

Transcript IFD 2001

Tomáš Halík

Mr. President, Your Royal Highness, Your Holiness, respected participants and guests of the Forum 2000 conference, ladies and gentlemen! This year I would like to inaugurate our quiet evening gathering with a few words from the Islamic tradition, a verse from the Koran: If God had pleased He would have made you a single people, but that He might try you in what He gave you, therefore strive with one another to hasten to virtuous deeds; to God is your return, of all of you, so He will let you know that in which you differed (5, 48) To which I would like to add the words of St. Bernard of Clairvaux: Let us deepen that which unites us, overcome that which divides us and preserve that which distinguishes us.

This, our annual joint meditation with representatives of the greatest religions, is not just one of the events that takes place on the fringe of the Forum 2000 conference. It is, in a sense, the "spiritual heart" of the Forum. After much talking, we descend into silence. We get in touch with our roots. Suddenly, we can see all the problems we have been discussing in a wider context. Here we have representatives of five great paths. Upon each of these, for much longer than a thousand years, billions of women and men have sought and found answers to the most basic questions of life. Various answers.

The verse from the Koran that I have quoted tells us that this variety is a gracious gift. It also tells us that it is a test. We are to be tested to see whether we will immediately regard difference as something threatening and respond to it with enmity and violence, hatred and killing, or whether we will be capable not only of tolerating many differences, but of accepting them as gifts that offset our own one-sidedness.

Obviously, we want to disseminate our own values, to offer them to others. But shall we then arrogantly and naively impose these values? Or shall we instead strive through patient dialogue for better knowledge and understanding of the other?

The recent tragedy in Manhattan was one battle in the long-running war between open and closed cultures of mind; the front line of this war cuts across national or religious boundaries. Yes, there are times in history when peaceful dialogue is impossible, when we must use force to defend ourselves and others. Yet even in the midst of war, we must think ahead to a peaceful future. There is no such thing as a holy war; only peace is sacred. In dramatic times, we must be on our guard not to be governed by a spirit of vengeance and under no circumstances to be forced to accept the logic, weapons, and rules of the other side. If everyone were guided solely by the philosophy "an eye for an eye", the whole world would be soon blind. We must not be satisfied with reaction; we need actions, positive action, in a new style, of a new quality. Great things can grow from the tiniest seeds if they are sown deep enough. Representatives of five different religions, stand together, listening to each other with great attention, humility, and respect. Is this not in itself a new beginning, a healing sign of hope? Is this merely a symbolic action? There is no greater power on earth than that of symbols. Symbols are impulses, which set in motion the actions of human beings and nations, for both good and evil. Symbols are keys that release energy resources in everyday life, including politics and economics. They can become sparks which, if they land on the gunpowder of human anxiety, frustration and feelings of injustice, can cause world-shattering explosions. On the other hand, they can mobilize goodwill, courage, heroism, and generosity. Here, in this sacred place, above the graves of Czech kings and saints, we welcome the representatives of world religions, the guardians of exalted values, who have come to encourage us on our path.

I would like to ask Mons. Škarvada, the auxiliary Bishop of Prague to address us on behalf of His Eminence Cardinal Vlk, the Bishop of this cathedral.

Jaroslav Škavarda

Esteemed Mr. President, esteemed ladies, esteemed gentlemen. I take the liberty of welcoming you on behalf of Mr. Cardinal Miloslav Vlk, who is presently in Rome, and also in my own name in our Prague Cathedral. I wish at in this time, when we are terrified by a new type of guileful war, that the genius loci of this temple provide a sense of security and protection, for which so many centuries generations of our ancestors have been praying. It is indeed incomprehensible that the people who invoke the creator of the universe, let themselves be influenced by such fanaticism that they are ready to offer their forces not to the service to life, but to annihilation and death. As a representative of my religious congregation, I should like to quote a brief text, by which the Second Vatican Council, celebrated less than forty years ago, explains the stance of the Catholic Church to the situation and problems which worry us today.

It follows from the ever-closer interdependence, which gradually assumes a worldwide extent, that the general well-being, or the set of conditions of the social life, which allows both groups as well as individuals in social life to attain more complete and easier achievement of their own perfection, becomes ever more general. Any group has to take into consideration the needs and just claims of other groups, and yes, also the general well-being of the entire human family.

