

[VATICAN](#)[WOMEN](#)[INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUE](#)[DIALOGUE](#)[HUMAN RIGHTS](#)

Vatican shines spotlight on vital role of women in building culture of encounter

As a conference for women involved in interreligious dialogue kicks off in the Vatican, an organiser says that women's voices must be brought "from the margins to the centre".

By Joseph Tulloch and Tiziana Campisi

An international conference on women's contributions to interreligious dialogue – entitled "Women Building a Culture of Encounter Interreligiously" – is taking place in Rome this week.

The conference is hosted by the Vatican's Dicastery for Promoting Interreligious Dialogue, in collaboration with the World Union of Catholic Women's Organisations (WUCWO).

The Secretary of the Dicastery, Msgr. Indunil Janakaratne Kodithuwakku Kankanamalage, spoke to Vatican News' Tiziana Campisi about the conference, and its goal of fostering a culture of interreligious encounter.

The role of women in interreligious dialogue

Why organise an interreligious conference featuring only women?

Msgr. Indunil explained this decision by quoting Pope Francis' encyclical letter *Fratelli Tutti*, which says that "the organisation of societies worldwide is still far from reflecting clearly that women possess the same dignity and identical rights as men. We say one thing with words, but our decisions and reality tell another story."

The conference, he said, thus aimed to give space to women's "particular contributions to interreligious dialogue", and "bring their voices from the margins to the centre, and to include their stories, so that they can inspire."

A global women's network

Another goal, he said, was to create a network of women involved in interreligious dialogue. Participants – who hail from 23 different countries – will be encouraged to make connections, so that when they return home they can begin to form local and national networks.

The idea, he said, is then to hold another series of in-person conferences in around a year's time, one per continent, as a prompt for further collaboration.

Creating a culture of interreligious encounter

A culture of encounter, said Msgr. Indunil, is one in which we are "fascinated about meeting others."

This impulse, he said, should come "from our spirituality too, from our religious teachings, because God is a dialogical God, God enters into dialogue with humanity from the beginning, our Scripture says."

In the course of meeting those of other faiths, he added, we find many differences – "religions are not all the same" – but also many similarities, because "religions have converging values, that we call 'universal' values: law, justice, peace, harmony, coexistence".

"On the basis of these universal values," Msgr. Indunil said, "we can build bridges and plan projects that include everyone."

Thank you for reading our article. You can keep up-to-date by subscribing to our daily newsletter. [Just click here](#)

25 January 2023, 15:50