

Religious leaders worried about world peace

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Religious leaders have met in Japan to pray for peace in the world and as a response to Pope Francis asking them to foster dialogue, friendship and peace.

Representatives of Buddhism, Shintoism, Christianity, Islam, Judaism, Hinduism and Zoroastrianism came together in Japan at an inter-faith "Interreligious Gathering of Prayer for World Peace" held from Aug. 3 to 4.

This gathering has been held every Aug. 4 every year to commemorate a "Religious Summit" held on Mount Hiei in 1987.

About 2,000 people, including 24 delegates from 18 countries, attended the event to mark the 30th anniversary of the first summit.

The religious summit was held in the temple city of Kyoto and at Mount Hiei, the most significant holy place for the Japanese Buddhist denomination Tendai.

Pope Francis sent a letter to Koei Morikawa, the present supreme priest of Tendai, to be read at the annual Interreligious Gathering of Prayer for World Peace. In his letter to this year's event in Japan, Pope Francis asked participants to work and pray to foster dialogue, friendship and peace.

In turn, it has been said that this Buddhist event had inherited the spirit of Pope John Paul's landmark

1986 inter-faith "World Day of Prayer for Peace" in Assisi, Italy.

Bishop Miguel Angel Ayuso Guixot, secretary of the Vatican-based Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, spoke as one of seven panelists at a symposium on terrorism and religion.

"We must increase our awareness that any kind of war is incompatible with true religious ethics," said Bishop Guixot. He stressed that dialogue was a necessity rather than an option.

Archbishop Mitsuaki Takami, president of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Japan, strongly appealed for the abolition of nuclear weapons as a way to foster peace. The archbishop's mother survived the Aug. 9, 1945 bombing of Nagasaki, when he had been in her womb.

Earlier, while marking the 70th anniversary of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Pope Francis in 2015 repeated the Catholic Church's call for a ban on nuclear weapons and all weapons of mass destruction.

"This tragic event still gives rise to horror and revulsion," the pope had said adding that the sad anniversary "is a call to pray and work for peace, to spread throughout the world an ethic of brotherhood and a climate of serene coexistence among peoples."

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