

SHORT WRITINGS FROM TAIZÉ

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Brother Johannes

Interreligious Dialogue

“Interreligious dialogue” may sound like something specialists do, but it is not. It is not reserved for intellectuals and it is not complicated. Any one with goodwill can be involved in it. It may even be that any one who has a religious belief and wants the good of all really should be involved in it in one way or another.

At the same time, interreligious dialogue is not a simple thing. We need only to make a brief analysis of the two words to sense its complexity.

Dialogue means speaking and listening one to another, receiving and giving, without knowing where the talk will lead. Most know by experience that this is difficult. What is meant to be or begins as dialogue often turns into arguments, parallel monologues or

attempts to convince one another about the correctness of one's own views.

For the dialogue to be *interreligious* the participants also quite obviously need to confess different religions. You cannot be neutral. Non-believers can only talk about religion as a human phenomenon. Such a talk has a value in itself as sociological or psychological analysis, but it has nothing to do with dialogue. Nor can you have the same religion. Sometimes people think that to have a dialogue between Protestant and Orthodox Christians and to have a dialogue between Buddhists and Christians is more or less the same thing. This is a confusion of terms. Talk between Christians of different traditions is called ecumenism. It may share the spirit of the interreligious dialogue, but it is not the same thing.

So, there are always at least two different religions involved in interreligious dialogue, and we need to confess the religion we represent. This may seem frightening to begin with – “I must believe, but I am not sure I do, can I then participate in the dialogue?” Unless you are quite sure you do not believe, yes.

Religion in itself is quite a complex matter. It is many things in one – metaphysical faith, but also intellectual belief, cultural expression and framework of historical identity, a channel for strong emotions and the source of much of the hidden structure of our thinking. In this context, nobody is neutral. An Indian materialist will react (and often think) like a Hindu, whereas a Western atheist shares many impulses and gut feelings with Christians. Intellectually we may take our distance, but culturally we often cannot.

To separate the cultural, ethical and political debate from the religious debate within our multicultural societies can be very difficult. It is equally difficult to separate the different strands of emotions, cultural belonging, habit and faith within ourselves. But perhaps it is not really necessary to begin with. There will always be some doubt and some hesitation in us and clarity grows only if we make a commitment, however little we may feel that we understand. Interreligious dialogue, after all, is something that happens between people who believe or want to believe.

Some, however, will object at this point and say that this is not realistic. To them the very concept of interreligious dialogue seems a contradiction in terms. For those who believe that Christ saves the one who believes in him and non-believers perish, or who are convinced that the only way to freedom is the noble path of Buddha, or have no doubt about the fate that awaits those who neglect the final word given by God in the Koran, entering into a dialogue makes no sense.

Such an attitude has often been predominant. But it is not right that interreligious dialogue is something that can be done only on the condition that we abandon all claims to know the truth. Believers in times past did not only fight and try to convert each other, as we often tend to believe. Already in the Middle Ages there were people who reflected on the modalities of a true dialogue with believers of other traditions, while being fully convinced of the truth of their own faith.¹ Even

¹ One remarkable example is Raymond Lulle, a Catalan Christian (1232-1315). He wrote a book called *The Book of the Gentile and the Three Sages*, in which the sages, one Jew,

though the history of religion, unfortunately, is full of conflict and competition, there has always existed an alternative, which may seem paradoxical, but nevertheless is an option. We will give a glimpse of this option in the following pages, adding, at the end of each chapter, a practical example of dialogue.

Our perspective is Christian, and, though we remain constantly aware of the Eastern religions, especially Buddhism and Hinduism, our focus will be on dialogue with Muslims. Dialogue can be likened to three rings that are interlocked and lead one to the other. It inevitably involves thoughts and words; but it is not only about thoughts and words, it is also about actions; yet it is not only about thoughts, words and actions, but also about contemplation and silence; and it is nothing if it does not include all of these at one stage or another.

First Ring: Dialogue of Life

The first image that rises to our minds when we hear about interreligious dialogue is likely to be a number of scholars gathered around a table, discussing points of doctrine. If we only have this image, we will get a distorted view of what interreligious dialogue is. Let's exchange it

one Christian and one Muslim, discuss belief in God with an existentially distraught pagan. They expose their respective beliefs one after the other and take leave of the pagan without demanding which religion he will decide to adhere to, continuing their amicable discussion about truth among themselves.

for another one, for instance the image of a Muslim man pushing a paralysed Christian woman in a wheelchair. This is an image of the dialogue of life.