Concurrently, the awareness of the high dignity, which pertains to a human person, grows, because it transcends all things and its rights and obligations are general and inviolable. In order for a man to lead a truly human life, it is necessary to make accessible to him all that which he needs, such as food, apparel,

accommodation; the right to freely elect a profession, to establish a family, to education, to work, to good repute, to respect, to proper information, to behave in line with the right commands of his consciousness, to protect his privacy, and to equitable freedom in religious matters. The social order and its progress must therefore be incessantly directed to serve well the human person and not the other way around, as the Lord himself indicated, when he said that Saturday is for man, not man for Saturday. This order must be developed ever more in such a manner that its foundation is truth, that it is built by justice and enlivened by love: in freedom it must find ever more human balance. In order that this may materialize, it is requisite to strive for renewal of the mindset and to carry out extensive social changes. So far the Second Vatican Council (pastoral constitution GAUDIM ET SPES on Church in the Modern World, Article 26).

After the horrific terrorist attacks in New York and Washington, the whole world has been praying for peace and quietude. On October 11th, also in front of the Roman Cathedral of the Most Sainly Savior in Lateran, a service similar to this service of ours was held with the participation of different world religions. Allow me therefore to end my speech with the prayer from the Roman Missal with which the Catholic Church prays from peace:

Almighty and merciful God, you frustrate wars and humble the hubris of the mighty; have mercy upon us. Divert from us the huge suffering, which is brought by a war and free us from all the strife and confusion, so that all the people can freely serve. We pray for this through Christ, our Lord. Amen

Tomáš Halík

Representative of the most ancient tradition, Hinduism, the honorable Om Prakash Sharma, President of the National Council of Hindu Temples in United Kingdom.

Om Prakash Sharma

VEDIC HYMNS

May God betide all people. May the sovereign rule the earth following the righteous path. May all beings ever attain what is good. May the worlds be prosperous and happy.

O citizen: Live in harmony and concord with each other. Be organized and cooperative. Speak with one voice and make your resolutions with one mind. As our ancient saints and seers, leaders and preceptors, have performed their duties righteously, similarly may you not falter in executing your duties.

O mankind! Let the object of your thought be the same, the place of your assembly ought to be common, your mind should be of one accord and let your hearts be united together. God initiate you in common inspired hymn and provide all of you with common objects for accepting and offering.

O mankind! Let your object of life be one and the same. Let your hearts be equal (in feeling) and let your minds be united together so that there may be an excellent common status of life for all.

O Supreme Spirit! Lead us from untruth to truth! From darkness to light! From death to immortal bliss!

There be peace in the heavenly regions, there be peace in the atmosphere, there be peace on the earth, there be coolness in the waters; the medicinal herbs be healing, the plants be peace giving; there be peace in the celestial objects and perfection in eternal knowledge, everything in the universe be peaceful and peace may pervade everywhere. May that peace come to all of us.

May all be happy!

May all be free of disease!

May all realize what is good!

May none be subject to misery!

Tomáš Halík

As in all previous years Rabbi Albert Friedlander, Dean of the Leo Baeck College in London will now address our gathering with his kind wisdom on behalf of Jewish community.

Albert Friedlander

A Meditation on The Book of Ecclesiastes

My dear friends: Again, in our fifth year, we turn to our roots, to the sacred texts in the original language. Somehow, in these dark days of turmoil and pain, they address our most basic needs; they comfort us. Ecclesiastes, the Biblical Preacher, describes a questing humanity caught in the web of time:

DOR HOLECH V'DOR BA, V'HA-ARETZ L'OLAM O-MEDET

One generation goes, and another generation comes, But the Earth abides forever.

My teacher Leo Baeck, in the darkest nights of the KZ, rephrased this: One world goes, and another world comes, But the generations abide forever. We have faith in this chain of humanity, in each other; we find the human dimension and the Divine within us as a fashioning of a future, even as worlds around us collide and crumble into dust. We still move through dimensions of time, as Ecclesiastes teaches: LA KOL ZMAN, V'ET L'CHOL CHEFETZ TACHAD HA-SHAMAYIM: ET LALEDDED, V'ET LAMUT, ET LA-TAAT. V'ET LAAKOR NATU'AH. ET LAHAROG, V'ET LIRPOH; ET LIFROTZ, V'ET LIVNOT....

