

Crans Montana Forum Presentation on Jerusalem And The Three Religions Of The Book

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In 2004, I had occasion to go to Israel for an interfaith dialogue. I have to say that it was one of the most spiritually uplifting trips that I had ever taken. As I sat quietly in meditation at one of the stations at the Church of the Holy Sepulcher, I could hear the call to prayer at the mosque nearby. I remember thinking how beautiful that voice was that called out to all who could hear it that we must be mindful of ourselves as spiritual beings, and to be in remembrance of our life of prayer and supplication to God.

I thought it was also wonderful that this mosque was right next to this Christian Church. I visited the West Wall, and marveled at the devotion of those who chose to spend their personal time in prayer, and to acknowledge the holy sites in this sacred city.

I visited with the head of the Druze community, who welcomed me so generously, and allowed me to have some private meditation time in the mausoleum of his predecessor. When I entered into the mausoleum, I felt such love and peace there.

I walked the trail that Jesus walked as he carried the cross to Calvary. I visited the place of his birth in Bethlehem, and the Garden of Gethsemane the site of his anguished prayer before being taken away for his crucifixion.

I visited Haifa, home of the Baha'i Faith, and also meditated in the mausoleum of the Bab. Again, there was so much peace there.

For all of the conflicts going on in the Middle East, there is a well spring of spirituality, and deeply held principles and beliefs that address the universal laws of God that are the laws of love, harmony, peace and joy.

What other land is as unique as this that has generated the co-existence of not only the three major religions in the world, but also the Druze and the Baha'i's?

Toward that end, I would like to address the universal principles that underlie the three major religions as a way of focusing our attention on the shared values that each has in common with the others on fundamental challenges that face not only the Middle East community but the world at large.

One of the most important principles is the **Golden Rule**, which captures the practice of loving others, and treating them in ways which if assiduously followed, would address issues of integrity, justice, respect, dignity and a host of other relationship concerns on a micro and macrocosmic level. It is the recognition that in this interconnected world, no one acts in isolation, and every act of one unto another is an act upon ones own self.

In Christianity, we have a citation from Luke 6:31 that states, "And as ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise."

From Islam, and the Forty Hadith of An-Nawawi, 13, "Not one of you is a believer, until he loves for his brother what he loves for himself."

From Judaism, and the Talmud, Shabbat 31a, "What is hateful to you, do not do to your neighbor, that is the whole Torah; all the rest is commentary, go and learn."

On the importance of **loving speech and kindness** towards others:

In Christianity, we find in Ephesians 4:31-32. "Let bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and evil speaking be put away from you with all malice; And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you."

In Islam, from the Hadith of Bakhari, "A man once asked the Prophet what was the best thing in Islam, and the latter replied, "It is to feed the hungry and to give the greeting of peace, both to those one knows and to those one does not know."

In Judaism, from Proverbs 18:19-21, "A man's belly is filled by the fruit of his mouth; He will be filled by the produce of his lips. Death and life are in the power of the tongue; Those who love it will eat its fruit."

A book that will be published soon by C. David Lundberg which addressed Universal Truths shared by the world's religions is an interesting tome which covers the range of human values from honesty and truthfulness to patience,

forgiveness and mercy by quoting the various scriptures of the different religions.

In a world where we are inundated daily with the dysfunctions and fault lines of the world's challenges, it would do well for us to focus on the positives, the points of agreement, cooperation, and shared values.

If history has taught us anything it is that policies of aggression, war, and hatred which ultimately lead to the degradation, humiliation and suffering of others do not bring peace and happiness into the world. We must move out of the paradigm of power and domination to the paradigm of wisdom and knowledge.

Our inherent wisdom honors all things sacred, including life itself, as well as sacred places on this earth that are special to us. These sacred places are important sites for spiritual pilgrims, whose inner knowing longs to feel its closeness with the Divine. War prevents pilgrims from visiting sacred sites. Importantly, manifestations of war and conflict are antithetical to the principles and precepts of the great teachers and enlightened masters who came to give us the teachings on right living.

We as students of great masters must be able to put into practice the ways of love for one another, and see how we can daily, dignify the lives of our fellow man. At all times, we must keep those who live in conflict areas in our prayers. During any conflict, the most vulnerable ones, the women and children suffer the most.

We are all members of one human family, and with the magnitude of the global crises facing us from global warming to water scarcity, food scarcity, and natural disasters on the rise, we must be able to pull together as a human family to meet these challenges. No one nation, religion or ethnic group can meet these challenges alone. We must now all join hands and help each other in the spirit of cooperation. Our very existence as a species depends upon it.