Whatever our religion, we live on the same earth and have the same basic needs. Every one needs food, a peaceful environment, love and appreciation – Christians, Buddhists, Muslims and Hindus alike. There is very little difference between the immediate needs of an oppressed and hungry Muslim and those of an oppressed and hungry Buddhist. All the major religions of the world give great importance to the service of the weak and oppressed. Within Islam, to speak only of that religion, there exists a strong passion for justice and equality. The first Muslims experienced Islam as a vast brotherhood. A simple, even ascetical life was encouraged, also among the leaders. It may not have lasted very long, but the ideal of simplicity of life, economic justice and solidarity among the believers before God has remained a strong undercurrent in Islam.

For a Christian, this recalls a constant theme of the Old Testament: the call to take care of widows and orphans, give alms, and remember the poor in the land (Exodus 23:6; Deuteronomy 15:7-10; Isaiah 58:6-9...). It is very prominent in the Bible and it certainly plays a great role in the teachings of Jesus (Luke 11:41; Matthew 19:21). This emphasis on compassion towards other people is particularly strong in Islam, Judaism and Christianity, but it also has a place of honour within Buddhism and exists in Hinduism.

So, it is quite possible to remain true to one's own

religion and serve people in need with members of other religions. The question of whether the others are “right” or “wrong” in their beliefs is left out of it, because they are “right” in their deeds.

So many things can be done together and in good religious conscience. There are so many people who suffer, nearby or far away, in small, everyday ways or in the cataclysms of history and politics. Close at hand, we have the social problems of our own societies; far away we have the victims of persecutions and failed states and all the poor in the Third World. And wherever we are, we find people who are marginalized, disabled, old, alone or abandoned; abused women, uncared-for children, drug addicts, dysfunctional families, poor people.

Few things are more urgently needed right now than to establish a basic, human trust among followers of different religions. This can be done by reaching out beyond often heavily loaded ideas, words and convictions and simply doing what all agree is good and urgent. There is an amazing degree of consensus on what this is, as any one who has tried the dialogue of life can tell.

That is not to say that it is without difficulties. Quite apart from the human and logistical complications arising from any kind of work together, there are questions of symbols and attitudes, dress codes, greetings and prayer life. Symbolic gestures of appreciation and honour can be immensely important, but there is a balance to be kept: both sides must give and take. Especially in the beginning there will be apprehen-

sions and fear of being drawn into something that is not “right”.

Mutual trust is created by mutual actions over time. Dialogue of life may mean that we do not talk religion, but it certainly does not mean that we try to ignore religion or make it into a private matter. The moment we do so, it has ceased to be a dialogue and retreated into social action.

For it to have the value of dialogue, each one will participate in the work on the basis of his or her beliefs. Each one should feel that, by this kind of work, he or she is actually realizing something of the core of the faith he or she confesses. It strengthens that faith and deepens it, not at the cost of other faiths, but together with them.

A practical example of the dialogue of life can be found in Mymensingh. We, a few Brothers of the Taizé Community, have been living in this Bangladeshi town for many years. Bangladesh is a predominantly Muslim country, with a sizeable Hindu population and a tiny percentage of Christians and Buddhists. Though there is a strong tradition of tolerance in Bengali culture, people of different communities still do not often mix. Our work with very poor, disabled people has in this context proved to be a remarkable meeting-point.

Some ten years ago, we set up a small Community Centre for the disabled. The staff is Muslim, Christian and Hindu. They regularly meet to share about their work, how it affects them and changes the way they look at other people. Religion is almost never discussed, but there is a strong feeling among all that what

they do has a spiritual dimension. At the same time their work is eminently practical, even physical: helping people to walk or sit up after a paralyzing accident, finding ways to earn a living for disabled individuals, visiting homes and trying out assistive devices.

Similarly, in another program, the parents of mentally disabled children gather once a month to share their sufferings and joys with one another. This gathering took place for many years in our garden, behind the chapel. Nearly all participants are Muslims, most of them living in slums in the town, leading very hard lives. Their faith is important in their lives and many mothers come veiled, though they usually unveil themselves once arrived: they feel at home here. The sharing of burdens and joys brings them closer to each other. The assistants to whom they entrust their children during the sharing are often Christian; several of them belong to ethnic minority groups.

