



For Immediate Release

30th June 2018 – Assisi, Italy

From around the world, leaders of the world's major religious traditions came together in Assisi, the home of St. Francis, as part of the Peace Pledge Pilgrimage Project; to pray, celebrate, meditate and pledge to work together based on the principle that Loving-Kindness and Compassion can overcome discord and lead to human unity and peace.

They pledged to share a Peace Pledge [www.peacepledgeproject.org] with world leaders, the United Nations, religious leaders, Parliamentarians, and billions of people inviting them to join the affirmation of the necessity and supreme importance of Loving-Kindness, Compassion, Forgiveness and Reconciliation. This simple truth they believe is transformative and universal.

His Holiness 12th KentingTai Situpa Rinpoche, a venerable Buddhist leader, emphasized that Loving Kindness and Compassion is the foundation of everything. Our very existence rests on it. For example, he said, "We are nurtured by mother's milk and protected by her compassion from birth." He highlighted a theme of the pilgrimage, "We are 99% water. Without it we will be a pinch of dust. Therefore taking care of environment is crucial." He further pointed out that the pure water arising from the melting polar ice cap should be utilized by piping it to cities and the melting must be stabilized.

Bhai Sahib Mohinder Singh reminded us that first and foremost those who want peace must themselves be at peace and that peace within and amongst religions is a pillar of world peace. Swami Chidanand Saraswati said, "We can either be at peace or be in pieces. The choice is now."

Prior to coming to Assisi, the peace pilgrims flew to Kangerlussuaq, Greenland and then on to the Greenland Ice Sheet to witness the enormity of the tragedy of its melting.

Eskimo Elder Angaangaq Angakkorsuaq said: "It is the human heart which needs to melt. This is a priority if we are to stop the melting of our mother ice."

From Greenland, the leaders travelled to Assisi and gathered for three days of intense dialogue and prayer. They were joined by many other faith leaders, scientists, and activists who had come in from around the world including India, United Kingdom, Serbia, Kenya and the United States of America amongst others.

Sacred water from Gangotri, the glacial source of the Ganges River in the Indian Himalayas, and the sacred water from Greenland were ceremonially mixed together into a heart shaped vessel, representing the sacred heart of humanity. Rivers of tears flowed from the eyes of the faith leaders as the sacred water was poured to the sound of prayers from the Muslim, Hindu, Christian, Jewish, Sikh, Buddhist and Indigenous traditions in the Porziuncula within the Basilica of Saint Mary of the Angels, Assisi.

On the following day the leaders carried the sacred water into the Basilica of Saint Francis of Assisi, where St. Francis' physical form lays in rest. A global peace prayer was held, in which more than ten internationally renowned faith leaders said prayers and pledges for peace, with followers connecting from around the world via social media. Bishop Ruben Tierrablanca welcomed this interfaith community and expressed the importance of all of us learning from the love that St. Francis lived.

"It is no longer enough to simply pray for peace," the leaders agreed. "Like St. Francis, we must also serve and actively work for peace".

The Peace Pledge Pilgrimage Project is an interfaith initiative led by the former Director of the International Monetary Fund and former Vice Prime Minister of the Netherlands, Johannes Witteveen, along with over a hundred spiritual and religious leaders, representing all major religions, from all over the world. Collectively this group represents tens of millions of devoted individuals.

The Project's last pilgrimage gathered at the Peace Palace in the Hague where the International Court of Justice and International Criminal Court convene. Before that it travelled to India's sacred places and received the good wishes of Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

The Peace Pledge will be shared with tens of millions of participants at the upcoming Kumbh Mela in Allahabad, India in January/February 2019, the largest spiritual gathering on earth, as well as up to 50 million youth in the KidsRights network.

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Eskimo Elder Angaangaq Angarkkorsuaq (centre) singing in the ancient Greenland tradition, next to Pir Shabda Khan (far left), Brigitte van Baren (left), XII Kenting Tai Situpa Rinpoche (right) and Jonathan Granoff (far right), at the Greenland Ice Sheet near Kangerlussuaq.



