

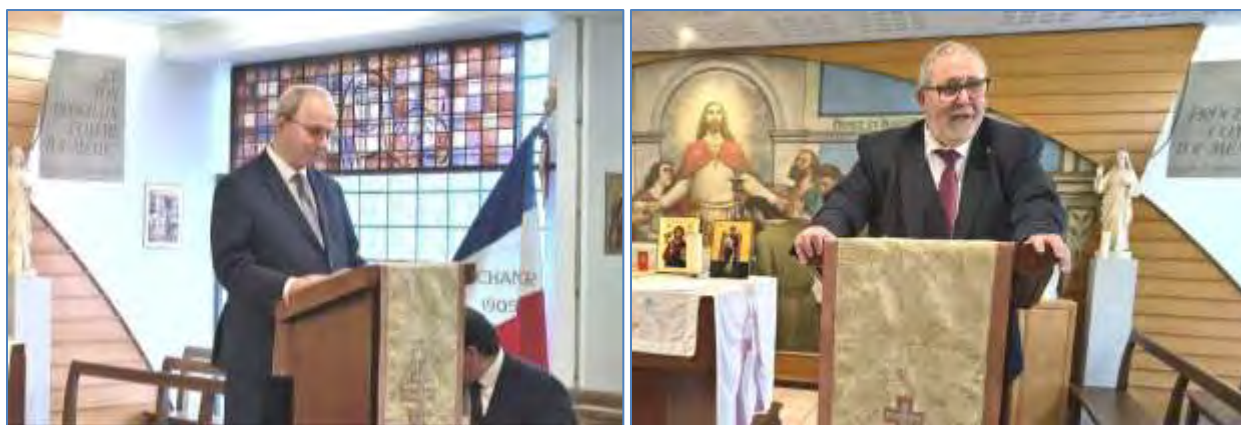
UPF France: Religious Leaders in Paris Illustrate Oneness of Humanity

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Paris, France – Representatives of various religious traditions gathered in Paris on February 7, 2026, as part of World Interfaith Harmony Week. Their reflections on what unites humanity were portrayed in two powerful symbolic moments: a water ceremony to open the meeting and a light ceremony before its conclusion.

Led by **Mr. Patrick Jouan**, vice president of UPF-France, the meeting took place in the small chapel of the Le Chantier Association. Participants were warmly welcomed by **Archbishop Nicolas**, Orthodox Patriarch of the Nations, whose church is present on every continent.



To the music of "Jesus, Joy of Man's Desiring," performed on the violin by **Ms. Harue André**, six religious leaders representing Judaism, Buddhism, Christianity, Islam, Scientology, and Unificationism took to the stage to solemnly pour, each in turn, a glass of water into a common vessel. This gesture symbolized the rivers of different religions converging in the same ocean.

Mr. Jacques Marion, president of UPF-France, recalled the origins of this interfaith week, proclaimed by the United Nations in 2010 at the initiative of the Kingdom of Jordan. He emphasized UPF's respect for all religions, as demonstrated in its publication of a comparative anthology of sacred texts from around the world, and its commitment, shared with the United Nations, to recognizing the role of religions in peace processes.

Drawing on the words of the Gospel according to Saint Matthew – "Love one another" and "Love your neighbor as yourself" – Archbishop Nicolas emphasized three essential conditions for interreligious dialogue: listening, mutual respect, and mutual understanding. He illustrated his point with the example of divided families, highlighting the urgency of dialogue while it is still possible, as well as the necessity, at times, of denouncing abuses within one's own community.

Rabbi Michael Shevack, from the Jewish mystical tradition, spoke of the concept of "tikkun olam," the

"repair of the world," as a mission common to all humanity. He testified to the profound spiritual communion experienced during this encounter, which he perceived as a foretaste of the Messianic era and an invitation to recognize that everyone belongs to the same human family.

Venerable Michel Thao Chan and his disciples described the state of conflict in the contemporary world, emphasizing the need for a spiritual response to which Buddhism can contribute. Their presentation was punctuated by chanted prayers, periods of meditation, and invocations, enhancing the spiritual intensity of the moment.



Rector Khalil Merroun, from the Grand Mosque of Évry, then spoke in poetic language on the theme of water, central to the Quran. Commenting on verse 17 of Surah Ar-Ra'd, he explained that water symbolizes divine revelation, received by each person according to their capacity, while the foam represents falsehood, destined to disappear, while truth remains.

A particularly moving testimony was given by **Dominique and Mariama Guillard**, a Christian-Muslim couple, who shared their path to spiritual and familial harmony in raising their five children. Their serenity and the depth of their journeys deeply moved the assembly.



To conclude the gathering, to the sound of "Be Thou My Vision" performed on the violin by Ms. Harue André, representatives of each spiritual tradition lit a candle from the central flame and then shared this light with each participant, thus symbolizing the desire to journey together toward the same light. The ceremony ended with a collective singing of the Ode to Joy, followed by a prayer led by **Mr. Ignace Wantete** of FCLC.

In his closing remarks, Mr. Patrick Jouan expressed his hope that future gatherings of similar fraternal spirit would take place.