Trust has grown between these people and they are willing to listen to each other when they share about all that is difficult in life as well as the moments of happiness. There are not many who fail to sense the spiritual impact of this, though they often cannot find words to express it. They will say: “I pray for you”, and ask you to do the same. And they will not think much about whether you are a Christian or a Hindu or a Muslim.

By putting into practice the ideal of service of the poor and struggling enshrined in their traditions, believers of different religions of the world can strive

together towards establishing peace – in all its many dimensions – instead of adding to the conflicts that tear humanity apart. The dialogue of life is a vital part of any meaningful dialogue. It also functions as an important counterweight to theoretical thinking, because it is first and foremost concerned with alleviating suffering and healing wounds, not with correctness of thought.

Second Ring: Dialogue of Thoughts

We can return to the image of the scholars now, but let's change it slightly: the people around the table are not scholars, but friends – ordinary people, like most of us are, with an ordinary knowledge of religious matters. Let's say that these friends have come back from some action together – perhaps from a centre for disabled people or a shelter for the homeless. They sit down for a cup of tea – some Muslims, some Christians. This may be the moment to do something deeply human: explaining to themselves and to others exactly what they are doing and why, and how it connects with their beliefs.

Here the individual in his little raft touches the vast continent of tradition and time – an important and risky moment. The Muslim as well as the Christian attaches himself to great communities of thought – and prejudices – that have existed for many centu-

ries, and it is by no means certain that they have got all their information right or will be able to handle it without causing offence. Many have at times felt tempted to skip this discussion. Is it not better just to go on doing good things?

But that cannot be. We are thinking beings and our lives are structured by thought. All our religious beliefs are defined and delimited in texts, commandments, ethics, traditions, rites and philosophies. The core of our faith is no doubt within and beyond all that, but this does not make it any less real. All that we do has to pass through words and concepts, governed by the rules of our intelligence. We need to think things out.

That is why our friends will have to enter the dialogue of thought, sooner or later. They will want to know if they really are as close as they seem to be or if they are in fact far from each other, as there always will be people and events suggesting they are. They will want to check their actions and experiences with their intelligence and see if there is a structural basis for the unity they may have experienced in their work.

There is no need to be a scholar to participate in it. But that does not dispense us from having to use our brains. The dialogue of thought can be an arduous, slow process where much attention must be paid to details of vocabulary and terminology. What exactly is it that is being said? Is it understood correctly? Am I presenting the faith of my community or am I just spreading my own opinions? What are the underlying presumptions of the ideas we present?

Our own beliefs are likely to be challenged and the challenge must be met not with emotions and indignation, but with deepened knowledge about the teachings of our faith-community. Yet teachings vary and we will have to acknowledge the multiplicity of interpretations. It is important to listen carefully and try to understand not on the basis on one's own view, but within the logical and emotional framework of the one who is speaking. Understanding does not mean accepting or adopting. It simply means acknowledging.

The dialogue of thoughts is the same everywhere and only varies in intellectual emphasis according to the people participating in it. Scholars will delve into original texts and history and religious leaders will discuss dogma, while the friends in our example, perhaps, will borrow a book from the local library to understand both their own religion and that of the other a little better. Exchanges will lead to disputes and clear demarcations: "I can go with you this far, but not further." But they will also help to identify the meeting-points. Ideally, the dialogue of thought is linked to the dialogue of life – the activities undertaken in common will help to keep the proportions of differences and similarities right.

There are two peculiarities in the West that need to be highlighted here. The first one is that the Western civilization has long had an ambivalent attitude towards its Christian heritage. People today often know surprisingly little about the Church, its teachings and history, and are not even very familiar with the Bible. There are some currents of thought peculiar

to the West that have even led people to deny the fact (so evident to others) that we actually possess a religious heritage.

A Westerner, then, has a double heritage: he belongs both to the old, Christian West and to the new, rational and scientific West that has rejected Christianity. Unacknowledged, it is likely to cause a subtle split in his mind; once it is acknowledged, however, it can become an asset rather than an obstacle. He can use his scientifically inspired intellectual rigour to make sure that only what is comparable is compared and that similarities and parallels are established where they actually exist and not where they seem to exist. For example, it will not do – for anyone – to stress all that is good (or bad) in Islam while having only a vague and unclear picture of all that is good (or bad) in Christianity. We often do such things.

