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THE BRIDGEMAKING ACTIVITY OF POPE JOHN PAUL II (SAINT) AS CASES OF INTERCULTURAL DIALOGUE IN DIPLOMACY

POPIEŽIAUS ŠV. JONO PAULIAUS II TILTŲ STATYMO VEIKLA KAIP INTERKULTŪRINIO DIALOGO DIPLOMATIJOJE ATVEJAI

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Summary

Intercultural communication has evolved due to the activity of The Foreign Service Institute (FSI) in the United States as a result of efforts to solve the FSI's failures in communication with other nations or civilizations. In parallel, the Church evolved its own theory and practice of intercultural communication, too, since and after the Second Vatican Council. This is evident especially in Saint John Paul II's activity (he was canonized in 2014 by the current Pope Francis). Pope Francis seemed to follow his great predecessor and this was evaluated by Israeli politicians like Simon Perez. Saint John Paul II's entire pontificate was full of intercultural actions: praying together with the Dalai Lama in Assisi (1986), while putting a Buddha on the altar; and it was he who first visited the Jewish synagogue of Rome. All these led to the culmination of the interfaith communication in his address to the Muslims in the Umayyad Mosque in Damascus, May 6, 2001.

Key words: *intercultural communication, interreligious dialogues, John Paul II Pope, Second Vatican Council, Islam Christian dialogues, peacemaking.*

Santrauka

Tarpkultūrinė komunikacija išsiplėtojo dėl JAV Užsienio reikalų tarnybos instituto veiklos, mėginant spręsti nesėkmingo bendravimo su kai kuriomis tautomis ar civilizacijomis atvejus. Greta to, nuo ir po Vatikano II Susirinkimo Bažnyčia kūrė savo pačios tarpkultūrinio bendravimo teoriją ir praktiką. Tai ypač akivaizdu Jono Pauliaus II veikloje (jis buvo kanonizuotas dabartinio popiežiaus Pranciškaus 2014 metais). Popiežius Pranciškus bandė sekti savo didžiuoju pirmtaku ir tai buvo įvertinta tokių Izraelio politikų kaip Simonas Perezas. Visi šv. Jono Pauliaus valdymo metai buvo pilni tarpkultūrinių gestų: jis meldėsi drauge su Dalai Lama Asyžiuje (1986), buvo netgi užkėlęs Budos statulą ant altoriaus; jis buvo pirmasis apsilankęs žydų sinagogoje Romoje. Visas šias pastangas vainikavo jo kreipimasis į musulmonus Damasko Omeijadų mečetėje 2001 metais gegužės 6 dieną.

Esminiai žodžiai: *tarpkultūrinė komunikacija, tarpreliginis dialogas, popiežius Jonas Paulius II, II Vatikano Susirinkimas, musulmonų ir krikščionių dialogas, taikdarystė.*

*Dialogue is a school of humanity and a builder of unity,
which helps to build a society founded on tolerance and mutual respect.*

Pope Francis ¹

Although in recent times, intercultural communication is usually taught at business schools with the intent to give more chances to explain to the business partner that the particular item or product is of great value, it was not the only aim nor even the main one of this field, when it evolved. Originally, it was elaborated as the study of methods to introduce ourselves and to understand others increasingly better; in particular, in order to help the partner. This was, has been and hopefully will be the basic motivation, even the axial one of intercultural communication;

¹ Apostolic journey of His Holiness Pope Francis to Sarajevo (Bosnia and Herzegovina), 6 June 2015, Ecumenical and Interreligious Meeting at the Franciscan International Study Centre, 5:30 p.m. Prieiga internetu: http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2015/june/documents/papa-francesco_20150606_sarajevo-incontro-ecumenico.html

that is, the bridge-making and conflict managing as in everyday life and in the sphere of international relations. If so, no wonder that religions especially Christianity picked up this new field even more. They developed something quite similar to what was named “intercultural communication” by the foreign services.

