

**Address at Peace Symposium – Ahmadiyya Muslim Association in Canberra**  
**Albert Hall**  
**Saturday 19 November 2016, 5pm**  
**Peace Symposium – How to Achieve Peace?**  
**Address by Archbishop Christopher Prowse**  
**Catholic Archbishop of Canberra and Goulburn**

I commend all those who have organised this important Peace Symposium. It is truly an interreligious event.

I come to you not as a politician nor as a diplomat. I come to you as a religious leader. I bring to the contribution of religious leaders my own perspective as a Catholic Christian Archbishop here in the Canberra and Goulburn region.

I wish to make a number of points on peacemaking in today's complex world.

My first point is that peace is not simply the absence of violence.

Certainly peacelessness and violence is the absolute opposite of peace itself.

Particularly if violence is perpetrated in the name of religion this becomes totally unacceptable.

Theological terminology must never be used as a motivation for violence. This approach is to be condemned outright by all religious leaders acting together. Not only is this immoral but it is also blasphemous. Because God is peace itself. The God of peace and love is non-violent.

But it is rather superficial simply to describe peace as simply an absence of violence. It is certainly this but it must go deeper than simply this.

Secondly, peace is the fruit of the contemplative heart.

It is quite easy to use slogan expressions in an attempt to define peace but peace is the fruit of something very deep. It finds its origin in the human heart. In the solitude and the silence of the human heart we can find true peace. Because the silence of the human heart becomes the womb of peace making when we experience the silence of God, either individually or communally, we come in touch with the God of all peace. This raises the priority of contemplative prayer and a solitude that is thick in the presence of God. When we seek the silence of God we seek peace. Peace always starts in the heart but never remains in the heart. Peace is expressed in practical service to the poor and oppressed. In my own Christian background, Christians find peace as personified in Jesus Christ who we claim as Saviour and the Lord. As the Father has sent the Son, Christians believe that the Son Jesus Christ has sent the Holy Spirit amongst us. The Holy Spirit enables us to become a community of peace and peacemaking. It is our motivation and strength.

Thirdly, peace is an ongoing task that respects differences.

Peace making never stops. It is a permanent challenge and task. True peacemaking never asserts itself in a way that isolates people or pressurises people to act in a particular way or manner. Peacemaking is more subtle. It is like the fragrance of a rose. It attracts people and proposes to people another way of looking at life and acting in life. But it never imposes itself on others.

Humans are born with a religious dimension. It is natural to be religious. It is not an added extra. In secular Australia, many Australians struggle with this innate religious sense. But it is from this religious sense deep and abiding peace and peacemaking emanates. This is because the religious sense comes from God and emanates from God who is love and mercy. In secular Australia there is the pressure to marginalise this religious dimension as if it is something extrinsic to our humanity. This is the threat to peace. Peace must have a transcendent origin. It is not just simply a superficial aspiration of a particular generation.

To persuade Australians and a very secular Western world of this is an ongoing task. In Australia, in this ancient but new land, religious people do willingly and happily commit themselves to this ongoing task of peacemaking emanating from religious motivations. We understand and respect that our religions are diverse but they do come together on the essential matters of peace. It is a little like a fruit salad. In this example we find that the apple is not the watermelon and the watermelon is not the pineapple and the pineapple is not the cherry. But together they form a fruit salad. There is something good about the difference yet there is something unifying the difference. It is the one fruit salad. It is the same with our religions. There are enormous differences in our theology and our understanding of God. Yet it is the one God which speaks to the deepest aspirations of the human heart. So whether we be Muslim or Christian or Hindu or Buddhist or Sheik or Jew we do commit ourselves to the ongoing task of peacemaking in our very complex world as religious leaders.

Let us make this beautiful Australia even more beautiful. Let us cover our motivations and our children and our children's children with peace that comes from God.

Thank you for inviting me to address you on this important occasion.