

[HOME](#)[ITINERARY](#)[THE HOLY FATHER](#)[CATHOLIC CHURCH
IN THE USA](#)[TEACHING RESOURCES](#)[VENUES](#)[VIDEO/AUDIO](#)[STORIES](#)[BLOG](#)[FEEDS](#)[MEDIA](#)

Pope Meets Interreligious Leaders, Says Dialogue Discovers Truth

By Regina Linskey Catholic News Service

WASHINGTON (CNS) -- Pope Benedict XVI encouraged interreligious leaders to work not only for peace but for the discovery of truth. The pope told about 200 representatives of Islam, Jainism, Buddhism, Hinduism and Judaism gathered at the Pope John Paul II Cultural Center in Washington April 17 "to persevere in their collaboration" to serve society and enrich public life.

"I have noticed a growing interest among governments to sponsor programs intended to promote interreligious dialogue and intercultural dialogue. These are praiseworthy initiatives," Pope Benedict said. "At the same time, religious freedom, interreligious dialogue and faith-based education aim at something more than a consensus regarding ways to implement practical strategies for advancing peace.

"The broader purpose of dialogue is to discover the truth," he said.

In a ceremony in the two-story main lobby of the cultural center, Milwaukee Auxiliary Bishop Richard J. Sklba, chairman of the U.S. bishops' Committee on Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs, introduced the pope to the interreligious leaders, who wore traditional garments to identify their faiths. To the pope's right were the five symbols of peace presented to him at the end of the ceremony.

The motorcade from The Catholic University of America to the Pope John Paul II Cultural Center did not last long; the two institutions are across the street from each other, although the pope's meeting with educators at Catholic University was on the far side of its campus.

Upon the pope's arrival at the cultural center, Cardinal Adam J. Maida of Detroit, a driving force behind its construction, got down on one knee and kissed the pope's ring. The pope said that in their attempt to discover commonalities, religious leaders perhaps "have shied away from the responsibility to discuss our differences with calmness and clarity." But by continuing to search for answers to questions such as what constitutes good and evil and what is humanity's destiny, dialogue "will not stop at identifying a common set of values, but go on to probe their ultimate foundation," he said. "We have no reason to fear, for the truth unveils for us the essential relationship between the world and God." Pope Benedict said that "only by addressing these deeper questions can we build a solid basis" for peace and security.

When people find the truth "they naturally seek out the path of peace," he said, quoting his message for the 2006 World Day of Peace.

Today, Pope Benedict said, religious leaders have a duty to place these truth-seeking questions "at the forefront of human consciousness" and "to make space in a frenetic world for reflection and prayer."

The pope also invited religious people to see dialogue as a means to serve society at large.

"By bearing witness to those moral truths which they hold in common with all men and women of good will, religious groups will exert a positive influence on the wider culture and inspire neighbors, co-workers and fellow citizens to join in the task of strengthening the ties of solidarity," the pope said.

He noted the positive impact religious communities make on society. For example, he said, faith-based schools help "young people learn to respect the beliefs and practices of others," which enhances civic life.

Meanwhile, the pope emphasized the protection of religious freedom.

"Protecting religious freedom within the rule of law does not guarantee that peoples -- particularly minorities -- will be spared from unjust forms of discrimination and prejudice," the pope said. "This requires constant effort on the part of all members of society to ensure that citizens are afforded the opportunity to practice their faith and to



3211 4th Street, N.E., Washington DC 20017-1194 | (202) 541-3000 © USCCB. All rights reserved.

Web site made possible
through donations to the
[Catholic Communication Campaign](#).

Throughout this website, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) provides links to other websites solely for the user's convenience. USCCB assumes no responsibility for these websites, their content, or their sponsoring organizations.