



**MESSAGE OF THE MINISTER GENERAL TO THE TRINITARIAN FAMILY
ON THE OCCASION OF THE SOLEMNITY OF THE MOST HOLY TRINITY**

B. S. SS. T.



Dear Brothers and Sisters,

May my cordial and fraternal greetings to all the members of the Trinitarian Family.

As a Trinitarian Family, we are celebrating the 25th anniversary of SIT. This celebration presents a valuable opportunity to review the journey we've taken and to look forward to embracing the challenges of the present time. One of the most significant moments of this anniversary celebration was the gathering in Bahrain, attended by representatives from various branches of the Trinitarian Family

and those who coordinate SIT activities locally and internationally.

It was a privilege to have the opportunity to celebrate these gatherings in such a unique setting as Bahrain. I extend my sincere thanks to Msgr. Aldo Berardi and his team for the warm hospitality they provided us. From this experience, I would like to share some reflections with you.

1. BACKGROUND.

For the first time, we held the SIT executive meeting in a country where Christians are a religious minority. This meeting continues the experience of the Inter-Trinitarian Assembly held between Spain and Morocco, the latter being a country where Christians make up less than 1% of the population.

Bahrain, situated in the heart of the Arab-Muslim world, serves as an exemplary model of mutual acceptance among religions and interreligious dialogue. The visit of His Holiness Pope Francis, who participated in the Bahrain Forum for Dialogue, held particular significance. Our group also had the opportunity to visit various mosques, Islamic cultural centers, a synagogue, and a Hindu temple. Notably, our visit to the King Hamad Global Center for Peaceful Coexistence was of great importance. This center, which has established a chair at La Sapienza University in Rome, is dedicated to promoting intercultural and interreligious dialogue while rejecting any violent distortion of religious messages or forms of religious fanaticism, as violence runs contrary to authentic religious experiences. The Kingdom of Bahrain, enshrined in its Constitution, guarantees freedom of worship. The settings where we convened these meetings of the Trinitarian Family hold particular significance, aiding us in better understanding and living out our mission in creatively faithful accordance with the charism of St. John de Matha. These specific locations also challenge us, as the Trinitarian Family, to heighten our focus and presence in places like Bahrain, where Christians, as religious minorities, require accompaniment and support in countries not always open or favorable to their presence.

2. TO THE ROOTS OF OUR COMMITMENT ON BEHALF OF PERSECUTED CHRISTIANS

Our experience in Bahrain deepens our commitment to advocating for persecuted Christians, rooted in our understanding of the Most Holy Trinity and the mystery of redemption. The Holy Trinity embodies an eternal dialogue of love between the Father and the Son, enveloped in the presence of the Holy Spirit, a dialogue that extends to all of humanity. Thus, the Trinity stands as a mystery that beckons dialogue, encounter, and acceptance; it serves as an infinite wellspring of communion and peace.

Qhis dialogue of salvation persists in the mission of the Church and in our mission as Trinitarians, dedicated to safeguarding human dignity from all types of oppression. Stemming from our intimate and profound relationship with the Trinity is our commitment to engaging in dialogue with everyone, leaving no one excluded. Interreligious dialogue arises from this imperative. It is not merely a strategy, tactic, or passing trend, but rather an expression and essential dimension of our faith and, for us Trinitarians, of our allegiance to the original essence of our charism.

“Dialogue among people of diverse religions is not pursued solely for diplomatic reasons, courtesy, or tolerance [...]. The aim of dialogue is to foster friendship, peace, harmony, and the exchange of moral and spiritual values and experi-

ences in a spirit of truth and love”¹. At the core of interfaith dialogue, like any other form of dialogue, lies the relationship, the encounter, and the embrace of the other.

We recognize that this is a challenging mission, as interreligious dialogue, among all forms of dialogue, is indeed the most demanding. Yet, we equally acknowledge that it is a vital necessity, with its only alternative being the incommunicability of war, which begets destruction and death.

3. INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUE AND RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

The history of our religious family reminds us that the redemptive mission of liberating captives *pro fide Christi* (for the faith of Christ) was achieved through encounters and dialogue with Muslims. “With the Trinitarian Order, Christendom established humanitarian contact with the world of Islam; indeed, Innocent III himself presented the redemptive and liberating work of your Institute to the leaders of the Muslim world, thus inaugurating a dialogue that had as its object the practice of works of mercy”.

