



### Dolores Puthod: *"Followers of God"*

Often a painting expresses and describes a concept better than words.

To express the "Universality of the Church", French artist Dolores Puthod painted (cm 400 x 300) a canvas to honour Pope Paul VI, a person who initiated and sustained dialogue at all levels in order to seek unity of all Christians and establish harmony and mutual respect among all religions. His role during and after the Second Vatican Council and his first encyclical letter, *Ecclesiam Suam*, are the best witnesses to his person and work concerning ecumenism and interreligious dialogue. In the painting, Paul VI is shown in St Peter's Square with his arms open to welcome everyone. His shadow suggests a form of the Cross of Christ, a symbol of suffering common to all people seeking the Truth. The Pope is surrounded by world religions which are represented by their respective charismatic leaders who are either living or dead.

Their names in order from the right:

**The Dalai Lama**, leader of Tibetan Buddhism.<sup>1</sup>

**Mahatma Gandhi**, a great exponent of Hinduism.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Date of meeting: September 30<sup>th</sup>, 1973.

<sup>2</sup> He died in 1948, he did not meet Pio XI nor Pio XII, nor Papa Paolo VI. He visited the Vatican on December 13<sup>th</sup>, 1931, but Pope Pio XI had no way to receive him.

**King Feisal**, Sovereign of Saudi Arabia and of Umma, i.e. Islamic religious leader.<sup>3</sup>

**Dhammayana Maha Thera Phra Buddhajinorot**, Supreme Buddhist Patriarch of Laos.<sup>4</sup>

**Nikodim**, Metropolitan of the Russian Orthodox Church.<sup>5</sup>

**Khoraiche**, Maronite Christian Patriarch of Antioche (later Cardinal).

**Cardinal Sergio Pignedoli**, the President of the "Secretariat for Non- Christians", the highest authority who, in the Pope's name, promotes dialogue between religions.

**Melitone**, ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople.<sup>6</sup>

**Somdet Phra Wannarat, Abbot of Wat Phra Chetupon**, became the 17<sup>th</sup> Supreme Patriarch of Thailand with the name Somdet Phra Ariyavamsagatanana. (Somdet Phra Wannarat).<sup>7</sup>

**Athenagoras**, Patriarch of the Greek Orthodox Church.<sup>8</sup>

**Michael Ramsey**, Archbishop of Canterbury until 1975 and the Primate of the Church of England.<sup>9</sup>

The imagination of the artist was first concretely realized in the invitation by Pope John Paul II to the leaders of various Christian churches and communities and leaders of different religions to come to Assisi on 27 October 1986 to pray for peace in our world.

However, it was on 28 October 2015, that Pope Francis opened his arms to welcome World Religious Leaders in St. Peter's Square at an Interreligious General Audience on the occasion of *Nostra aetate's* 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, as Dolores Puthod had thought half century before.

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<sup>3</sup> He never visit the Vatican.

<sup>4</sup> Date of meeting: Rome, June 8<sup>th</sup>, 1973.

<sup>5</sup> Nikodim died in the Apostolic Palace on September 5<sup>th</sup>, 1978, while meeting Pope John Paul I. Cf.: <http://ilsismografo.blogspot.com/2022/03/vaticano-la-vicenda-della-morte-del.html>

<sup>6</sup> Date of meeting: December 7<sup>th</sup>, 1975. Cf.: <https://www.osservatoreromano.va/it/news/2019-04/il-gesto-del-servo-dei-servi-di-dio.html>

<sup>7</sup> Date of meeting with Pope Paul VI: June 5<sup>th</sup>, 1972.

<sup>8</sup> Date of meeting with Pope Paul VI: October 26<sup>th</sup>, 1967. Cf.

<https://www.vatican.va/content/osservatore-romano/it/comments/2017/documents/piccoli-passi-ma-balzi-da-gigante.html>

<sup>9</sup> Date of meeting with Pope Paul VI: March 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1966. Cf.:

<https://www.famigliacristiana.it/articolo/il-primato-anglicano-welby-indossa-l-anello-donato-da-paolo-vi.aspx>