

## The Importance of Inter Faith Relations

*- A View from HG Bishop Angaelos of the Coptic Orthodox Church and Moderator of the Churches' Inter-religious Network*

The foundation of Christianity and Christian life and witness is love, and thus all that we do must be built on this premise which our Lord Jesus Christ Himself lived in every situation throughout His life-giving ministry. Christianity has no place for intolerance or enmity, and thus Christians must live their lives with a spirit of tolerance and a true love for all people. In this same spirit, the holy Scriptures are very clear in their instructions for our dealings with our neighbours, regardless of ethnicity, colour or faith.

In our ever-changing world, our paths now cross with many more people from various backgrounds cultures and faiths. As we have seen in recent years, whether through acts of aggression, humanitarian disasters or natural catastrophes, there is a greater interaction between races and peoples who may never have crossed each other's paths before. Even at our own regional level, we find that it is essential to understand others and to break traditional stereotypes. We are beyond the point of generalising concerning a Christian West and an East that brings forth various faiths. I myself represent a Traditional Christian Church that was established in Egypt, whether one considers that Africa, the Middle East, or both, in the first century, and still exists and flourishes there until today as the largest Christian Church in the Middle East.

In the United Kingdom we now have a vast collage of faith and ethnicity depicting our broad community, and therefore we must find ways of understanding and accepting one another while at the same time not necessarily being the same as each other.

The basis of Christianity is the love and respect of others while at the same time being good stewards of our own Faith and beliefs, and for this reason we must sufficiently understand our own Faith while at the same time trying to understand and deal with others. We can never fully and properly engage in interfaith dialogue without having a strong understanding of our own doctrine and theology.

We pray that we may be a source of God's light and peace in the world through our faithful witness, and that we may live our Lord's two commandments: to love the Lord our God with our whole being, and loving our neighbour as ourselves.