The birth of intercultural communication was the failure in cases of the post-war supports that were to be given by the United States to countries which suffered during World War II and were quite underdeveloped. Then officials of the US faced the problem that the representatives, even more so, the people of the third-world and the countries that were to be helped, did not understand them. They did not accept the help as they were not convinced that that was real aid. Many development programs failed not because of poor design, but because of how they were implemented. Generally, the contacts between an average – even educated – American person and someone from the third-world-countries were sometimelike dialogues between the deaf; even when they spoke English excellently. What was the problem? The costumes, ways of expressions, methods of turning to the other, and such circumstance seemed not to be accidental but essential factors. According to Rogers and Steinfatt (1999, 61) many programs failed because of “inept, culturally insensitive technicians, working in Third World Nations whose language and culture they did not understand.” Thus: “An important lesson learned from these failures was that cultural factors needed to be given more weight in training and program development.” (Idem) The culture we live in, determines our meaning; therefore, when speaking to the other, one must acquire not only their language but their culture, too. Culture is as much a subject to be learned as the language, if one wants to talk to others and to understand them. Culture and language are equal, essential channels of communication; both of them must inevitably be acquired to perfection, if one wants express him / herself to others. This was the great discovery which inspired the Foreign Service Institute

of America to support investigations in problems of intercultural communication, as this field got its name at that time as well. This institution was established in order to train diplomats and clerks to work abroad. One FSI anthropologist, Edward Hall, combined his practical work with people in different cultures with his training in order to establish the new discipline of intercultural communication. After he wrote his best-selling book on nonverbal communication, more people began to study the impact of nonverbal messages (Hall, 1959). From the middle of the twentieth century, intercultural communication has dynamically developed into a wide and compounded discipline. The first university courses in ICC were introduced in the 1960s. The basic textbook was published by Samovar and Porter in 1972 under the title, *Intercultural Communication: A Reader*. As a result by the 1980s, more than 60 US universities taught graduate courses and about 200 offered undergraduate ones in the subject (Hickson, Stacks, Moore, 2004). For an example, in the non-business even non-diplomatic fields of intercultural communication, Hickson and Stacks (1992) give advice for academic chairs as well.

In parallel, actually, the Church evolved its own theory and practice of intercultural communication, as *Ecclesiam Suam* by Pope Paul VI and *Dives in Misericordia* or the *Redemptoris Missio* by John Paul II.

It was an act of setting an example that an old-fashioned structure like the Catholic Church tried to renew by opening its horizon to the rest of the world and contemporary values. As was stated in the Constitution about the role of the Church in the [contemporary] world, called by its initials as *Gaudium et spes* (“Joy and Hope”; further GS): since human dignity is the axial value of the world, and the Church exists in the world, the Church must hold a dialogue with the world. As GS was proclaimed at the end of 1965, no wonder the cited sentence reflects the first Encyclical *Ecclesiam Suam* by Pope Paul VI, who exerted pressure on the Council by his Opening Speech to the

second session of the V2 on September 29, 1963. – The title of its 7th chapter was quite meaningful: “The dialogue of the Church with the Contemporary World” (*Dialogo della Chiesa con il mondo contemporaneo*; subtitles are given in Italian – secondary – official – text, but not in the Latin version) (underline SF) and he stated in § 7.7 (the Latin text is to be cited as generally the Latin version is the most official text, published in the AAS, the official journal of the Holy See): “*Aetatem hanc nostram eiusque varias at pugnantes significationes summa benevolentia prosequimur...*” (Latin: Allocutio, AAS 1963, 856)². Let’s pay attention to the significant differences between the published official text in Latin and the delivered opening address in Italian. The Latin *at* conjunction is quite sharp, determined for expressing the ambiguity: “even, even, even though”. While the Italian text contains *e* “and” which is neutral. Italian verb *seguire* “to follow, to accompany” is not as strong as its etymological relative, Latin *prosequor* “follow somebody / sg; deal with somebody, treat somebody” which implies more active energy taken by the agent, even being a part of the idiomatic phrase *prosequor aliquem benevolentia* “be well / kindly disposed toward somebody”. As it already is a well-known fact, the Second Vatican Council was the terrain of sharp battles between the conservative and the realist wings of the Catholic Church; especially the “German lobby” fought for innovations and reformation (Wiltgen, 1978). Therefore, an opening address by the new Pope, who was just elected as successor to John XXIII, the “Pope of the Synod”, had to be modest, balanced, yet at the same time he had to be determined and unhesitant. Cardinal Montini was an adherent of the progressive wing but not as sharply as the “German lobby”; when he became the Pope, he

² Italian: “*Seguiamo con estrema simpatia questa nostra epoca e le sue varie e contraddittorie manifestazioni...*” (Italian, *Discorso...*, 7).

