

*Part of our ongoing series of offerings for use in Affiliate Chapter meetings, this Easy Meeting is on this issue's theme.*

**EASY MEETING:  
AFFILIATES AND INTERFAITH DIALOGUE**

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**Preparation:**

1. **Read** through these two pages.
2. **Plan** who will read the passages and lead discussions of the questions.

**MEETING PLAN**

**Opening Prayer:**

*God help me cross human-made borders  
to stand with all your sons and daughters  
who live on the edge.*

*May everything I say and do help them realize  
how much you love, forgive,  
and care for them.*

—Fr. Joseph Veneroso, MM,  
p. 31, Maryknoll Book of Prayer

*Religions found everywhere strive in different ways to answer the restless searching of the human heart by proposing 'ways' which consist of teachings, rules of life, and sacred ceremonies. The Catholic Church rejects nothing which is true and holy in other religions and regards with sincere reverence those ways of conduct and life, those precepts and teachings, which, though differing in many aspects from the ones the Church holds, nonetheless often reflect a ray of that Truth which enlightens all. **The Church exhorts her members to prudently and lovingly dialogue and collaborate with the followers of other religions...***

Pope Paul VI, "Declaration of the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions" also known as *Nostra Aetate*.

**Introduction:**

Let each attendee silently consider these initial questions:

1. What encounters have you had with people of other faiths?
2. How do you witness to your Catholic Christian faith?

**Reading:**

I was fortunate to help found the Arizona InterFaith Movement (AIFM) in 1995 and to serve on its board for over 10 years. Our guiding principle was living the Golden Rule: "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you". This principle is found in all the major religions of the world although the words may not be the same. For example, in Buddhism: "Hurt not others in ways that you yourself would find hurtful." (Udana-Varga 5:18)

Our Mission Statement is, "to build bridges of understanding, respect and support among diverse people of faith through education, dialogue, service and implementation of the Golden Rule."



The Arizona Interfaith Movement has built bridges of understanding, respect, and support among diverse people of faith through education, dialogue, service, and the implementation of the Golden Rule by holding a variety of events:

- Golden Rule Banquet: Where people who are living out the Golden Rule are honored
- Voices of Faith Concert: An InterFaith evening of music, song and chants
- Experience InterFaith: A dialogue with members of other faiths
- Monthly forums to discuss the key ingredients of each faith and critical life issues our world confronts
- Interfaith prayer and support at churches, synagogues, temples, mosques, and other locations

where violent crimes have been committed because of one's faith belief.

- Educational forums and outreach programs to increase understanding, respect, and support among diverse people of faith.
- Opportunities to visit places of worship of a variety of faith groups throughout the community and to promote thoughtful discussion about the roles of religion in a multi-faith globalized society.

For me, it has affirmed even more my own Roman Catholic Christian faith, while witnessing, and because of, the faith encounters and inter-religious dialogues with members of other world religions through the AIFM. We may call God/Ultimate Reality by a variety of names, but in doing so we realize that we are limited by any name or concept.

Some principal points of agreement coming from representatives of the world religions are set forth in an article by Father Thomas Keating, OSCO, entitled "An Experience of Interreligious Dialogue," at [contemplative-leadership.com](http://contemplative-leadership.com):

- God/Ultimate Reality cannot be limited by any name or concept.
- Faith is opening, accepting, and responding to God/Ultimate Reality. Faith in this sense precedes every belief system.
- The potential for human wholeness—or in other frames of reference, enlightenment, salvation, transformation, blessedness, nirvana—is present in every human people.
- God/Ultimate Reality may be experienced not only through religious practices but also through nature, art, human relationships, and service to others.
- As long as the human condition is experienced as separate from Ultimate Reality, it is subject to ignorance and illusion, weakness and suffering.
- Disciplined practice is essential to the spiritual life; yet spiritual attainment is not the result of one's own efforts, but the result of the experience of oneness with Ultimate Reality.
- Some examples of disciplined practice common to the world religions are: practice of compassion, service to others, practicing moral precepts and virtues, training in meditation techniques and regularity of practice, attention to diet and

exercise, fasting and abstinence, the use of music and chanting and sacred symbols, practice in awareness (recollection, mindfulness) and living in the present moment, pilgrimage, and study of scriptural texts and scriptures.

The "Maryknoll Movement" provides a rich history that continues to the present moment of respectful encounters, dialogues, and service to and with people of other faiths, throughout the world. I hope that our Maryknoll Affiliate Chapters will reflect individually and collectively on the theme of Interreligious Dialogue and Affairs. May the Spirit of God guide you in this!

### **Discussion Questions:**

1. In reading this article what new insights or ideas came to you?
2. What individual actions are calling to you?
3. What actions might your chapter undertake in the future?

### **Interfaith Closing Prayer:**

**G**racious Creator of the Universe,  
 bless us with wisdom and courage  
 to respect our diverse religious beliefs  
 and practices and to have honest and  
 authentic dialogue and collaboration  
 with one another.

### **Resources:**

The Secretariat for Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs at the USCCB: [www.usccb.org](http://www.usccb.org)

Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue: [www.vatican.va](http://www.vatican.va)

Catholic Association of Diocesan Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs (CADEIO): [www.cadeio.org](http://www.cadeio.org)

Maryknoll Office of Global Concerns: [www.maryknollogc.org](http://www.maryknollogc.org)



*Please share the topics and resources that led to an especially effective meeting for your chapter. We could feature them in future issues. Send to [nsfa@maryknollaffiliates.org](mailto:nsfa@maryknollaffiliates.org).*