



FCAPP 2026 International Conference

Friday 29th May 2026

New Synod Hall, Vatican City

A Fragmented World in Search of Spirituality: Freedom and Pluralism from Within the Social Doctrine of the Church

PS 2. Peacebuilding in Europe: Political Integration as a Way to Peace

***Peacebuilding and Post Conflict Reconciliation Practical Experience and
Implications for Integration of Migrants and Interreligious Dialogue***

Fr. James Channan OP

Ladies and gentlemen,

1. First of all, I am very grateful to Prof. Paolo Garonna, Chairperson, Centesimus Annus Pro Pontifice Foundation and Prof. Oliver Galea, Secretary General of FCAPP for inviting me to this 2026 General Assembly and International Conference. I also express my sincere gratitude to Mr. Christophe Deage, and also to Sr Nathalie who are conducting this session. I feel very honored that you have invited me to participate and share my thoughts in this extraordinary international conference!

2. Asia is home to more than 4.86 billion people, representing nearly 60% of the world's population. This immense religious, cultural, and ethnic diversity presents both challenges and opportunities for peaceful coexistence, intercultural dialogue, and social harmony. Church remains a tiny religious minority in Asia. It is about 8 %, with the population of 415 million Christians. It is very important and urgent to share Social Doctrine of the Catholic Church in Asia with religious pluralism for good governance and responsible leadership.

3. The Catholic Social Teachings which were very firmly laid by Pope Leo XIII in *Rerum Novarum*, in 1891 defended the dignity of workers, the right to just wages, and the moral responsibility of economic systems.

4. A century later in 1991, Saint Pope John Paul II reaffirmed in *Centesimus Annus* that authentic development must always place the human person at the center of political, social, and economic life.



5. The Church teaches that economic progress without moral responsibility cannot produce authentic human development. And that it is of primary importance to respect people of all religions and promote dialogue among religions.

6. In Asia, religious pluralism is not merely a theory; it is a lived reality experienced daily by millions of people belonging to different religions. Many times, tensions, persecutions and discrimination are also experienced, unfortunately on account of religion and belief. There are serious issues of religious freedom, human dignity, just wages and peaceful living.

7. The Second Vatican Council, particularly *Nostra Aetate*, encouraged sincere dialogue and collaboration with followers of other religions, recognizing the presence of truth, spiritual values, and moral wisdom indifferent religious traditions. I remember that while addressing the audience at the Vatican on 28th of October, 2025 to celebrate 60th anniversary of *Nostra Aetate*, H.H. Pope Leo XIV said, “*Nostra Aetate*, opened our eyes to a simple yet profound principle: dialogue is not a tactic or a tool, but it’s a way of life – a journey of the heart that transforms every one involved, the one who listens and the one who speaks.”

Saint John Paul II observed in *Ecclesia in Asia*, “Asia is the continent where humanity’s religious sense is particularly strong.”

THE CHURCH IN PAKISTAN

9. I come from Pakistan – a country which is characterized by religious diversity, cultural richness, and important social challenges.

10. In Pakistan with the population of over 230 million has 96 % of Muslims and Christians are only 3.3 million and they form 1.37% of the total population. Christianity is the 3rd largest religion in Pakistan. Being a religious minority, many times we are faced with discrimination and persecutions on account of our religion. The illiteracy rate among Christians in Pakistan is extremely high which is between 65% to 80 %. Most of the Christians do not know about the encyclicals and social teachings of the Church.

11. However, in spite such realities and circumstances, the Catholic Church in Pakistan is rendering great services to bring a positive change in the society, through establishment of the educational institutions, vocational training centers, pastoral centers, catechetical centers, seminars and conferences on human rights, human dignity and equal citizenship as well as religious freedom and practice of religions.

12. In Pakistan we as Christian are committed to promote interfaith and especially Christian-Muslim dialogue. For this purpose, National Catholic Commission for Interreligious Dialogue and Ecumenism was established by the Catholic Bishops Conference of Pakistan in 1885. I was its first Executive Secretary for 17 years.



We organized seminars and conferences throughout the country and also observed national and international events such as International Day of Peace and international Women's Day and celebrated religious festivals together.

13. The Dominican Order has been involved in the mission of interfaith and Christian-Muslim dialogue since several decades. The Ibn-e-Mariam, Dominican Order, Pakistan has established Peace Center in Lahore, which was inaugurated by His Eminence, Cardinal Jean-Louis Tauran on 28th of November, 2010. I am the Director of this Peace Center. In this center we organize programs and seminars throughout the year to promote interfaith dialogue, peace and harmony. We organize Christian faith formation programs for the families, especially youth. There is a need to do much more work and activities to let the people know about the social doctrines of the Catholic Church through seminars, conferences and publication of articles and books. And also, to organize awareness programs and activities along with Muslims and believers of other religions. This can be done, provided, we have more financial support and resources.

14. In Pakistan we see that our Government is also very committed in promoting interreligious dialogue as it has established Interfaith Harmony Commission at the federal level as well at the level of all 4 Provinces. We see that interfaith and Christian-Muslim dialogue is becoming very common. However, it is very important to make it more common at all levels especially at grass root level, since many times problems arises from there. The better and bright future of Pakistan depends of how people of different religions live peacefully and that there is no discrimination against anyone on the basis of caste, creed or religion.

15. The Gospel calls us to become peacemakers, as expressed in the Holy Gospel according to Saint Matthew: "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called children of God" (Mt 5:9)

16. The Christians of Pakistan are people of hope. We never give up on doing good and spreading the message of peace, human dignity, justice taught by our Saviour Lord Jesus Christ.

Thank you very much!