That is from Latin, literary: “Toward our time [=world] and toward its various – even struggling – manifestations, we must be disposed with all the good will [of ours]...” – and from Italian, literary: “We follow with all the sympathy [of ours] toward our epoch and its various and ambiguous manifestations...” (translations mine; no English version on the Vatican site).

definitely interposed into the process of the Synod, supporting the progressives, using his pontifical authority but apparently respecting all kinds of opinions, even those of the conservatives. Two months later, when the text was published as an official pontifical teaching by the Head of the Church, the Latin version already expressed, the goodwill “benevolentia” toward the secular world, the modern times clearly, more definitely. This was a step for the intercultural communication by the Catholic Church, and it demonstrated that the different versions of the Vatican texts in various languages were to be considered for investigating its particular meaning and significance.

Pope John Paul II was the first who wittingly spoke about intercultural communication, and distinguished between the dialogues of different cultures and the dialogue of the Gospel with the world. (The latter was one of the main ideas of Paul VI’s encyclicals *Ecclesiam suam* and *Populorum progressio*, too, and other of his speeches mentioned above. But Paul VI did not distinguish enough between the dialogues of culture and the dialogue by the Church with cultures; the latter was of the only importance to him, and anything else was subordinate to the relations between the Church and the secular world. The first Pope who directly treated intercultural communication was his second successor on the Papal throne.) Thus JP2 was the first Pope who paid attention to communication between different spheres of the contemporary world as a relevant task of the main actors of humankind (such as politicians, capitalists, arts and churches as well) and, on the other hand, the special communication with the purpose of spreading the Gospel. The first, “intercultural communication” in his texts means “dialogues between cultures”, while the second, [mere] “cultural communication” means “dialogue between Gospel and cultures” (Török, 2010, idem, 2011).

He highlighted interfaith and intercultural dialogues as important tools and ways for peacebuilding and solving such

global problems as migration. The Church had to take an active and effective role in this, as John Paul II emphasized:

Despite the problems I have mentioned, the world of immigrants can make a valid contribution to the consolidation of peace. Migration can in fact facilitate encounter and understanding between civilizations as well as between individuals and communities. The enriching dialogue between cultures, as I wrote in my *Message for World Day of Peace 2001*, is an “obligatory path to the building of a reconciled world” (n. 3). This happens when immigrants are treated with the proper respect for the dignity of each one... (John Paul II, Pope, 2003, 5)

In the eighth year of his pontificate, thus relatively early (considering his long officiation as Pope), in Assisi, October 27, 1986 he invited the leaders and representatives of “World Religions” which means he organised a very interreligious meeting. It was entirely his initiative, and as to the prayer for peace, the latter was based on the initiative by Community Saint Egidio. He there prayed together with the representatives of other religions, and he was criticized for putting a statue of Buddha on the altar of the Christian church. It was a real act of intercultural communication, though within a small number of different “establishment” religions, but not in the presence of a wide audience, according to media reports. However, none of his predecessors had done this, either with the opportunities of those times, or their ability for innovation, leading to openness in dialogue with the world. It is very popular, even already a commonplace, to recall the great act of the Pope who first visited the Jewish synagogue in Rome. This step was taken very soon in 1986, in the sixth year of the twenty-seven years of his pontificate. Let’s pay attention to the required length of preparing such a diplomatic act, too, thus it can be stated that the visit to a Jewish synagogue was one of JP2’s first serious plans. More than likely he had intended this step to (re)establish peaceful relations between Jews and Christians.

The date of the Assisi meeting was carefully planned: the Gulf War was starting, which was, according to several commentators, occasional, but in the opinion of the Pope, it followed in regular consequence of the wars in Vietnam, Lebanon and at that time in Afghanistan.

On the common pray there were represented almost every branch of Christianity (Orthodox Patriarchs of Constantinople, Moscow, Antioch, and others; leaders of Protestant churches, too) – and what is of more significance, leaders of eleven non-Christian world religions: representatives of Jews, American Indians, animists from Africa, Buddhists, Bahai'ists, Hindus, Jainists, Muslims, Sintoists, Sikhs, and Zorostrians.

Thus, the positive impacts of Assisi were of great significance. As we could see, the time of the first Assisi meeting was hot, it was at the beginning of the Gulf war, and the world was still divided into socialist and capitalist regimes, the Soviet Union still existed. Standing in the crossfire of his critics, Pope Saint John Paul II decided to arrange the interreligious meeting in every case, and, as his Secretary put it, according to the Catholic faith, his decision “was justified by the Holy Spirit” (by God), as that day no person fell victim to wars (Dziwisz, Svidercoschi 2008).

