

**Westminster Interfaith**

**DIOCESE OF WESTMINSTER**



# A Journey into Hope: Celebrating 60 Years of Nostra Aetate

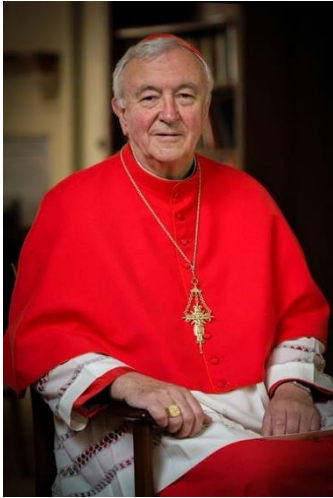
**Tuesday 28<sup>th</sup> October 2025**  
Farm Street Church, London





# Foreword by Cardinal Vincent Nichols

## Archbishop of Westminster



I am pleased to greet you, here in the Church of the Immaculate Conception, Farm Street, to celebrate the 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of *Nostra Aetate*.

The Second Vatican Council's Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions, known by its opening words *Nostra Aetate* ("In our time"), marks a watershed moment for the Catholic Church's theology on interreligious dialogue. When Pope Paul VI proclaimed the document 60 years ago, few knew the impact it would have, not just on the Catholic Church, but on the community of faith across the world.

The document was fundamental in resetting the Church's relationship with the Jewish people, recognising the treasured spiritual patrimony between Christians and Jews (§4), alongside the esteem in which the Church holds Muslims (§3). Moreover, *Nostra Aetate* recognised the truths in religions everywhere which "try to counter the restlessness of the human heart" and "preserve and promote the good things, spiritual and moral" (§2), as discovered through dialogue and collaboration.

2025 marks not only this significant anniversary, but also a Jubilee Year, to which our beloved late Holy Father gave the theme "*Pilgrims into Hope*". Tonight, you will hear how interreligious dialogue might help us to become pilgrims, journeying into hope.

Finally, may I commend to you a new translation of *Nostra Aetate*, completed for this anniversary by Fr Michael Barnes SJ, a former director of Westminster Interfaith and Professor emeritus at Heythrop College. This new translation helps us to realise our own calling to dialogue, "*in our time*", and I am grateful to Fr Michael for undertaking this work.

May my prayers and greetings be with each of you today, as you celebrate together this moment in the life of the Church.

# **A Journey into Hope:**

## **Celebrating *Nostra Aetate***

*When invited, please stand for our entrance procession*

### **Welcome**

Please sit as Fr Michael Barnes SJ welcomes us to this evening's celebration.

### **Bishop James Curry, Auxiliary Bishop of Westminster**

Bishop James addresses us and explores the role of hope in the life of the Catholic Church and the development of interreligious dialogue in the last 60 years.

### **“A Journey into Hope” in Religious Scriptures**

Representatives from religions are invited to share a reading on the theme of hope, from their scripture. Included in this booklet are excerpts from their readings and reflections.

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### **Bahá'í Faith – What a blessing that will be, when all shall come together**

*““Verily God loveth those who, as though they were a solid wall, do battle for His Cause in serried lines!” Note that He saith “in serried lines”—meaning crowded and pressed together, one locked to the next, each supporting his fellows. To do battle, as stated in the sacred verse, doth not, in this greatest of all dispensations, mean to go forth with sword and spear, with lance and piercing arrow—but rather weaponed with pure intent, with righteous motives, with counsels helpful and effective, with godly attributes, with deeds pleasing to the Almighty, with the qualities of heaven. It signifieth education for all mankind, guidance for all men, the spreading far and wide of the sweet savours of the spirit, the promulgation of God’s proofs, the setting forth of arguments conclusive and divine, the doing of charitable deeds.*

*Whensoever holy souls, drawing on the powers of heaven, shall arise with such qualities of the spirit, and march in unison, rank on rank, every one of those souls will be even as one thousand, and the surging waves of that mighty ocean will be even as the battalions of the Concourse on high. What a blessing that will be—when all shall come together, even as once separate torrents, rivers and streams, running brooks and single drops, when collected together in one place will form a mighty sea. And to such a degree will the inherent unity of all prevail...”*

## **Buddhism – Setting in Motion the Wheel of Truth**

*Dhammacakkappavattana-sutta*

*“Thus have I heard. The Blessed One was once living in the Deer Park at Isipatana near Varanasi. There he addressed the group of five bhikkhus:*

*'Bhikkhus, these two extremes ought not to be practised by one who has gone forth from the household life. What are the two? There is devotion to the indulgence of sense-pleasures, which is low, common, the way of ordinary people, unworthy and unprofitable; and there is devotion to self-mortification, which is painful, unworthy and unprofitable.*

*'Avoiding both these extremes, the Tathagata has realized the Middle Path: it gives vision, it gives knowledge, and it leads to calm, to insight, to enlightenment, to Nibbana. And what is that Middle Path? It is simply the Noble Eightfold Path, namely, right view, right thought, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, right concentration. This is the Middle Path realized by the Tathagata, which gives vision, which gives knowledge, and which leads to calm, to insight, to enlightenment, to Nibbana.”*

## **Christianity – God’s dwelling place is now among the people**

A Reading from the Book of Revelation (21:1-4)

*“Then I saw “a new heaven and a new earth,” for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea.*

*I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband.*

*And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Look! God’s dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them.*

*They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. ‘He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death’ or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.””*

## Hinduism – The tale of Rama and Sita

Rama's beloved brother Lakshman lay dying on the battlefield, and could only be saved by the miraculous, medicinal Sanjeevani plant. Rama's most loyal servant – Hanumanji, was tasked with fetching the plant, located high on a mountain. Once there, he couldn't determine which plant it was, so picked up the entire mountain and brought it back to the battlefield.