The second thing is that Islam is in a category of its own from the Western point of view. The followers of this faith entered into conflict with the Christian Roman Empire from the very beginning and this conflict has shaped both the Islamic and the Western civilization to a large extent (the blame for it can be equally apportioned). Westerners often feel uncomfortable with Islam. Collectively and traditionally, we are accustomed to seeing each other as enemies and rivals. Contemporary terrorism, past colonialism and fairly widespread mutual proselytism over the years tend to reinforce this idea.

The dialogue of thoughts is necessary to clear the ground of the weeds and poisonous plants that have

spread through ignorance and indifference, not only regarding the way we see the others or the way the others see us, but also about the way we see ourselves and the way the others see themselves. It is a particularly sensitive and important task in the case of dialogue between Muslims and Christians.

One practical example of this dialogue is the work done by the Henry Martyn Institute, the International Centre for Research, Interfaith Relations and Reconciliation in Hyderabad in India. The Institute is named after a famous English missionary to India (H. Martyn, 1781–1812), who also spent some time in Iran. While present there, he engaged in deep discussions with Muslim scholars. Significantly, Hyderabad is also the town where the famous Muslim ruler Tipu Sultan reigned in the 18th century. As he remains the symbol of resistance for Muslims (he fought against the British, and eventually lost) and Henry Martyn was a man who, while a missionary, tried the way of peaceful dialogue, the symbolic impact is strong.

The institute describes itself as “an ecumenical Christian organisation, dedicated to the objective study and teaching of Islam, the promotion of inter-faith dialogue and reconciliation.” Through its clear Christian identity and its desire to understand Islam more deeply, it stimulates Muslims to seek to know Christianity better. The Institute is equally involved both in academic peace education and social activities that put into practice the theories taught. The intellectual pursuit is directly linked to the dialogue of life,

and deepening of religious knowledge to a stronger commitment to peace.

Faith has to be put into words. In the process it inevitably becomes a belief system that is governed by an internal logic. Yet faith is also beyond that logic. As Christians, we talk about grace, a gift from God of something that is simply unattainable for human beings. There is nothing wrong with the logic of the mind and the system of beliefs, provided that it remains open to this wind from outside, the unpredictable living Spirit of God. As long as the Spirit penetrates the belief system, dialogue is possible – it remains a dialogue of faith. If the system becomes complete in itself, closed and perfect, it turns into an ideology. Then there is obviously no room for dialogue – whatever contact there is will be on the level of negotiations only.

Third Ring: Dialogue of Hearts

We will now leave the scholars or friends around the table and turn to yet another form of interreligious dialogue. The dialogue of hearts may sound romantic, but it is not – “heart” here refers less to the seat of vague sentiments than to the “heart” of the Prophets in the Old Testament. There, the word indicates the core of the human being, the vital centre, where truth

resides. The dialogue of thoughts will, if it is sound, bring the participants very close to this centre and words will then cease.

No matter what our religion is, we all stand in awe and wonder before the mystery of existence. We all sense the spiritual depth of the beauty of creation. Before the enigma of birth and death, we are the same. Is it possible somehow to share this experience and build upon it?

This is a sensitive question. We have seen that we can work together and talk together – are we now saying that we can also worship together? Many people would feel uneasy with this, and for good reason.

When we pray, we enter into the heart of our religion. The Muslim always confesses his creed when he sits down to pray. The Christian will turn his inward gaze towards Christ. Though they may seem alike outwardly, inwardly they are actually affirming their differences.

Prayer is also linked with the community. Unless it is entirely private and wordless, it will be liturgical, that is, it will follow a certain pattern sanctioned by tradition and employ particular and multilayered words that hark back to the Scriptures or to tradition and express the essence of our creed. It is hard to imagine that we could invite someone who does not share the same creed to participate in this community experience.

It is nevertheless difficult to claim that there is no common ground. We may agree that people can be the victims of illusions or ignorance, and perhaps this

is how we explain to ourselves the bewildering multiplicity of religions in the world. At the same time, all major religions have developed ways to explain the fact that there is holiness and true justice to be found also outside of their own realm, that is, in the spiritual life of people of other faiths.

But if I admit the existence of holiness and truth within other religions, as I seem compelled to do, the exclusive value of my own faith is put into question. It ceases to be the single answer. It may, however, remain, in my view, the best answer, the one that corresponds the most to observations made in all domains of life and to our deepest experience of reality.

