

# Parliament speakers discuss global ethic

By Heidi Schlumpf Kezmoh  
Catholic News Service

CHICAGO — Peace among nations will come only after there is peace among religions, and that could be achieved if religions recognize the principles they share, said Father Hans Kung, one of the speakers at the Parliament of the World's Religions.

Father Kung, the Swiss-born priest silenced as a Catholic theologian by the Vatican in 1979, addressed the need for a global ethic that draws on basic principles found in all religions.

The priest is the main author of a "Declaration of Global Ethic," on which about 200 religious leaders were to vote during the Aug. 28-Sept. 5 parliament in Chicago.

"We are not creating a global ethic. The global ethic is already there ... in all these different traditions," Father Kung said Aug. 31. However, the need for the declaration is evident, he said.

"There will be no peace among nations without peace among the religions," he said, pointing to the religious hatred fueling the conflict in the Balkans as an example.

Religions must recognize what they have in common, especially in the field of ethics, and then can be a "factor of peace." The declaration brings that together and can serve as "a moral foundation for a new global order."

He described the ethic as "a minimal, fundamental consensus concerning binding values, universal standards and moral fundamental attitudes."

Its four ancient principles are derived from different versions of the Golden Rule that exists in all religions, Father Kung said. They are:

- "You shall not kill," or "Have respect for all life."
- "You shall not steal," or "Live

honestly and fairly."

- "You shall not lie," or "Always speak and behave truthfully."

- "You shall not commit sexual immorality," or "Respect and love one another."

The global ethic is not meant to create a uniform religion or to water down a tradition's specific moral teachings," Father Kung said. "That's why I never speak about unity of religion, I talk about peace among the religions. That would be enough."

Cardinal Joseph L. Bernardin of Chicago called the proposed global ethic document "a wonderful framework in which to continue discussions on further issues."

He addressed the parliament on euthanasia, expanding upon his theology of a consistent ethic of life.

Euthanasia, he said, "compromises the fundamental dignity of the human person in its inordinate exaltation of rational consciousness and its challenge to the belief that there can be any significance to human suffering," the cardinal said.

In the consistent ethic, Christians cannot be selective about life-threatening or even "life-diminishing" issues like racism, sexism and child abuse, according to Cardinal Bernardin.

"A consistent ethic is based on the need to ensure that the sacredness of every human life, which is the ultimate source of human dignity, will be defended and fostered from the genetic laboratory to the cancer ward, from the ghetto to the prison," he said.

Helen Alvaré, the U.S. bishops' chief spokeswoman on life issues, said the use of abortion as a solution to the world's population problems has serious and dangerous implications, especially for women.

"It actually intensifies and deepens an attitude ... that women are second-class citizens — that women in their biological differences are not different and equal but different and subordinate," Alvaré said.

Abortion as a form of population control makes an inconsistent human rights argument by trying to achieve human dignity for one group by sacrificing another, Alvaré said.

"It says, in principle, we are willing to terminate certain classes of human beings in order to achieve results that we deem beneficial to other classes of human beings," she said.

Alvaré and the other Catholic speakers were among some 6,000 participants representing 125 faiths from around the world at the parliament, which commemorates the first World Parliament of Religions held a century ago in Chicago.

Organizers were calling the 1993 event "the greatest gathering of religious and spiritual leaders in history."

Orthodox Christian representatives canceled their involvement saying that participation by "quasi-religious groups" was compromising the gathering's goals.

Contributing to this story was Jay Copp in Chicago.



AP/Wide World Photos  
Roman Orona of Wilmette, Ill., represents the Bahai faith during the procession opening the World Parliament of Religions in Chicago Aug. 28. More than 6,000 religions were represented at the conference, which concluded Sept. 5.

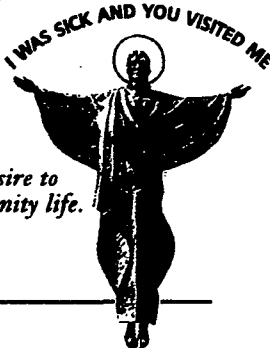
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