The aim of interreligious meetings is the managing of peacemaking! – stated the Pope in Assisi. As he wrote in the teaching documents (especially concerning the Pontifical Council of Cultures), the Catholic Church had to organise meetings with “the learned elite” of different religions and different cultures. We demonstrated what the role of “The Pontiff” was in this field by meeting the pontiffs of others: praying together as equals, and discourse on hope and love as equals.

Followed by apostolic visits, this interreligious meeting opened the way for intercultural communication in diplomacy, too, which was a significant part of the activity of JP2. As William Cenkner raised the question of “Mission and / or Dialogue” by stating:

Pope John Paul II in his visits around the world, including the United States and western Europe, but especially in Asia and Africa, meets consistently with religious leaders of other faiths. His talks in Asia and Africa have been considerably more progressive than in the West in which he has advanced dialogue and inculturation. (Cenkner, 1997, 138, note 7)

Soon it was followed by interreligious dialogues in the field of peacemaking, around the world, for example: a Buddhist-Christian meeting as a day of prayer for the 1200th anniversary of the Buddhist monastic complex on Mount Hiei, in Japan, August 3-4, 1987 (scarcely a year after Assisi, when a Buddha was put on the altar by the Pope); then a meeting of the World Council of Churches' Ecumenical Consultation on Spirituality in Interfaith Dialogue that met at the Kansai Seminar House in Kyoto, Japan, from December 1 to 5, 1987 (though this was "only" ecumenical but not interreligious), its final document deserved attention in its intercultural aspect, as issued by church representatives who were either native Asians or Westerners who have lived long enough in Asia to call one of these Asian countries an adopted home; then a discourse between Buddhists, Christians, Muslims, and Hindus that was held in Colombo, Sri Lanka, from August 23 to 29, 1987, coming to the final declaration in the very spirit of John Paul II (though he did not take part in it): "Opting for the Poor: The Challenge to the Universal Religions" (Editorial, 1988, 187). The first declaration recalled the Assisi meeting directly, moreover, it attenuated the significance of mere prayer and emphasized the duty of prayers in actively managing current problems:

Our being together here to pray for peace signifies a continuation of the same open spirit in which the Day of Prayer was observed at Assisi in October 1986, when the leaders of different religious traditions came together to pray for peace. [...] When we pray, we cannot but confess our unworthiness for the task of peace. [...] Praying for peace involves also working for peace, and even suffering for peace. (Idem, 188)

The second document, on the event where all participants were Christians but of different churches, highlights the importance of different cultures in the aspect of enriching Christianity by acquiring “strange” values of non-Christian religions:

In the Hindu and Buddhist traditions especially, we have found forms of practice and prayer that have been both challenging and enriching. For some, it was reading a book such as the Tao Te Ching or experiencing the worship of Hindu friends that captured us and moved us to look more deeply. For those of us who are monastic, it has been the dialogue with brothers and sisters in other contemplative traditions that has motivated our journey. And for those of us involved in social action programs, it has been in the very work of joining hands with people of other faiths in the struggle for a new society that we have been spiritually renewed. (Idem, 189)

What a great step forward, made by Christians, after the careful diplomat Paul VI, due to Saint John Paul II, the Pope of single heart! Last but not least, the “representative group of Hindus, Muslims, Christians and Buddhists from Third World countries who deliberated on the ‘Opting for the Poor,’ pointed out: there is an ambivalence in all religions. In its enslaving forms, religion encourages us to work with the powerful-Kings and Priests-in contradiction to the Primordial Liberative Experience [...] Participating in the struggle of the poor will invariably bring real possibilities of renewal to all religions” (Idem, 191).