To everything there is a season,

And a time to every purpose under the heaven.

A time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant,
And a time to pluck up that which is planted;
A time to break down, and a time to build up;
A time to weep, and a time to laugh;
A time to mourn, and a time to dance.
A time to cast away stones, and a time to gather stones.
A time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing.
A time to seek, and a time to lose;
A time to keep, and a time to cast away.
A time to rend, and a time to sew;
A time to keep silent, and a time to speak;
A time to love, and a time to hate;
A time for war, and a time for peace.

ET MILCHAMA, V'ET SHALOM

Must we not search for peace these days? And are we not here to affirm the Biblical teachings which address all of us? Surely, this is the time to love our neighbor, a time to swallow up our grievances, to keep silent and to maintain the roads upon which we can walk together. Has the time for peace moved beyond us? Riane Eisler once spoke here of a cultural transformation theory, a "partnership model or way of life". Have we waited too long for this? Science and diplomacy have failed us. Human dignity and human responsibility have withered away, and the world has been poisoned. Yet there is still the pathway of prayer which we walk together on this night. And: L'CHOL Z'MAN. To everything there is a season ...

I have heard Elie Wiesel retell a Rabbi Nachman story: There was once a mountain land, cut off from all others, where a people and their wise king lived simply, but contentedly. Then, the king's advisor came with tragic news: Somehow, the produce of their fields had become poisoned — all who would eat it would go mad, but no other food existed! The king thought in silence and then said: "You are my wisest counselor. It will be your task to starve yourself, to eat so little that you will remain sane. And then, each day, you must go through the land and cry out to every one: "Remember that you are mad. Remember that you are mad." That is what we, as the professors of faith, must cry out to everyone around us when we leave this forum: "Remember that you are mad. Remember that you are mad." And God, in loving kindness, will sustain us and bring the world back to song and to laughter, to dance and to build, to give life and to create peace. Amen.

Tomáš Halík

It is my great pleasure to welcome the first female voice in the short history of our gathering: Jana Šilerová, the Bishop on the Czechoslovak Hussite Church.

Jana Šilerová

The Letter of Paul to the Galatians, chapters 5 and 6:

For you were called to freedom, brethren; only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love, be servants of one another. For the whole law is fulfilled in one word, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself'. But if you bite and devour one another, take heed that you are not consumed by one another. But I say, walk by the Spirit, and do not gratify the desires of the flesh. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such there is no law. If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit. Let us have no self-conceit, no provocation of one another, no envy of one another. Do not be deceived; God is not mocked, for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. For he who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption; but he who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life. And let us not grow weary in well-doing, for in due season we shall reap, if we do not lose heart. A text from the Christian ecumenical tradition: Romano Guardini, *The End of the Modern Times*: Christian conduct will have to gain extraordinary trust and courage. Only thus will faith withstand danger. In the relationship with God, a significantly strong component will be obedience. It will be unconditional obedience, based on the fact that these are the last things, which cannot be performed otherwise but in obedience. Not because man is "heteronymous", but because God is absolute and holy. It is, therefore, entirely non-liberal-thinking aiming unreservedly at the unreserved, but — and in this it is different from all forms of violence — it does so without restraint. This unreservedness hence does not mean that man has submitted to the physical and mental force of a command, but that he has assumed the Divine demands into his own conduct in a manner befitting their supremacy. In man, however, this requires a mature judgement and the possibility of making free decisions. The stronger the anonymous forces, the more resolute faith must be in conquering the world by making relative the freedom of man, by harmonizing the donated freedom of man with the creative freedom of God. And all this with trust in what God is doing. It is strange what unimagined possibilities are opening up in the midst of the growing pressures of the world: This union of the absolute and of the personal element of unconditionality and freedom will enable the believer to stand and find his bearings even though there might be no stable and protected place. Isolation in faith would be horrible. Love would disappear from the general thinking of the

world. People would not be capable of love and would not understand it. Its worth will be greater if it unites one lonely person with another; this will be the courage of the heart, growing directly from the love of God, as revealed in Jesus Christ. This love will be experienced in quite a new manner in its supremacy and independence of the world and in the secret of its last "why?". Maybe it will gain such depth of warmth and mutual understanding as has never been experienced before. There will perhaps be in it something that is included in the last words of Jesus on providence: that around the man who seeks first the kingdom of God everything will change. Amen

Tomáš Halík

The second Christian representative is Orthodox Bishop Simeon of Olomouc and Brno, Moravia.

