
Pope in Indonesia: “United in diversity against wars and fundamentalisms”

“United in diversity.” This is the Indonesian people's secret, which offers a model for the world to pursue in order to “counter extremism and intolerance,” “protect against rigidity, fundamentalism and extremism,” and “avert wars and conflicts,” “caused at times by the manipulation of religion.” During the first leg of the longest Apostolic Journey to Asia and Oceania of his pontificate, **Pope Francis** delineated a portrait of Indonesia, an archipelago of 17,508 islands where the majority of the world's Muslim population resides, under the banner of the harmony of diversity. Being brothers and sisters, Francis said quoting poet Wanda Szymborska, during the [meeting with the clergy](#) means “recognizing each other ‘as different as two drops of water’”. “Just as the ocean is the natural element uniting all Indonesian islands, the mutual respect for the specific cultural, ethnic, linguistic and religious characteristics of all the groups present in Indonesia is the indispensable and unifying fabric that makes Indonesians a united and proud people”, Francis said paying homage to the “diverse peoples firmly united in one nation”, in his [first address to authorities delivered in Jakarta](#), at the Presidential Palace Hall. The highlight of the two public days in Indonesia was a visit to the Istiqlal Mosque, the largest in Southeast Asia and the venue for the interfaith meeting and the signing of a shared statement, five years after the signing of the Abu Dhabi Document on Human Fraternity. The joint declaration identifies two major crises - dehumanisation and climate change - and stresses the responsibility of religious leaders “to promote a culture of respect, dignity, compassion, reconciliation and fraternal solidarity” in order to “defeat the culture of violence and indifference that afflicts our world.” Earlier, Pope Francis and the Grand Imam **Nasaruddin Umar**, walked together through the “Tunnel of Friendship”, an underpass that connects the Istiqlal Mosque compound with the neighbouring Cathedral of Our Lady of the Assumption, in an exemplary display of dialogue. “In order to foster a peaceful and constructive harmony, ensuring peace and joining forces to defeat the imbalances and pockets of misery, which still persist in some parts of the country, the Catholic Church wishes to increase interreligious dialogue”, Francis assured in his first speech in Jakarta: “In this way, prejudices can be eliminated and a climate of mutual respect and trust can grow. This is indispensable for meeting common challenges, including that of countering extremism and intolerance, which through the distortion of religion attempt to impose their views by using deception and violence.” For the Pope, political life should strive toward harmony, equity, respect for the fundamental rights of human beings, sustainable development, solidarity and the pursuit of peace, both within society and with other peoples and nations.”

“We see in today’s world certain tendencies that hinder the development of universal fraternity”,

Francis’ analysis: “In various regions we see the emergence of violent conflicts, which are often the result of a lack of mutual respect, of the intolerant desire to let one’s own interests, one’s own position, or one’s own partial historical narrative prevail at all costs, even when this leads to endless suffering for entire communities and results in wars and much bloodshed.” Sometimes “violent tensions arise within countries because those in power want to make everything uniform, imposing their vision even in matters that should be left to the autonomy of individuals or groups.” Not to mention when “faith in God is continually placed in the forefront, but is sadly manipulated to foment divisions and hatred instead of furthering peace, communion, dialogue, respect, cooperation and fraternity for building up the nation.” **“May religious experiences may be reference points for a fraternal and peaceful society and never reasons for close-mindedness or confrontation”**, the Pope said in his address at the Istiqlal Mosque: “May all of us, together, each cultivating his or her own spirituality and practicing his or her religion, walk in search of God and contribute to building

open societies, founded on reciprocal respect and mutual love, capable of protecting against rigidity, fundamentalism and extremism, which are always dangerous and never justifiable”, is the Pope’s exhortation, who called upon attendees to “cultivate bonds of friendship, care and reciprocity” and to “to move forward together in pursuit of the same goals: defence of human dignity, the fight against poverty and the promotion of peace.”

Conflicts and wars “are caused at times by the manipulation of religion”,

Francis remarked. Conversely, religions are called to

“defeat the culture of violence and indifference and promote reconciliation and peace.”

“May no one succumb to the allure of fundamentalism and violence. May everyone instead be awestruck by the dream of a free, fraternal and peaceful society and humanity!”, he exclaimed.

“Be builders of peace and hope”,

Francis said in his homily for the [closing Mass at Jakarta stadium](#), where he quoted from Saint Teresa of Calcutta: “When we have nothing to give, let us give that nothing. And remember, *even if you reap nothing, never tire of sowing*”. Finally in unscripted remarks, the Pope called on the people of Indonesia to “make a noise”.

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