

## “My paternal friend Cardinal Tauran”

The Catholic News Service [kath.net](http://kath.net) published [a tribute](#) to the late Jean Louis Cardinal Tauran by Thomas Schirmmacher, which we make available for free use by the media now.

My dear paternal friend Jean Louis Cardinal Tauran died on 5 July 2018 at age 75 in Hartford, Connecticut, where he had been hospitalized for treatment of Parkinson’s disease. In my long career in working with Christian organizations, he was one of my most treasured friends within the Roman Catholic Church and a man of great faith and principle.

Cardinal Tauran was a top diplomat of the Holy See for a long time. As such, he took part in many major international conferences, such as the Conference for Security and Cooperation in European (CSCE) and the UN Conference on Disarmament. He was papal nuncios to many countries, including Lebanon, and then the Vatican’s “foreign minister” for 13 years.

On March 13, 2013 at 8:10 p.m., it was Cardinal Tauran who stepped onto the balcony of St. Peter’s Cathedral to announce to hundreds of thousands of people present there and millions more who were watching the live broadcast that a pope had been selected: “Cardinalem Bergoglio qui sibi nomen Franciscum” [“Cardinal Bergoglio, who has taken the name Francis”].



Born in 1943 in France, Cardinal Tauran was the Vatican’s Secretary for Relations with States of the Secretariat of State from 1993 to 2003, which included the important years after the collapse of the Soviet Empire. Thereafter, from 2003 to 2007, he was the Vatican archivist. In 2007, even though he was suffering from Parkinson’s disease by that time, Pope Benedict XVI named him as President of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue (PCID). Additionally, he was the Protodeacon of the College of Cardinals from 2011 to 2014; in that role he communicated the results of the election of Pope Francis. From 2015 until his death, he was the Camerlengo of the Catholic Church, i.e., the individual who conducts business until the election of a new pope should the current pope die or resign. Only a few curial cardinals have held so many various high offices over such a long period of time. This modest, friendly, but also well-versed and well-read theologian and canon law expert was a deeply personal, caring human being. His staff always spoke about him in only the most glowing terms. I had the privilege of working with Cardinal Tauran during the development of ‘Christian Witness in a Multi-Religious World’, to which both the Catholic Church and the World Evangelical Alliance were signatories. I will never forget the words he shared about his life on the occasion when this document was publicly presented. At that time, Cardinal Tauran expressed the hope that the global Christian community would act much more in concert in the future. He and I enjoyed many more interactions in the subsequent years.

Upon the release of ‘Christian Witness in a Multi-Religious World’ in Geneva in 2011, Cardinal Tauran said,

“Today represents a historic moment in our shared Christian witness. For the first time in history, the World Council of Churches, representatives of the Vatican, and the World Evangelical Alliance have issued a joint document.”

Cardinal Tauran told those present,

“We Christians have the duty to proclaim our faith without any compromise. ... We are not teachers giving lessons about God. We are messengers of salvation brought to us by the death and resurrection of Christ, who is still living today.”

I saw Cardinal Tauran again when Pope Francis was installed. Soon after that, it became clear that the two would be linked in many ways beyond the fact that Cardinal Tauran had announced the new Pope’s election. Rather, two kindred spirits had found each other. Tauran was one of the first to be confirmed in his office by Francis despite his progressive disease and enjoyed the Pope’s complete trust.



## Four more remembrances

I wish to mention four other instances in which Cardinal Tauran exhibited his superlative leadership and fearless character.

At a breakfast meeting with journalists in March 2008, Tauran said that Rowan Williams, the Anglican Archbishop of Canterbury, had been “mistaken and naïve” in stating publicly that including some aspects of Sharia law in the British legal system was unavoidable. He also lamented the fact that relations with Islam so greatly dominated interreligious dialogue, stating that all religions needed to be addressed on equal terms with none assigned second-class status.

In June 2016, as President of the PCID, Cardinal Tauran invited representatives of the three bodies signing ‘Christian Witness in a Multi-Religious World’ to come together to celebrate the document’s fifth anniversary, together with representatives of about ten non-Christian religions. The three Christian bodies were represented by their highest representatives for interreligious dialogue, H. Em. Cardinal Jean-Louis Tauran (PCID), Dr. Clare Amos (WCC), and Prof. Dr. Thomas Schirmmacher (WEA). The speakers were Rev. Dr. Shanta Premavardhana, previously a staff member of the WCC, Bishop Miguel Àngel Ayuso Guixot, for the PCID, and Prof. Dr. Thomas K. Johnson, for the WEA. In his keynote address, Tauran stated that the document had had a vibrant impact, being used by all three bodies around the globe, and called it probably the most successful ecumenical document in existence.



In 2017, I had the privilege to present the Pakistani human rights lawyer Aneeqa Anthony to Pope Francis. She gave him a painted brick as a symbol of the numerous Christians enslaved in brick factories in Pakistan. This brick, which she referred to as a “stumbling block” was designed by three Christian children whose parents were beaten by a mob, thrown alive into a brick kiln, and burned to



death in November 2014. Anthony was representing the children in court. Tauran unhesitantly labeled what had happened a “barbarous act” and called on Islamic authorities to denounce it. I had met with Cardinal Tauran on the prior day.

Finally, in April 2018 Cardinal Tauran visited Riyadh, the capital of Saudi Arabia, and met with various high-ranking Muslim leaders. Despite the fact, that non-Muslim religious meetings are forbidden in the country, he celebrated a mass together with the local Catholic congregation. He spoke up for human rights and dignity and for religious freedom.

We will all miss Cardinal Tauran, but I will remain inspired by the example of this good and faithful servant.

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