Bishop Simeon

Dear Mr. President, Your Royal Highness, sisters and brothers, let me greet you with a Christmas song of angels and read you excerpts from several psalms with which the Orthodox Church starts its morning services.

PSALM 3

A Psalm of David, when he fled from Absalom, his son

2 Many there be which say of my soul, There is no help for him in God, Se'lah.

3 But thou, O Lord, art a shield for me; my glory, and the lifter up of mine head.

4 I cried unto the Lord with my voice, and he heard me out of his holy hill, Se'lah.

5 I laid me down and slept; I awaked; for the Lord sustained me.

PSALM 38

A Psalm of David, to bring to remembrance

2 For thine arrows stick fast in me, and thy hand presseth me sore.

3 There is no soundness in my flesh because of thine anger; neither is there any rest in my bones because of my sin.

4 For mine iniquities are gone over mine head; as a heavy burden they are too heavy for me.

5 My wounds stink and are corrupt because of my foolishness.

10 My heart panteth, my strength faileth me: As for the light of mine eyes, it also is gone from me.

11 My lovers and my friends stand aloof from my sore; and my kinsmen stand afar off.

12 They also that seek after my life lay snares for me: And they that seek my hurt speak mischievous things, and imagine deceits all the day long.

13 But I, as a deaf man, heard not; and I was as a dumb man that openeth not his mouth.

14 Thus I was as a man that heareth not, and in whose mouth are no reproofs.

15 For in thee, O LORD, do I hope: thou wilt hear, O Lord my God.

16 For I said, hear me, lest otherwise they should rejoice over me: When my foot slippeth, they magnify themselves against me.

PSALM 63

A Psalm of David, when he was in the wilderness of Judah

2 To see thy power and thy glory, so as I have seen thee in the sanctuary.

3 Because thy loving kindness is better than life, my lips shall praise thee.

4 Thus will I bless thee while I live: I will lift up my hands in thy name.

7 Because thou hast been my help, therefore in the shadow of thy wings will I rejoice.

8 My soul followeth hard after thee: Thy right hand upholdeth me.

9 But those that seek my soul, to destroy it, shall go into the lower parts of the Earth.

PSALM 88

A Song or Psalm for the sons of Korab, to the chief Musician upon Mahalath Leannoth. Maschil of Heman the Ezrahite

2 Let my prayer come before thee: Incline thine ear unto my cry;

3 For my soul is full of troubles: And my life draweth nigh unto the grave.

10 Wilt thou shew wonders to the dead? Shall the dead arise and praise thee? Se'lah.

11 Shall thy loving kindness be declared in the grave? Or thy faithfulness in destruction?

12 Shall thy wonders be known in the dark? And thy righteousness in the land of forgetfulness?

13 But unto thee have I cried, O Lord; and in the morning shall my prayer prevent thee.

14 Lord, why castest thou off my soul? Why hidest thou thy face from me?

PSALM 103

A Psalm of David

1 Bless the Lord, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless his holy name.

2 Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits:

3 Who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases;

4 Who redeemeth thy life from destruction; who crowneth thee with loving kindness and tender mercies;

5 Who satisfieth thy mouth with good things; so that thy youth is renewed like the eagle's.

6 The Lord executeth righteousness and judgement for all that are oppressed.

7 He made known his ways unto Moses, his acts unto the children of Israel.
8 The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy.
9 He will not always chide: Neither will he keep his anger forever.
10 He hath not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities.
11 For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy toward them that fear him.
12 As far as the East is from the West, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us.
13 Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him.
14 For he knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust.
15 As for man, his days are as grass: as a flower of the field, so he flourisheth.
16 For the wind passeth over it, and it is gone; and the place thereof shall know it no more.
17 But the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children's children;
18 To such as keep his covenant, and to those that remember his commandments to do them.

PSALM 143

A Psalm of David

7 Hear me speedily, O Lord: my spirit faileth: hide not thy face from me, lest I be like unto them that go down into the pit.
8 Cause me to hear thy loving kindness in the morning; for in thee do I trust: Cause me to know the way wherein I should walk; for I lift up my soul unto thee.
9 Deliver me, O Lord, from mine enemies; I flee unto thee to hide me.
10 Teach me to do thy will; for thou art my God: thy spirit is good; lead me into the land of uprightness.
11 Quicken me, O Lord, for thy name's sake: For thy righteousness sake bring my soul out of trouble.
12 And of thy mercy cut off mine enemies, and destroy all them that afflict my soul: for I am thy servant.
Amen.

