II, Editor, Walter M. Abbot, S.J., New Century Publishers, 1966.
- (3). Francis Cardinal Arinze, "Mission and Dialogue", Secretariat for Non-Christians, June 10, 1984, The Japan Missionary Bulletin, November, 1984, pp 606-614. In 1987, the U.S. Bishops Conference established the National Office for Interreligious Affairs in Washington, D.C.
- (4). Augustin Cardinal Bea, The Church and the Jewish People, Harper and Row, New York, 1966, p.29. Cardinal Bea was the first President of the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity.
- (5). Arinze, "Mission and Dialogue", idem, p.608
- (6). Leonard Swidler, "The Dialogue Decalogue: Ground Rules for Interreligious Dialogue", Inter-Religio, Spring, 1984, No. 5, p. 30.
- (7). The New Code of Canon Law (1986), Canon 787, 1, calls missionaries "to establish dialogue with those who do not believe in Christ".
- (8). "Guidelines and Suggestions for Implementing the Conciliar Declaration", (1974) Doing The Truth In Charity, ed., Thomas Stransky and John Sheerin, Paulist Press, N.Y., 1982.
- (9). Notes on the Correct Way to Present Jews and Judaism in Preaching and Catechesis in the Roman Catholic Church", Origins, Vol. 15, No. 7, July 4, 1985. Within Context: Guidelines for the Catechetical Presentation of Jews and Judaism in the New Testament, United States Catholic Conference, Washington, D.C., 1987. Understanding the Jewish Experience, ed., Eugene Fisher and Leon Klenicki, United States Catholic Conference, Washington, D.C., 1986.
- (10). The Board of Rabbis of Southern California in 1974 officially opposed mixed marriages saying "Rabbis who do participate with ministers of other faiths are violating Jewish doctrine and practice".
- (11). Guidelines for a Dialogue between Muslims and Christians, Secretariat for non-Christians, Edizione Ancora, Rome, 1971.
- (12). The Third International Buddhist-Christian Conference was held at the Pacific School of Religion, Berkeley, CA., August, 1987.
- (13). Towards The Meeting with Buddhism, Secretariat for non-Christians, Editrice Ancora, Rome, Vol. I, 1963 and Vol. II, 1970.
- (14). For a Dialogue with Hinduism, Secretariat for non-Christians, Editrice Ancora, Rome, 1972.
- (15). Handbook for Interreligious Dialogue, ed., John Borelli, National Association for Diocesan Ecumenical Officers, United States Conference, Washington, D.C., 1988.

(16.) Multifaith Calendar, 1410 West 12th Ave., Vancouver, B.C., V6A1M8.
Calendar of the Christian Year, British Christian Union, 4637 North Manor Ave.,
Chicago, Ill. 60625.

(17) "Vatican Report on Sects, Cults and New Religious Movements", Origins,
May 23, 1986, Vol 15, No. 1, pp. 1-10. Women are being especially affected
by a rising interest in the goddesses. See Laughter of Aphrodite by Carol
Christ.