

Rev. Indunil Kodithuwakku, Under Secretary for the Pontifical Council

"On behalf of the E. Em. Cardinal Jean-Louis Tauran and the staff of the Pontifical Council of Inter-religious Dialogue, and also as a son of Sri Lanka, I would like to extend my heartfelt greetings and gratitude to the Joseph Naik Vaz Institute, California, for organizing this Eucharistic celebration to commemorate the founding of the Oratory of St. Philip Neri in Goa by Blessed Joseph Vaz in 1685. Thank you also for the opportunity to pray for the canonization of Blessed Joseph Vaz as well as for the success of the pastoral visit of His Holiness Pope Francis to Sri Lanka and to the Philippines in January 2015.

Dear friends, we are gathered around the Eucharistic table which brings to mind the direct relationship between the Eucharist and interfaith dialogue (Eph. 2:12-14). The reconciliation we experience in the Eucharistic liturgy is the peace that we can share with others. The ministry of Christian reconciliation is particularly to break down the dividing walls built within the human hearts. The end of the Eucharist celebration each time is thus the beginning of the mission of reconciliation.

It is said that Fr. Joseph Vaz, the Apostle of Sri Lanka, arrived in the Island with no other possessions except the sacred vessels for Mass, wrapped in a cloth, such as poor coolies did in that time. The encounter with the Eucharistic Lord not only made Fr. Joseph Vaz a zealous missionary but also a man of dialogue. Even though Fr. Joseph Vaz was formed by his particular era, his simplicity and holiness of life made him able to enter into dialogue with high and low alike and with traditional religions and ancient cultures. His loving kindness and care for the sick, the rejected and the lowly revealed the compassionate face of God Who is constantly in dialogue with humanity, especially with the poor and the needy.

Today our world urgently needs peace. The Church is continually sent forth to carry out Christ's mission to participate in God's work of healing a broken world, collaborating with the followers of other religious traditions and people of good will.

Imitating Blessed Joseph Vaz, let us also draw sustenance for our reconciling mission from the Eucharist!"

Rome, September 23, 2014