

## Correspondence

# Religions in action: the role of interreligious dialogue in the COVID-19 pandemic

### ABSTRACT

Recent correspondence letters to the editor of this journal pointed on the praxis of faith in the context of COVID-19 pandemic. The #ChurchinAction presents the role of religious interventions in times of COVID-19. However, a question is raised: how to promote interreligious dialogue in the context of COVID-19 pandemic? To address this question, people of different faiths/religions should come together in promoting the life and dignity of the human person, a sense of community, and participation, respecting the rights and responsibilities of each person, helping the poor and vulnerable sectors of the society, respecting the dignity of work and the rights of the workers, solidarity and caring for the whole creation. In this perspective, interreligious dialogue highlighted the importance of world religions in order to provide a spiritual intervention. The dialogue of life, dialogue of action, dialogue of theological exchange, and dialogue of religious experiences promote interreligious dialogue in the context of COVID-19 pandemic.

**Keywords** COVID-19, religion, interreligious dialogue, spirituality

### To the Editor

The recent correspondence by del Castillo et al.<sup>1</sup> presents the role of religious interventions in times of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19). In addition to the role of Catholic Church's #ChurchinAction, this paper adds that religious and spiritual interventions be promoted by world religions. Indeed, religious/spiritual interventions are needed in order to assist people with different backgrounds. A recent correspondence by Ribeiro et al (2020)<sup>2</sup> reports the 'Spiritual Hotline Project, a project designed by many Brazilian healthcare workers intended to give spiritual and religious assistance to people with different cultural background.' World religions fill a gap in our being which cannot be filled by science, technology or art alone because that place is meant to be filled with an irreplaceable love, compassion, and kindness which reminds us of the real essence of humanity. Cornille (2013)<sup>3</sup> suggests that the term 'dialogue' can be "used in many ways, ranging from peaceful coexistence and friendly exchanges, to active engagement with the teachings and practices of the other, and from cooperation toward social change to common prayer and participation in the ritual life of the other" (p. 20).

Christians and Muslims, Hindus and Jews, Jains, Buddhists, atheists and agnostics expressed their support participated in a 'Day of Prayer for Humanity' (Vatican News, 2020).<sup>4</sup> Inter-faith communities are joining forces to launch a global Multi-Religious Faith-in-Action Covid-19 Initiative to raise awareness of the impacts of this pandemic on the world's youngest citizens (UNICEF, 2020).<sup>5</sup> People of different faiths/religions should come together in promoting the life and dignity of the human person, a sense of community, and participation, respecting the rights and responsibilities of each person, helping the poor and vulnerable sectors of the society, respecting the dignity of work and the rights of the workers, solidarity and caring for the whole creation (USCCB, 2005).<sup>6</sup> The Pontifical Council for Inter-religious Dialogue (1991)<sup>7</sup> presents the forms of dialogue such as: the dialogue of life, dialogue of action, dialogue of theological exchange, and dialogue of religious experiences. The dialogue of life, in a time of COVID-19 pandemic promotes the idea that people of different faiths, religions and spiritual traditions live in an open and neighborly spirit. The dialogue of action is a concrete commitment to the praxis of faith in building

a just and humane society. The dialogue of theological exchange where specialists seek and deepen their understanding of world religions. The dialogue of religious experiences promotes shared ideas and ways of searching for God, the Absolute, the higher being/principles in life. All these four ways of interreligious/interfaith dialogue can serve as a model for human flourishing in the age of COVID-19 pandemic. The four ways of interreligious/interfaith dialogue can be applied by world religions in their spiritual/religious interventions in response to COVID-19 pandemic.

In conclusion, the global partnerships of all religions promote values amidst the COVID-19 pandemic. People of all faiths can promote interreligious/interfaith dialogue during this time of crisis. Universal Values such as promoting the life and dignity of the human person, a sense of community, and participation, respecting the rights and responsibilities of each person, helping the poor and vulnerable sectors of the society, respecting the dignity of work and the rights of the workers, solidarity and caring for the whole creation can be a positive force that can build a just and humane society. Religions, in a time of COVID-19 pandemic can be a force that can change the world. After all, we are all one human family.

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## References

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- 7 Pontifical Council for Inter-religious Dialogue. (1991). Dialogue and proclamation. [https://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/pontifical\\_councils/interelg/documents/rc\\_pc\\_interelg\\_doc\\_19051991\\_dialogue-and-proclamatio\\_en.html](https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/interelg/documents/rc_pc_interelg_doc_19051991_dialogue-and-proclamatio_en.html) (3 August 2020, date last accessed).

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