Tomáš Halík

His Eminency Abbas Mohajeraani, officiating in London, Muslim thinker and writer, will address us on behalf of the Muslim community.

Sheikh Abbas Mohajerani

An-Nisá 4 or The Women Súrat An-Nisá, Ayat 1-2

In the name of Allah, Most Gracious Most Merciful

S1. O Mankind! Fear Your Guardian Lord,

Who created you

From a single person,

Created, out of it,

His mate, and from them twain Scattered (like seeds)

Countless men and women;

Fear Allah, through Whom Ye demand your mutual (rights),

And be heedful of the wombs (that bore you): for Allah ever watches over you.

S4. A 55-59

58.

Allah doth command you

To render back your Trusts

To those to whom they are due;

And when ye judge

Between people

That ye judge with justice;

Verily how excellent

Is the teaching which He giveth you!

For Allah is He who heareth

And seeth all things.

S5 A6-8

8. O ye who believe!

Stand out firmly

For Allah as witnesses

To fair dealing, and let not

That hatred of others

To make you swerve

To wrong or depart from Justice. Be just: that is

Next to Piety: and fear Allah.

For Allah is well-acquainted

With all that you do.

S16 a90-92

Allah commands justice, the doing
Of good, and giving to kith
and kin, and He forbids
All indecent deeds, and evil
And rebellion: He instructs you,
That ye may receive admonition.

S2 A 134-137

136. Say ye: We believe
In Allah, and the revelation
Given to us, and to Abraham,
Ismail, Isaac, Jacob,
And the Tribes, and that given
To Moses and Jesus, and that given
To (all) Prophets from their Lord:
We make no difference
Between one and another of them:
And we submit to Allah.

S2. A 284-286

285.

The Messenger believeth
In what hath been revealed
To him from his Lord,
As do the men of faith,
Each one (of them) believeth
In Allah, His angels,
His books, and His Messengers.
We make no distinction (they say)
Between one and another
Of his Messengers. And they say:
We hear and we obey:
(We seek) Thy forgiveness,
Our Lord, and to Thee
Is the end of all journeys.
8. O Lord! (they say), Let not our hearts deviate
Now after Thou hast guided us,
But grant us mercy
From Thee: For Thou art the Grantor
Of bounties without measure
9. Our Lord! Thou art He
That will gather mankind
Together against a Day about which
There is no doubt; for Allah never fails his promise.

Tomáš Halík

From the depths of the Buddha's noble wisdom we will be pleased to hear Master Kósen Nishiyama.

Kósen Nishiyama

When all things are the dharma, there is enlightenment, illusion, practice, life, death, Buddhas and sentient beings. When all things are seen not to have any substance, there is no illusion or enlightenment, no Buddhas or sentient beings, no birth or destruction.

Cosmic mantra

No bo agya sha gyarabaya on ari kyamari bor sowaka.

Prayer

Negawa ku wa kono kudo ku wo motte, amaneku issai ni oyobo shi, warera to shujo to minna tomo ni,
Butsudo wo jozen koto wo.

With these merits, we wish these merits to go all over the world and we — all of us should continue our Buddhist practice.

Message from his holiness the Dalai Lama

Although I am unable to be physically present at this Multireligious Assembly at St. Vitus Cathedral I am very much in spirit with you today. I deeply regret not being able to visit Prague at this time.

I have always believed that all the major world religions need to be equally respected and that each in their

own way contributes tremendously towards a better human society. Our methods may differ but the objectives of transforming a person into a better human being are achieved by all the different world faiths. Moreover, I believe that those of us who profess to follow a religious tradition must do so seriously and make the practice of our traditions part of our lives. I also strongly feel that religious persons have a special responsibility in contributing to the promotion of basic human values such as compassion, honesty, tolerance, forgiveness and self-discipline, which I usually refer to as secular ethics.