When Hanumanji could not differentiate the right choice from the wrong ones, it was his faith and determination that gave him the courage to move beyond his immediate limitations. His devotion to God, in the divine form of Lord Rama kept his resolve strong, and it was this hope within him, that meant Lakshman was saved.

Hope has the power to change situations in which all seems lost, into ones where everything seems possible.

## Islam – God is holding our hand

Muhammad Asad's translation of Quran 2:256 is:

*"There shall be no coercion in matters of faith. Distinct has now become the right way from [the way of] error: hence, he who rejects the powers of evil and believes in God has indeed taken hold of a support most unfailing, which shall never give way; for God is all-hearing, all-knowing."*

There is a strong overlap between faith and hope - faith is a stronger form of hope, as it has the backing of God, as captured in the verse above. It is sometimes translated as a handhold...

M. M. Pickthall:

*"There is no compulsion in religion. The right direction is henceforth distinct from error. And he who rejecteth false deities and believeth in Allah hath grasped a firm handhold which will never break. Allah is Hearer, Knower."*

The thought that God is holding our hand and that He will never let go gives me hope.

## **Jainism – Hope is a journey into one’s own purified soul**

King Shrenik was out for a ride when he saw a young monk meditating in a garden. The monk’s face radiated calm, which deeply impressed the king. He wondered what could have led the young man to renounce his vibrant lifestyle for an ascetic one.

The king approached him and asked, “O monk, I see the light of great bliss in your eyes, but you’ve forsaken the joys of youth. What compelled you to take this path of penance?”

The monk replied with a loving tone, "O King, I renounced the world because I realised, I was utterly alone, helpless, and hopeless in this worldly life”.

The king laughed, thinking of the monk's apparently uncompelled position: “How can you say that when you have your family and a vast fortune?”

The monk explained to the king, “By taking the initiation, I realised hope is a journey into one's own purified soul. Hope, therefore, lies in the promise of the soul's liberation from karma. I had found true hope not from my worldly life, but from the power of my own spiritual journey to cleanse my soul.”

## **Judaism – To do justice, love goodness and walk modestly with your God**

Micah 6:1-8: *“Hear what the LORD is saying: Come, present [My] case before the mountains, and let the hills hear you pleading. Hear, you mountains, the case of the LORD—You firm-a foundations of the earth! For the LORD has a case against His people, He has a suit against Israel. “My people! What wrong have I done you? What hardship have I caused you? Testify against Me. In fact, I brought you up from the land of Egypt, I redeemed you from the house of bondage, and I sent before you Moses, Aaron, and Miriam. “My people, remember what Balak king of Moab plotted against you, and how Balaam son of Beor responded to him. [Recall your passage] From Shittim to Gilgal—and you will recognise the gracious acts of the LORD.” With what shall I approach the LORD, do homage to God on high? Shall I approach Him with burnt offerings, with calves a year old? Would the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, with myriads of streams of oil? Shall I give my first-born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for my sins? “He has told you, O man, what is good, and what the LORD requires of you: Only to do justice and to love goodness, and to walk modestly with your God.”*

## **Sikhism – Keep faith in the One Lord within your mind**

Ek aas raakhahu man maeh ||

*Keep faith in the One Lord within your mind.*

Sarab rog naanak miT jaeh ||1||

*All disease, O Nanak, shall then be dispelled. ||1||*

Guru Arjan Dev Ji - Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji - Ang 288

## **Zoroastrianism – Hope drives action towards good**

The Gathas are the oldest of Zoroastrian scriptures. Hope in the Gathas is not passive optimism but an active trust in Ahura Mazda (the Wise Lord), Asha (truth & righteousness), and Vohu Manah (good mind) to achieve ultimate justice, victory of good over evil, leading to frashokereti – renewal and perfecting of the world.

Yasna 33.14 states: *"You two (Ahura Mazda and Vohu Manah) are the givers of good to the righteous: be ye the hope of the righteous!"*

And in Yasna 43.5, Zarathushtra states: *"Ahura! Grant me now the hope which thou didst promise to me through Good Mind."*

Zarathushtra intertwines hope with agency. He encourages us to choose righteousness with a good mind. Hope in Zoroastrianism is dynamic, it is tied to ethical living and community reform. These quotes reflect Zoroastrianism's optimistic worldview: evil is temporary, and hope drives action toward good.

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### **Final reflection**

Our evening will draw to a close with a brief reflection on the light of hope, that illuminates our paths and guides our steps.

### **A moment of silence**

When invited, you are asked to stand and light your candles from those in front of you, spreading a light of hope and concluding our service this evening.

# Thank you for being with us to celebrate the 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of *Nostra Aetate*!

After the organ voluntary has concluded, please follow the directions of the ushers to the London Jesuit Centre, where there is a reception following tonight's event.

## SAVE THE DATE

**Monday 9<sup>th</sup> March 2026 from 6-8pm**

The final event in our "A Journey into Hope" series is a lecture, given by Cardinal Michael Fitzgerald M. Afr., at St Mary's University, Twickenham. Cardinal Michael will be examining the theology, impact and legacy of *Nostra Aetate*, 60 years after its promulgation.

Reserve your space via the QR code below.

## Westminster Interfaith

*Building bridges through dialogue*

Founded in 1981, Westminster Interfaith works to live out the Church's call to promote dialogue, respect and collaboration between Catholics and the followers of other religions in the Diocese of Westminster.

We host regular events across the Diocese and support parishes & schools to build bridges with their local communities.

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