This arrangement opens a door to some kind of common spiritual experience. Though we may have different ideas about the totality of Truth, we at least seem to share many intuitions about it. It is often on the level of poetic, intuitive and aesthetic experiences that we feel closest to each other. Christians can read Jalaluddin Rumi, one of the greatest mystical poets of Islam, with the same deep feeling of recognition as Hindus read Meister Eckhart or Sufis read John of the Cross. Christians in Bangladesh use as church hymns poems written by the great Bengali writer Rabindranath Tagore, who was a Hindu, and others written by Nazrul Islam, who was a Muslim.

We have already said that the dialogue of hearts is very close to the dialogue of thoughts. Nevertheless, the distinction between the two is vital.

The dialogue of hearts is a little like standing together at the sea shore, moved to silence by the vast-

ness of the sea and the secret of whatever lies beyond it. The differences that may exist between us seem, at least for the moment, small and insignificant. The simile is arbitrary – it can happen in a living room, at the end of a particularly deep discussion. It has nothing to do with nature, even though nature is often helpful in opening to door of silent wonder in our minds. It is more an awareness of not being alone, of a loving presence that awakens an intense longing. This is very strong in mystical poems of all religions.

As soon as we start drawing intellectual conclusions from these moments of closeness, however, saying for example that all religions are basically one or that dogmas do not really matter, we have fallen back into structural talk. This is not what the dialogue of hearts is about – to replace the dialogue of thoughts with wordless intuitions, however true they may be. It will not work, because in the first place they will no longer be wordless. The mind will impose its structures on the intuitions. The beauty and strength of mystical poetry is precisely the inability of the author to express fully his or her own feelings and their divine object – the impossibility of encompassing the experienced reality. There is always more, and every word carries many meanings.

Visits in churches, mosques and temples certainly belong to this kind of dialogue. The beauty of the great historical places of worship around the world carries a spiritual message. The same is true of music and visual art. It is not always that the muezzin has a good voice, and lately the indiscriminate use of loud speakers has

done much harm, but anyone who has had the chance to hear a well performed prayer-call from a mosque knows how hauntingly beautiful it can be.

How is it that art, when it reaches some mysterious level, becomes universal and touches the depth of the heart? Perfect beauty coincides with perfect truth, according to Aristotle (who has inspired the Muslims as well). The dialogue of hearts is an exchange of the glimpses of beauty that our respective religions have given us and others in our tradition.

Mysteriously, these rays of light give us a firmer vision of truth. While they bring us out of the logical system of beliefs that we have, they never seem to damage it. A Muslim who learns to appreciate Bach is no less a Muslim; a Christian who finds joy in Arabic calligraphy is no less a Christian. Both may actually feel strengthened in their respective beliefs. But it is a near certain fact that none of them will be much tempted by religious extremism.

One practical example of the dialogue of hearts was given in a spectacular way during the World Day of Prayer for Peace in Assisi, 27 October 1986. The initiative was taken by Pope John Paul II, who invited representatives of all the religions in the world to gather in the city of St Francis in order to pray for peace together.

Representatives of world religions have met before – one notable occasion was the Parliament of Religions in Chicago 1899 – but never with the express aim of praying for a single purpose. By inviting every one, Pope John Paul II acknowledged the common spir-

itual ground of all human beings. “With the World Religions,” he said in his address to the assembly, “we [Christians] share a common respect of and obedience to conscience, which teaches all of us to seek the truth, to love and serve all individuals and people, and therefore to make peace among nations. Yes, we all hold conscience and obedience to the voice of conscience to be an essential element in the road towards a better and peaceful world. Could it be otherwise, since all men and women in this world have a common nature, a common origin and a common destiny?”

There was no praying together. The different communities had different places of worship. But the aim – peace – and the conviction of a spiritual reality which offers a common ground made the gathering a unique example of the dialogue of hearts. “Yes, there is the dimension of prayer,” the Pope continued, “which in the very real diversity of religions tries to express communication with a Power above all our human forces. Peace depends basically on this Power, which we call God, and as Christians believe has revealed himself in Christ.”

The dialogue of hearts is essential, but not sufficient in itself. Its path is narrow and sometimes slippery. This ring, however, is linked to the first one. Unless the experience of the greatness of the mystery of God’s gift somehow brings us back to those whose lives are marked by pain and loneliness, it bears no fruit. The experience of the heart must refresh and enlarge thought and encourage action. Only in this

way will interreligious dialogue be complete, not as a single act but as a continuous movement.