Furthermore: interreligious meetings must not be “mere” spiritual exercises for some romantic love of each other as demonstrating brotherhood in faith, but serious acts for managing recent problems of humankind. Why? Because religions represent huge crowds of people, thus religious leaders are responsible for playing an active role in solving the vital questions of the world; that is, the very recent World; independent of their respective teaching on the hereafter. Those living in this world, and having authority and reputation in this world, are responsible for this world but not only for the other world. What is of significance is

that this approach is derived from the principles of all religions, in the declaration:

The dichotomy between the spiritual and the secular is a false one and true spirituality does not take us away from the world and its harsh realities but leads us right into it, strengthened for the tasks of full human living. Spirituality must pervade the economic, social, political, and cultural domains, not only the religious domain. (Idem, 192)

Nonetheless, the impact was made by John Paul II on diplomacy in Europe and shaping the Union as well. As Mudrov (2011) emphasizes, citing Leustean (2009), the European Community (now European Union) must establish contacts between European institutions and religious ones, which was made relatively late, although the religious issues in the EU are of increasing importance. According to Mudrov, Christianity represents the majority of religious people in the EU – which nowadays seems to be changed. (Thus Europe is becoming a terrain of interreligious dialogues, too, though he examines only the role of Christianity.) The liberal approach is conducive to minimising influence of religions on the people, as “privatized religion” is excluded from public and political issues. On the contrary,

The process of secularisation, occurring in some areas of the Union, is not applicable to the EU at large. [...] one can expect that the degree of influence and involvement of Churches goes according to confessional lines. We can expect a higher degree of influence and involvement of the Roman Catholic Church on the supranational level, while on the national level this depends on the circumstances of a given country. (Mudrov, 2011: 376)

John Paul II gave a good example for this, too. It concerned intercultural communication inasmuch as European countries and nations are different in their respective costumes and mentality. When he was still a Cardinal, Karol Wojtyła, travelled

in France, Belgium, Germany, and had good acquaintances in the West, and this led to his election as Pope, too, among other factors (Weigel, 2005). Thus, against the above quoted Cenkner (1997), who said that John Paul II's talks in Africa and Asia would be of greater success, the truth was the Pope's role in European diplomacy were of significance, too, though not as spectacular as those in the Third World. The papal diplomacy played an active role in European policy in the twentieth century, too (O'Mahony, 2009). European integration is the terrain of intercultural communication, too, even today, when tensions are to be reduced. Let's recall the case of Greece (an Orthodox country), the national government in Hungary (though a multi-confessional country, with a Catholic and Calvinist majority, its churches have increasing political power), and the respective role of churches in the national identity of Ireland, Scotland, Poland, and other mono-confessional countries (Mudrov, 2011, 375). John Paul II urged peacemaking in the war on the Balkans, too, in the 1990s; and his role was well-known for the peaceful transitions of East European countries from socialism into democratic society.

Another good example of intercultural communication was the alliance between Muslim politicians and John Paul II on the "Conference on Development" held by the United Nations in Cairo, 1996. It was a significant case of the role played by Pope John Paul II in the field of international relations, when he stood up against abortion at the conference on UN on the Growth and Development in Cairo, 1994. "Islamic leaders have begun to line up with the Vatican in condemning a landmark U.N. document on population and development, saying it condones extramarital sex, homosexuality, abortion, and possibly prostitution" (Lancaster 1994). According to Raymond Flynn, then-ambassador of the United States to the Holy See at the Vatican, then-president Jimmy Carter and his liberal politicians planned to solve the overpopulation of the world by supporting abortion and strict birth control, paying less attention to the better distribution

of goods and more effective development in poor third world countries. Pope John Paul II wanted to consult with the US President, thus Ambassador Flynn made a great effort for it, with little success. The Pope could not speak to President Carter before the US submitted its proposals. As Flynn described in his book on his diplomatic mission to the Vatican, the Pope called the Ambassador for a personal visit himself, urging him to pressure Carter to give an opportunity for a direct phone call using the hot line. In a vain result, American diplomacy did not change its conception on the Cairo conference of the United Nations; on the other hand, some Muslim leaders noticed the political conception of the Pope and they shared it. Although the western press focused on the question of abortion, the problem was global economic development and the fair distribution of goods in the globe. Benazir Bhutto and some other leaders welcomed the Pope's initiatives. Thus not only the religious leaders accepted some points of view of the Pope, as of Al-Azhar, but political ones, too (Flynn, 2001).

Bhutto criticized some western liberals who denied that religion and democracy may coexist, especially in the Muslim countries. She evidenced it was not true even on the base of the Noble Quran. Therefore, special forms of religious societies had to be provided; those preserve global human values. On this platform, the "clash of civilization" (Huntington) can be avoided, as no clash is inevitable, but reconciliation is the natural and regular way of the development of humankind, – stated Bhutto. The traditional frameworks of the society became elastic, the new generation seeks values; if so, religions must be considered as frameworks, cultural heritage and representers also holders of general values. It does not contradict modern society and progress (Bhutto, 2008). Recent decades demonstrate the time of the revival of religion, thus we can not deal with current problems without considering it, – writes Ali A. Allawi, the former minister of the transition governments in Iraq (Allawi, 2009).

