



PONTIFICIA ACADEMIA SCIENTIARVM

THE CHANCELLOR

Vatican City 4 August 16

Dear Gùruji, dear Friends,

The feelings of goodwill, amity and cooperation from our time together in March in New Delhi are still with me, and they still inspire me to this day — I cherish having been invited to celebrate with you the Art of Living Foundation's 35th Anniversary.

I am delighted to have this further opportunity to say a few words at the Meditation for Peace, meeting today in Germany.

Out of consideration of the many others who will want to speak, I will be brief.

I note that this gathering today is inspired in part by the recent acts of violence initiated by those who claim to be following the Islamic faith.

The first years of the Third Millennium have been sadly stained by the ever more assertive presence of religious-inspired terrorism propagated by a few individuals who insist that they alone have the correct interpretation of Islam — this persistence in the face of the billion other adherents of Islam who testify to a tolerant religion which does not recognise the legitimacy of the actions of these few wicked individuals.

The presence of this terrorism in the West threatens not only the further meaningless destruction of innocent lives with widespread social disharmony and chaos in its wake; it also risks a very real backlash against the millions of foreign-born immigrants in our Continent who seek only to live their lives peaceably and tranquilly, according to the secular laws of the land — in the countries that have welcomed them and accepted them as fellow citizens — while following their own religion.

It must be acknowledged that most Muslims are as innocent of the violence that is perpetrated in the name of their religion as the people who are blown to pieces by the bombs. In the case of Nice, there were Muslims themselves who were killed in the massacre. Indeed, throughout the Middle East, the overwhelming majority of the victims are Muslim.

It therefore falls upon all leaders of moral authority in these times to do all they can to calm an increasingly tense situation — made all the more tense by the actions of the few.

It would be naive to pretend that there are not certain episodes in the Koran and the Hadith that may lend themselves to a violent interpretation. How the Muslim community worldwide can give a peaceful hermeneutic to these passages is a task which I imagine will be made more difficult with too much pressure 'from outside': so I wouldn't dream of telling Muslims how to interpret their own faith. But those who want to work towards that end from within will find a strong ally and friend in the Catholic Church, ready to accompany on the way.

Nobody knows how the coming decades are going to unroll, but with the growth into mainstream prominence and acceptance of movements — the so-called 'far-right' political parties — that would have been unthinkable just a few years ago, there is cause for apprehension as we look to the future.

What I want to say — and this is my central message for the Meditation for Peace today — is that perhaps it is the case that this generation has been entrusted with the last opportunity of

preserving peace throughout our societies; not only in Germany but right across the European Union and the wider world.

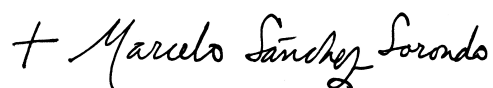
Every single person, irrespective of personal faith, has the responsibility to speak — and to act — with the utmost prudence; only ever appealing to our neighbour's most noble sentiments and never to his worst instincts.

I would like to congratulate publicly Sri Sri for organising this meeting today. In these chaotic times — Gùruji — you show yourself always to be the true leader you are, in that you only ever seek to bring out the best that lies within people.

Pope Francis prayed to Almighty God with these words at Kraków a few days ago on 30 July, at the World Youth Day: "Touch the hearts of terrorists so that they may recognise the evil of their actions and may turn to the way of peace and goodness, of respect for the life and for the dignity of every human being, regardless of religion, origin, wealth or poverty."

I think this is also the sincere hope of everybody — of whichever faith tradition —gathered in Germany today for the Meditation for Peace.

For those Catholics and Protestants in your gathering today, please know that I am praying to our Lord Jesus Christ that your latest initiative for peace brings forth a rich harvest.



Marcelo Sánchez Sorondo

Bishop Chancellor

Pontifical Academia of Sciences