

# Religions for Peace

## **The World Council of Churches 11th Assembly, 2022: “Christ’s love moves the world to reconciliation and unity”**

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Greetings of peace, As-Salaam-Alaikum, shalom, every single word of Peace be upon you and upon everyone here, and those who are not with us, but in our minds and hearts.

Your Eminences, your Excellencies,

Friends, Family, Brothers and Sisters in faith,

Professor Iaoan Sauca,

Thank you very much for this distinguished, and great honor, and privilege, to be able to be here today, to say a few words of Greetings to this August assembly.

I worked in the United Nations for almost 20 years. Every year the political leaders of the world would come together during the United Nations General Assembly. And it’s a very awe-inspiring moment to look around the room, and see a room full of prime ministers and presidents and all other very important political figures.

Yet, to be very honest with you, this assembly, and this room, is far more inspiring and far more meaningful.

I understand the power of politics. I understand the responsibility of politicians particularly when and where they are elected by their people. And it is a burden, a big burden, as it is a very serious responsibility to deliver on the mission of a government to protect its citizens and the people living within its territories.

We still wonder how well governments look after the people living within their territories, but we presumably do not wonder as much, about citizens in a democratically elected context.

The challenge, however, is factually ar greater for faith leaders, because it is a spiritual, a moral, a political, an emotional, a mental, and a very big set of practical and interconnected challenges.

That is why I firmly believe that the power of faith leaders, far, far exceeds the power of political leaders.

But that power also carries enormous responsibilities. I am not saying anything new to you, but I do wish to make a plea. And if I had not been so short I would have gone to my knees as I make this plea. But if I get on my knees now, some of you will not see me. So, please pretend I am on my knees, as I try to make this plea.

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And the plea is this: Was Christ's love meant only for people of the Christian faith? And if Christ's love is meant for all of humanity, what would that mean, practically, for each of us in this room?

Because I believe, very firmly, as a Muslim, that Christ's love was meant for me too.

And if you believe that it was meant for me too, and those like me, and many others of who do not believe in anything at all, but believe in something (all of us believe in something by the way), if you believe that Christ's love was meant to be inclusive of people like me and any others, then I would ask you, in fact I would beg you, to consider that the question is not only how you could overcome the differences within the Christian community (which are significant enough), but that you consider how it would be when we work together from **different faith traditions**... When we work together from different faith institutions - each of which is deeply protective of itself of its mandate, of its territory, of its citizens (it's adherents), consider how much more of Christ's love can be spread - when we work, multireligiously, to serve everyone! Not just one nation, not just one community, not just one religion, but **everyone**...

I believe very firmly that the resurrection of Christ is meant to symbolize that moment when we all come together to serve each other, regardless of our genders, regardless of our nationalities, regardless of our religions, regardless of our nations.

But in order to do so we have a moral and political obligation not to be used by the politicians and the political establishments. We have a moral obligation to be the conscience of the political establishments.

To be the conscience of the political establishments requires us to look within first, to make sure that when we point a finger at one another, or at the political establishment, we are also looking inwards to see where we ourselves may be replicating the same distancing, exclusion, superiority, that sometimes we claim the political establishments to.

When and where do we not listen to one and other?

Where do we fail to be together?

Where do we fail to honor the integrity of the humanness of one another?

Our political establishment today, everywhere in the world, has proved it cannot serve the needs of everyone. It has been proven over and over and over again.

Furthermore, our political establishments today, regardless of north, south, east, west, democratic or not, have also proven that war is an easier option. And that is where your role as faith leaders comes in, to uphold the consciousness that **war is not an option**.

Because you can **demonstrate**, not only through the words - though heaven knows the word is powerful because that is how we see God, we know God's presence through the word - but you can **demonstrate through the actions of standing together in solidarity regardless of the faith traditions, regardless of the distinctions, you can demonstrate the war is not an option**.

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If every single Christian today, anywhere in the world, whether they happen to be Catholic, or the various and myriad forms of Protestant and Orthodox, were to come together in very firm solidarity and unity... When that day happens, God willing, whether it is under the aegis of the World Council of Churches, or any other aegis, please believe me, it will be a wonderful moment, **but it will not be enough.**

Because our world, our **world** consists of so many more who deserve Christ's love, but who might not come under that Church aegis. But they come under the Church that is the mother of us all, that is the Faith that bring us all together.

We can be believers. Let's act as believers.

Thank you.