

Pope Francis: central role of women interfaith dialogue



Pope Francis greets participants at the plenary assembly of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue

(Vatican Radio, 9 June 2017) Pope Francis met on Friday with participants in the plenary assembly of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, who have been discussing the key contribution of women to interfaith relations.

The Pope began by noting how often women's work and dignity is threatened by violence and hatred which tears families and societies apart. Faced with the challenges of our globalized world, he said, there is a vital need to recognize the abilities of women to teach values of unity and fraternity which can transform the human family.

It is therefore to the benefit of society that women have a growing presence in social, political and economic life - as well as in the life of the Church - at national and international level, the Pope said. Women's rights, he insisted, must be affirmed and protected, including, if necessary, through legal means.

In their role as educators in the family and beyond, the Pope continued, women have a particular vocation to foster innovative ways of welcoming and respecting others. Whether or not they are mothers, the contribution of women in the field of education is invaluable, he said.

Women and men, Pope Francis said, through their different roles and intuitions, are both called to the task of teaching fraternity and peace. Women, who are so intimately connected to the mystery of life, can contribute much through their care of life and their conviction that love is the only power able to make the world more habitable for each one of us.

Women, the Pope noted, are often the only ones to be found accompanying others, especially the weakest members of families or societies. Through their care of victims of conflict and all those facing the daily challenges of life, they teach us how to overcome our throwaway culture.

The Pope concluded by highlighting the importance of these values in the work of interreligious dialogue. In the so-called dialogue of life, where women are often more involved than men, they can help us better understand the challenges of our multicultural societies.

But beyond that, he stressed, many women are well prepared to contribute to the religious and theological discussions at the highest levels, alongside their male counterparts. It is more necessary than ever that they do so, he said, so that their skills of listening, welcoming, and openness to others can be of service in weaving the delicate fabric of dialogue between all men and women of good will.