As for the Muslim initiative, it is worthwhile to pay attention that the city of Baku also joined the centers of Islam and played a significant role in interfaith dialogues, in the past years of the pontificate of JP2. Its great mufti, Allahshükür Hummat Pashazade organized interreligious meetings, with the participation of Garegin II, the Armenian Catholics (even when their countries made war against each other!), and Moscow Patriarch Kirill, the head of the Russian Orthodox Church, and Cardinal Jean-Louis Tauran, then chair-person of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Affairs in the Vatican. Cardinal Tauran confirmed that Muslims in Azerbaijan were remarkable for their tolerance. Allahshukur Pashazade, the great muphti of Azerbaijan, demonstrated by his activity that the word “Islam” in Arabic was derived from “salam” which meant “peace”. While his country was making war with Armenia, he invited the Catholic’s (religious leader of the Armenian Nestorian Church) Garegin II for interreligious peacemaking meetings in Baku. “As the Armenian patriarch, I find it very important to continue our efforts with the head of the Muslim of Caucasus, Sheikh ul-Islam Allahshukur Pashazade, to continue our work and try to find a solution for the problem. This is our duty”, – said Garegin. (Radio Free Europe, 2010) The Vatican took part actively in the religious meetings in Baku, too. Cardinal Jean-Louis Tauran represented the Holy See in Azerbaijan, as then head of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogues. According to the Russian-language version of the Vatican³, Cardinal Tauran said: “The believers must become the hope of the World”, and the Caucasian Muslims worked toward this noble goal: “Muslims in Azerbaijan are of great tolerance” (Radio Vatican 04/05/2010).

Last but not least, let’s see the address of Pope John Paul II in Damascus. He was the first of the leaders of the Catholic Church who delivered a talk in a Muslim mosque, even in a mosque of much high rank. Thus it would be regarded as a festive sermon

³ I did not find his whole contribution on the English site.

like opening addresses, but it was rather an occasional speech, a policy-making speech, as for its message and friendly style. The invocation means far more than can be interpreted on the English version: My Friends! As-Salamu ‘alaiqum! The “Friend” in Arabic *Sadiq* means “the one whom I trust” as the root *sadaqa* means “to tell truth”. Therefore, the Pope expressed that he trusted his Muslim audience as true people. This is emphasized by the adjective “Dear”. The greeting is not only some mere polite words but it means: “Peace be with you!” And it recalls the Catholic greeting at the beginning of a pontifical mass in Latin: *Pax vobiscum* (“Peace be with you”). Then he recalls what is common in both Islam and Christianity, the Holy Land, Mary, Jesus – though he deals more with Mary than Jesus, as the resurrection of Jesus is the dividing point between the two religions, but Mary’s figure is more appropriate for linking. After these arguments, he points out the main task is peace-building; especially the new generation must be educated in the spirit of love and respect for others (John Paul II, 2001a Eng).

In conclusion, what can the intercultural communication of Saint Pope John Paul II teach us? First, diplomatic processes can be and must be continued. Then, churches can be and must play a more active and effective role in managing such problems as the question of migrants, the perspective of youth, the sharing of goods avoiding starvation, and making the life of humankind more human. Last but not least, let’s quote some words of the recent pontiff, Pope Francis: “Dialogue is a school of humanity and a builder of unity, which helps to build a society founded on tolerance and mutual respect”, as he said at the Ecumenical and Interreligious Meeting in Sarajevo, 6 June 2015 (Francis, Pope 2015).

Pope John Paul II was canonized as a saint in 2014 by Pope Francis, whose activity in intercultural diplomacy seemed to follow his great predecessor and was valued e.g. by Israeli politicians like Simon Perez. As may already be common knowledge, Perez proposed to the recent Pope to establish a union

of religions on the pattern of the United Nations (Lyman, 2014). Therefore, it was a message from the recent head of the Catholic Church to canonize his predecessors, who treated other religions as partners. Pope Francis seems to follow and even surpass his predecessor; therefore, the long and already concluded pontificate of JP2 may and can legitimize and popularize some of Pope Francis's recent statements and decisions.

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