Our founder anticipated St. Francis of Assisi in his willingness to engage with the children of Islam to establish a dialogue with them based on the liberation of slaves, which, during our founder's time, was considered the greatest act of charity. Both our history and our present mission affirm that it's impossible to assist persecuted Christians without advocating for religious freedom for the benefit of all. Furthermore, it's impossible to promote this fundamental right, enabling individuals to freely express their faith and live according to its principles, without embracing the challenging work and courage of dialogue with believers of other religious traditions. In fact, religious freedom serves as the essential prerequisite and one of the primary objectives of interreligious dialogue. It's no coincidence that Pope Francis consistently emphasizes the need to collectively safeguard the most vital among fundamental human rights in every interreligious gathering he attends.

This underscores why SIT's endeavors in recent years have been directed towards this goal, forging agreements and collaborations with esteemed academic institutions such as the Center for Interreligious Studies at the Pontifical Gregorian University.

¹ FRANCIS, Encyclical Letter *Fratelli Tutti*, n. 271.

² JOHN PAUL II, *Message to the Minister General of the Order of the Most Holy Trinity on the occasion of the eighth centenary of the approval of the Rule proper in AOSST XIII* (1998), 447.

4. DIALOGUE FORMATION.

Dialogue, particularly interreligious dialogue, cannot be improvised. Adequate preparation for dialogue is essential and can be conducted at various levels. At the theological level, it's crucial to train experts in dialogue, a need emphasized by the Church today. During my meeting with the Permanent Council of the Malagasy Bishops' Conference in 2021, the bishops sought assistance in this regard. They expressed that interreligious dialogue, especially with Islam, poses a challenge for which the Malagasy Church is unprepared.

Our Trinitarian presence in countries where Christians are a religious minority also necessitates specific training. While this mission relies on the willingness and goodwill of individuals, it must be supported by proper formation.

However, it would be a misconception to view dialogue solely as the concern of theologians and specialists. Other forms of dialogue, accessible to everyone, such as the dialogue of life and actions, and the dialogue of religious experiences, are significant. These forms of dialogue are applicable in any context, as the challenge of interreligious dialogue affects all of us living in a world increasingly marked by religious pluralism.

We must muster the courage to invest more in training and education in interreligious dialogue. It stands as one of the greatest challenges of the complex historical period we are traversing, and it represents the most significant contribution we can offer toward constructing a freer and more peaceful society. We must summon the courage to invest and engage more profoundly in this endeavor.

5. OUR RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES AND LAY FRATERNITIES TO BE LABORATORIES OF DIALOGUE

Dialogue *ad extra* demands and calls for dialogue *ad intra*. We cannot position ourselves as advocates of dialogue unless we actively embody within our communities and fraternities the experience of dialogue, which is both exhilarating and challenging. The temptation that often besets us is to retreat into silence, to avoid confrontation, and to succumb to misunderstandings. Dialogue, prior to being an activity, is a way of life, as it requires the capacity to listen, to honor the spaces and liberties of others, and the recognition that the pursuit of truth, in which no one holds a monopoly, necessitates openness to the other. Even moments of crisis can transform into opportune occasions for even deeper and more genuine dialogue.

If “the invisible God in His great love speaks to men as friends and entertains Himself with them to invite and admit them to communion with Himself” (*Dei Verbum* 2), who are we to deny listening and open and constructive dialogue to our brothers and sisters? Indeed, dialogue allows conflicts to be transformed into opportunities for growth and even grace.

5. LOOKING TO THE FUTURE TOGETHER

In the near future, two particularly significant events await us, for which we must prepare as of today: the Ordinary Jubilee of the year 2025 and the General Chapter of religious. The theme of the Jubilee is “Hope does not disappoint” (Rom. 5:5), while the theme of the next General Chapter, to be held in Rome, is “persecuted but not abandoned” (2 Cor. 4:9). I ask everyone to accompany with prayer the preparation for the General Chapter, so that it may be a privileged moment of listening to the Holy Spirit, may be an authentic synodal experience, a moment of grace to grow in fidelity to the charism and give a stronger impetus to our commitment on behalf of persecuted Christians.

In a few days we will celebrate the Solemnity of the Most Holy Trinity. May the renewal of the promises of our consecration be an expression of our daily commitment to remain faithful to the Trinitarian charism and to be witnesses of fraternity and peace in this world torn by wars and discord. May it also be an expression of our commitment to communion, which we are called to realize at various levels, starting from our communities and fraternities until we embrace the whole world, especially the poor and the neediest, because only when we have embraced the last can we be sure that we have embraced the whole world. This is my wish for the whole Trinitarian Family: to be fervent and passionate witnesses of the mystery of communion and love of the Most Holy Trinity.

Rome, May 12, 2024

Solemnity of the Ascension of the Lord



Fr. Luigi Buccarello O.S.S.T.
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Minister General