Religious Leaders outside of the Portiuncula within the Basilica of Saint Mary of the Angels, holding the water contained in the heart shaped vessel. From left: Jonathan Granoff, Mohanji, A.K. Merchant, Sadhvi Bhagawati Saraswati, Rabbi Awraham Soetendorp, Audrey E. Kitagawa, Bhai Sahib Mohinder Singh, [holding heart shaped vessel together with], XII Kenting Tai Situpa Rinpoche, Pir Shabda Khan, Swami Chidanand Saraswati, Ezekiel Ole Katato, Syed Salman Chishty, Bishop Ruben Tierrablanca, Angaangaq Angakkorsuaq, Johannes Witteveen.



Religious leaders, led by Bishop Ruben Tierrablanca, in the courtyard outside of the Basilica of Saint Francis of Assisi.

The Peace Pledge



The Peace Pledge to Live Loving-Kindness & Compassion

THE JOURNEY OF LIFE IS A PILGRIMAGE;
BEAUTIFUL QUALITIES ARE A COMPASS

*Intending to advance peace and harmony in our personal lives
and in the world, we affirm the following:*

We commit to treat all lives with loving-kindness & compassion.

We reject the distortions of religious, national, and racial prejudice, which are used
to violate the Golden Rule to treat others as we wish to be treated.

We respect the diversity of ways people pursue their individual ideals.

We challenge the misuse of beliefs, rites, rituals, practices, philosophies, and traditions
used to degrade anyone or which lead to violence. We affirm the necessity
of bringing loving-kindness & compassion into action.

Through such actions, we seek to improve the relationships of people, one nation
to another, one religion to another, one belief system to another, one gender
to another, one race to another, and one person to another.

We call upon all people of good will to join this pledge.

We pledge that in all we intend, think, and do, we shall strive to bring
loving-kindness & compassion into action and into the lives of all we meet.

www.peacepledgeproject.org

Some of the Leaders joining the Peace Pledge Pilgrimage in Assisi

Johannes Witteveen, *The Netherlands*

Chair of the Universal Sufi Council, leader of the International Sufi Movement, Minister of Finance and Vice Prime Minister of the Netherlands and Managing Director of the International Monetary Fund.

Bishop Ruben Tierrablanca, *Turkey*

Delegate vicar of the apostolic vicariate of Istanbul and Professor of Sacred Scripture of Theology at the St. Anthony Seminary, El Paso, U.S.A.

Jonathan Granoff (Ahamed Muhaiyaddeen), *USA* President of the Global Security Institute, United Nations Representative of the Permanent Secretariat of the World Summit of Nobel Peace Laureates.

Brigitte van Baren, *The Netherlands*

Zen teacher, Founder of Inner Sense, which aims to enhance inner depth in the corporate and industrial world by applying 'essentials in leadership' and endorses the values of the Earth Charter.

XII Kenting Tia Situ Rinpoche , *India*

As a Buddhist master of the Karma Kagyu tradition, Situ Rinpoche oversees a vast network of Karma Kagyu monasteries, retreat centers, and Dharma centers worldwide.

Pujya Swami Chidanand Saraswati, *India*

President of Parmarth Niketan Ashram, Rishikesh, India, and founder of the Global Interfaith WASH Alliance (GIWA).

Sadhviji Bhagawati Saraswati, *India*

President of the Divine Shakti Foundation and Secretary-General of Global Interfaith WASH Alliance.

Rabbi Awraham Soetendorp, *The Netherlands*

Co-chair of the Global Forum of Spiritual and Parliamentary Leaders and founded Green Cross International.

Pir Shabda Kahn, *USA*

Pir (spiritual director) of Sufi Ruhaniat International, teacher and performer of Hindustani classical vocal music and director of the Chisti Sabri School of Music.

Bhai Sahib Mohinder Singh, *UK*

Bhai Sahib is the third in line of Sikh religious leaders of Guru Nanak Nishkam Sewak Jatha, GNNSJ UK, and since 1995, Chairman of the Nishkam Group of Charitable Organizations.

Syed Salman Chishty, *India*

Founding member and current of the Chishty Foundation and researcher on world Sufi traditions.

Audrey E. Kitagawa, *USA*

Founder and President of the International Academy for Transcultural Cooperation, the President of the Light of Awareness International Spiritual Family.

Angaangaq Angarkkorsuaq, *Greenland*

Eskimo-Kalaallit Shaman Elder whose family belongs to the traditional healers from Kalaallit Nunaat, Greenland.

Mohanji, *India*

Spiritual leader from India and founder of Mohanji Foundation.

Ezekiel Ole Katato, *Kenya*

Maasai leader from Kenya.