The Challenge of Being Open

We have seen that interreligious dialogue challenges us. In the first case, it demands of us common action, which is difficult enough already among people of the same background. In the second case it demands of us to change our perspective, if only for a moment, and see things as the others do, simply in order to understand their position. To do this while retaining one's own is not always easy. In the third case it demands of us to accept that the rays of God's light fall over all peoples and nations. Truth is infinitely vaster and deeper than my mind. Perhaps we should no longer say that we know the truth, but that we remain in the truth. Given our anxious minds, always eager to possess and control, this is no easy thing.

To round off this brief description of interreligious dialogue two points should be made. The first one concerns a particular problem in the dialogue between Muslims and Christians.

Islam has its own image of Jesus in the Koran. He is an important person there – it has often been said that Jesus is the one in the Koran who stands closest to God and the only one except God who speaks in the first person. He also plays an important role in

popular piety. Numerous stories about his words or deeds have been circulating in the Muslim world for centuries. It is also a widespread belief among Muslims that it is Jesus who will come back at the end of time to judge the world.

This may seem a remarkable point of convergence between the two faiths and in some ways it is. The Jesus of the Koran and the Jesus of the Gospels, however, also show quite a few differences. These differences reflect the difference in the concept of revelation between Christianity and Islam.

According to Islam, true faith is faith in the One God, and this faith has been proclaimed many times through the history of mankind by various prophets whom Islam recognizes and respects, among them Jesus. The greatest of them, Mohammed, left a divinely written book as a “guide” to the believers, the Koran. After this, no more prophets will appear.

In the Koran, Jesus rejects as blasphemy that he and his mother would be equal to God (5,116) and God himself declares that the crucifixion only seemed to happen. Consequently, the Christian notion of Jesus being one with God and dying to be raised again is dismissed as an error.

Since the image of Jesus as it appears in the Koran does not correspond in important points with that found in the Gospels, one must be convinced of the absolute truth of the Koran in order to give it credence. In Islam the connections with other religions are not established according to the Scriptures of those

traditions as they are, but according to the Scriptures as they are presented in the Koran.

This is different from the Christian tradition. Jesus in the Gospels claims to be the key of the unchanged Holy Scriptures of the Jewish tradition (Luke 24:25-27). The context in which the life of Jesus becomes meaningful existed before him in time.

Though we should be thankful for the great reverence and esteem in which Jesus is held in Islam, it is perhaps better not to stress too much the “common” Jesus. In fact, the Islamic counterpart to Jesus is the Koran, the Word of God. Christians often fail to appreciate the very special character of the Koran in Islam, even though its importance is obvious.

Similarly, Muslims find it very difficult to understand what the Church is actually saying when it talks about the Trinity. A widespread notion has it that the Virgin Mary is included in the Trinity. The term “Son of God” is understood in a physical way and thus considered almost blasphemous. Very few Muslims have penetrated into the teachings of the Church concerning the mystery of the Trinity.

In these two cases it is important not to focus on the intellectual presentation, but to be attentive to how these articles of faith are translated into actual life. It is easy – and, for dialogue, fatal – to remain on a categorical level, simply demanding acceptance of a fact: this book is holy; this dogma simply is so. The holiness of the Koran or the mystery of communion of the Triune God will never touch a believer of another faith

unless it somehow manifests itself beyond and behind words, in actions and reactions that will be instantly and intuitively recognized as coming from the heart, that secret place in the depth of our being where God dwells.

The second point is of a different nature. Interreligious dialogue is no substitute for spiritual life. One who tries to find all spiritual nourishment in dialogue or ceaselessly delves into different traditions will soon be dried up or lost. Many people who have experience of interreligious prayer meetings – where songs acceptable to all are sung, readings are taken from different Scriptures and so on – have felt that this is insufficient in the long run. We all have a spiritual home and should return to it regularly. The challenge is to make that home wide and open so that it somehow includes the dialogue.

In Mymensingh, our identity as Christians is clear. This seems to reassure many Muslims. They appreciate that we pray often, and they know who we are. At the same time, they do not feel threatened. Since we welcome them as they are, they are ready to welcome us as we are, and we can work together. In such a truly transformative meeting, how could we not trust that Christ is present?

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