

# Catholic-Muslim dialogue members urge improved teaching for peace

VATICAN CITY – Textbooks used in Catholic and Muslim schools and in predominantly Catholic or Muslim nations should be reviewed and revised to ensure a respectful, accurate portrayal of the history and beliefs of the other community, said members of a Catholic-Muslim dialogue.

The annual dialogue between Vatican representatives and representatives of al-Azhar University in Cairo, Egypt – a leading Muslim institution – was held at the Vatican Feb. 24-25 and focused on the role of religions in teaching peace.

Both Christianity and Islam consider peace to be a gift from God that requires human cooperation, said the final statement from the meeting.

Religious leaders must work to ensure that “a culture of peace” permeates all their activities, particularly their educational efforts, said the statement.

“Scholastic books should be revised in order not to contain material which may offend the religious sentiments of other believers” in the way their doctrines, moral teachings and history are presented, the leaders said.

“Youth, the future of all religions and of humanity itself, need special care in order to be protected from fanaticism and violence, and to become peace builders for a better world,” the statement said.

Archbishop Pier Luigi Celata, secretary of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, said in a statement that meeting participants recognized their responsibility for promoting peace “as an authentically human and religious value.”

He said they paid particular attention to “the quality of religious teaching and preaching, the affirmation of equality and justice, (and) respect for the dignity of every human person and of freedom of conscience.”

The Catholic and Muslim participants also discussed the ongoing suffering of people

in the Middle East and urged the world's political leaders to resolve the existing conflicts through dialogue.

In an interview Feb. 26 with Vatican Radio, Cardinal Jean-Louis Tauran, president of the dialogue council, said that good relations between Christians and Muslims are important for peace in the world.

While many positive dialogues are taking place and involving major Christian and Muslim leaders, he said he has been disappointed that they have not gotten much coverage in the Arab press.

"The basic problem, I think, is that the improvement in relations and in the atmosphere in which these high-level conversations are taking place still has not had an impact on the Muslim masses. I think this is a problem," the cardinal said.