



## THE 2018 PARLIAMENT OF THE WORLD'S RELIGIONS — *Why Catholics Should Participate*

**WHAT IS THE PARLIAMENT?** The Parliament was convened in 1893 in connection with the World's Fair in Chicago. It marked the first time that religious leaders from many traditions from throughout the world gathered together. Representatives of Asian religions came to the United States for the first time to attend the Parliament. After one hundred years, in 1993 a group of Chicago leaders decided to commemorate the first Parliament. That event saw some 7,000 people converge on Chicago for seven days of dialogue and encounter. The 1993 Parliament produced a major document called *Toward a Global Ethic*. Subsequent Parliaments were held in Cape Town, South Africa, Barcelona, Spain, Melbourne, Australia, and Salt Lake City, United States. The next Parliament is being held in Toronto, Canada on November 1 - 7, 2018.

**WHAT HAPPENS AT THE PARLIAMENT?** The Parliament provides Catholics an opportunity to encounter people of other religious and spiritual traditions, to experience their sacred rituals and to learn about their beliefs. The Parliament does not focus on intricate theological discussions but rather on providing a window into how differing religious and spiritual traditions perceive the divine reality in our midst. Sessions organized by Catholics help people from other faith communities better understand the basic beliefs of Catholics.

**WHY SHOULD CATHOLICS PARTICIPATE?** In 1965, in the final session of the II Vatican Council, the assembled bishops approved by a wide majority a statement known as *Nostra Aetate* ("In Our Time"). This document substantially changed the classical outlook in the Catholic Church regarding religious communities outside the parameters of Christianity. *Nostra Aetate* focused in a special way on Catholicism's relationship with the Jewish People. But it also established a new template in the Catholic Church for relations with all other religious traditions outside the boundaries of Christianity. It argued that all religions have their ultimate roots in one God and hence Catholics can learn from their religious perspectives. Such learning can enhance our appreciation of the core values of the Catholic faith. The Parliament is not about challenging these core values but rather aims to bring greater depth to many of them through an encounter with people of other faiths.

The Parliament also helps to build bridges among people of differing faith perspectives. Religion has sometimes been a source of violence in public society. The Parliament works to bring people together in a common effort to address the central social issues of our day, such as economic justice, sustainability, and human rights. Such issues can only be addressed on an interreligious basis, as Pope Francis said in his address in Sri Lanka in January 2015, and as Bishop Mitchell Rozanski, Chairman of Catholic Bishops Committee on Ecumenism and Interreligious Relations, has emphasized in speaking about the significance of *Nostra Aetate*.

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