It is extremely unfortunate when a religion is used as another instrument for more division between humanity and becomes a source of conflict. The world we live in is very interdependent. Relations with our neighbors and other nations are imperative to our survival. Under such circumstances, the spirit of pluralism, including interreligious understanding and the spirit of harmony, is essential. It is therefore of the utmost importance that there is trust, respect and understanding amongst the different religious traditions. When we have so many other problems in the world, it is the greatest tragedy to see interreligious disharmony erupting into violence and causing conflicts amongst various communities. I am therefore particularly happy that this gathering here in St. Vitus Cathedral is taking place during the concluding conference of the Forum 2000. I would like to extend my best wishes and prayers to all of you gathered here today.

In conclusion, I would like to take this opportunity to pray together with you both for the people who have been killed and are suffering as a result of the recent terrorist attacks in the United States and for the people of Afghanistan.

Tomáš Halík

Ladies and gentlemen, now I am honored to invite Mr. Václav Havel, President of the Czech Republic, to share with us his message which he sent tonight to the highest representatives of five main world religions.

Václav Havel

Recently, the world was shaken by the cruel terrorist attacks on New York and Washington. This event was one of many symptoms of the contempt for life, basic human rights and the ethics of human coexistence. This contempt is all the more dangerous because of the high level of technology that is now available. Led by the voice of my own conscience, I have decided, together with my friends and colleagues, who have been organizing the Forum 2000 conference for a number of years, to address you, the leading representatives of the world's major religions, who are present at this multireligious meditation in the Prague Cathedral, as well as all others who are not present, and in the light of the recent dreadful events, to urge you to consider the possibility of intensifying your cooperation.

We are addressing you from the Czech Lands, whose past is marked by brutal acts of violence carried out in the name of religion. We are addressing you at a moment when, for the fifth time, thinkers, scientists, artists and cultural representatives from all over the world have gathered in our Forum to discuss humanity's hopes, fears and prospects, as well as the threats facing it at the beginning of the new millennium.

The sacred writings and venerable traditions of all the world's major religions are great sources of inspiration and moral courage, which our world desperately needs — today more than at any time in the past. Statesmen, politicians and other public figures cannot completely fulfill their responsibility for the maintenance of peace, prosperity and respect for human rights in their countries if they drift away from the spiritual roots of their cultures, which you represent. It is our deep conviction that one of the basic keys to healing this sick world is the cultivation of a humble openness to all that the mind of contemporary humanity can draw from those roots.

This world is linked together in thousands of ways into one global, though enormously diversified, civilization, and it will be even more interlinked in the future. The recent events in the USA have been a drastic reminder of how evil is being globalized. Crime, violence, fanaticism, arrogance, selfishness as well as a lack of consideration for people, nations and nature is spreading throughout the world with the aid of the latest science and technology.

For this reason I believe that in the interest of a "globalization of good". The time has come for people who feel a responsibility for the future of humankind on this planet. We believe that the spiritual inspiration and moral strength for such an alliance should spring from the heart of the world's religions. Your work is therefore of enormous and unique importance. We urge you to use all your authority in favor of the common struggle against everything that threatens human dignity and to confront together all attempts to veil hatred and violence with religious arguments or to misinterpret holy teachings, symbols and traditions to justify the expression of hatred and violence. Please continue in all your efforts towards deeper mutual understanding and dialogue among world religions, as well as towards a dialogue between spiritual authorities and those who shape our world in the areas of politics, economics and science. Please support all those who are seeking what is common to the various religious traditions, and who assert the importance of humility, love of one's neighbor, and respect for the natural and cosmic order.

We believe the time has come to create a kind of "Grand Spiritual Coalition", which would enhance the existing endeavors at the cooperation of the world's religions, and their joint efforts to confront together the

forces of destruction in the name of respect for life and human dignity, brotherhood, the equality of nations and a just world order, as well as concern for the interests of future generations. The task of such a "spiritual coalition" would be to seek and promote the basic ethical values shared by people of goodwill everywhere, and in the spirit of those values to influence the life of the world community. Thank you for your attention.

Tomáš Halík

Thank you Mr. President. Let us now, towards the end, make a symbolic gesture that has already become tradition at these gatherings. Representatives of different religions, cultures and nations will light a candle. May these candles become a sign of hope that spirit can overcome darkness, that love will overcome indolence and hatred. May this be a message to all dark and painful corners of our world. Message of hope and reconciliation. May the light we lit tonight never die. May it shine forever.