

Interreligious Dialogue, A Key In Creating Basis For Peace

VATICAN CITY, MAY 15, 2004 (VIS) - Members of the plenary assembly of the Pontifical Council for Inter-religious Dialogue and council president, Archbishop Michael Fitzgerald, were received by the Holy Father this morning as the council marks the 40th anniversary of its founding by Paul VI on May 19, 1964.

The Pope noted that the decision by his predecessor to institute this dicastery came from - as Paul VI himself wrote - "the atmosphere of unity and hopefulness that clearly marked Vatican Council II." During these 40 years, the Pope added, the work of the council has produced fruitful results in many dioceses as well as in Churches and Christian communities of different denominations.

"The importance of the work you do," stated John Paul II, "has been noted by many organizations of other religions which have had in the past and continue to have fruitful contacts with your pontifical council, and share diverse initiatives with you. Such cooperation must be intensified, orienting attention to themes of common interest."

The Pope added that "coming years will see the Church even more committed to respond to the great challenges of inter-religious dialogue." He recalled that in his Apostolic Letter "Novo millennio ineunte" at the close of the Jubilee Year 2000, he wrote that the new millennium would see "increased cultural and religious pluralism." He added that what must be avoided in "promoting dialogue with the followers of other religions, (is) any kind of relativism and religious indifference."

Again quoting his apostolic letter, John Paul said that inter-religious dialogue is important for "creating a sure basis for peace. ... The name of the one God must become increasingly what it is: a name of peace and a summons to peace." In building foundations for peace, Christians must be "animated by love for all of mankind and for every man, seeking with courage the truth, and cultivating a prophetic thirst for justice and freedom."