

Dialogue and Alliance French Scripture Study on Cultivating Forgiveness

Jean-François Moulinet
September 17, 2023



Paris, France -- The 29th Francophone scriptural sharing had the theme "Cultivating Forgiveness."

The monthly meeting of the Dialogue and Alliance interfaith circle, held on September 17, 2023, commemorated both the UN International Day of Peace and International Forgiveness Day (www.journeeinternationaledupardon.org/).



The theme of the 2023 International Day of Peace -- "Actions for Peace: Our Ambition for the #GlobalGoals" -- refers to the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals and is a call to action that recognizes our individual and collective responsibility to foster peace.

The main meeting was held face-to-face at the Espace Barrault conference center in Paris, with Zoom connections from Austria, Belgium, Benin, Burkina Faso, Canada, Côte d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of the Congo, France, Italy, Lebanon, Mauritius, Republic of the Congo, Senegal, Spain, Switzerland, Tunisia, and the United States.

To start the meeting, the moderator, **Soraya Ayouch**, a clinical psychologist, invited the participants to observe a minute's silence in solidarity with the victims of the earthquake in Morocco and the floods in Libya.

Brigitte Wada, president of the French chapter of Women's Federation for World Peace (WFWP) (wfwp-france.org/), an organization that is affiliated with UPF, introduced the Bridge of Peace initiative. At an international level, this has been a flagship project of WFWP for nearly 30 years. The Bridge of Peace is a practical tool designed to facilitate the process of healing and reconciliation, and to bring together people who are enemies or who have been wounded in the depth of their soul. Committing to building a relationship with another person can enable participants to move beyond victimhood and become agents of their own personal change.



Ms. Wada presented several examples of sisterhoods organized in France since 1997, bringing together believers from different faiths -- for example, Christian and Muslim women -- or marking a commemoration between two countries or regions -- France-Germany, France-Africa, France-England, France-U.S., France-Korea, France-Japan, France-Algeria, etc.

Professor Boumédiène Benyahîâ, Dr. Honoris causa, Peace Administration, director of the Institute of the Word (Kalima institut-kalima.com/), and secretary general of the Coordination of Swiss Islamic Organizations, commented on the Islamic reading: verse 22 of Sura XXIV of the Koran: The Light (*Nour*) and verses 87, 88 and 89 of Sura XLIII: The Ornament (*Zukhruf*).

In Islam, forgiveness is built up on three major levels, Professor Benyahîâ explained:



- "integral" forgiveness, which is the great divine forgiveness, with a total willingness to wipe the slate clean;
- "intermediate" forgiveness;
- "horizontal" forgiveness between human beings, before moving on to the higher levels.

"Forgiveness is a divine duty and a human duty," he concluded.

The participants then watched the music video of the song "*Pardonner*" (to forgive), performed by **Jean-Claude Gianadda** (www.jeanclaudegianadda.net), the author of more than 1,000 Christian songs.

The last presentation was based on the self-help book *The Four Agreements*. **Pascal Bernagaud**, facilitator of Circles of Forgiveness (www.cerclesdepardon.fr/) and a member of Association Pardon International, gave the background of Circles of Forgiveness, which Olivier Clerc established after meeting the book's author, Don Miguel Ruiz. Forgiveness is like a "heart shower" that we administer to ourselves, Mr. Bernagaud said, and it is essential to understand that we are the actors of what we cultivate in our heart.



The meeting concluded with a question-and-answer session moderated by **Dr. Laurent Ladouce**, a UPF researcher.

Jean-François Moulinet, coordinator of the Dialogue and Alliance circle, announced that the next meeting would take place on Sunday, October 22 on the theme "Cultivating Gratitude."

He sincerely thanked and acknowledged the main partners of Dialogue and Alliance for their continuous support, in particular:

- the French chapter of Interreligious Association for Peace and Development;
- the United Religions Initiative (www.urieurope.org/);
- the Interreligious and Intercultural Alliance of Geneva;
- and the Comité Mondial des Trois Testaments, in Mali.

