



**8th Buddhist-Christian Colloquium**  
**Buddhists and Christians Working Together**  
**for Peace through Reconciliation and Resilience**  
**May 26–29, 2025 | Phnom Penh, Cambodia**



## **I-Introduction**

In *Nostra Aetate* (1965), the Catholic Church expressed deep respect for other religions, recognizing in Buddhism a noble spiritual path offering “perfect liberation” and awakening awareness of impermanence and suffering in the world. Inspired by this vision, the Dicastery for Interreligious Dialogue has supported a historic series of Buddhist-Christian Colloquia, offering space for mutual understanding and collaboration.

These international colloquia bring together Buddhist and Christian monks, priests, nuns, scholars, and practitioners to reflect on shared spiritual and ethical values. In dialogue, they explore how both traditions can contribute to the healing of wounded societies, the restoration of human dignity, and the advancement of justice and compassion in a world marked by violence and fragmentation.

Since the re-establishment of diplomatic relations between the Kingdom of Cambodia and the Holy See in 1994, following decades of civil war and become peaceful country, the Catholic Church in Cambodia has played an active and constructive role in national reconciliation, social development, and interreligious dialogue. Over the years, the Catholic Church of Cambodia has developed a strong and respectful relationship with the Buddhist community the majority faith in the country. This relationship is marked by regular exchanges of visits at various levels, including leaders of religious institutions, NGOs, congregations, educational institutions, and . These engagements reflect a shared commitment to peace, mutual understanding, and the promotion of the common good. Joint activities

and collaborations, particularly in the fields of education, humanitarian aid, and community development, have become significant bridges of friendship between the two religious Buddhist and Catholic. Through these efforts, both communities continue to demonstrate that interfaith harmony is not only possible but also essential for the healing and growth of Cambodian society.

The Catholic Church in Cambodia comprising the Apostolic Vicariate of Phnom Penh, the Apostolic Prefecture of Battambang, and the Apostolic Prefecture of Kampong Cham has been actively and concretely engaged in interreligious dialogue and cooperation for many years. This commitment is deeply rooted in the Church's mission of peace, reconciliation, and service to all people, regardless of faith, and is a vital expression of its identity within a predominantly Buddhist society.

## **II-Brief Background of Buddhist-Christian Colloquium**

**The Buddhist-Christian Colloquia began in 1995** with the groundbreaking first gathering in Taiwan, centered on “Buddhism and Christianity – Convergence and Divergence,” which laid the foundation for ongoing interreligious dialogue. In the years that followed, themes such as silence and the Word (India, 1998), community life (Japan, 2000), inner peace and global harmony (Rome, 2013), fraternity (India, 2015), and nonviolence (Taiwan, 2017) shaped the conversations. After the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, **the 7th Colloquium was held in 2023 in Thailand**, focusing on “*Karunā* and *Agape* in Dialogue for Healing a Wounded Humanity and the Earth,” emphasizing compassion, love, and ecological healing in a post-pandemic world.

## **III-Objective of the 8<sup>th</sup> Buddhist-Christian Colloquium**

**The 8th Buddhist-Christian Colloquium**, to be held in **Phnom Penh, Cambodia**, continues this journey under the theme “**Buddhists and Christians Working Together for Peace through Reconciliation and Resilience.**” This event seeks to deepen mutual understanding and discern how our respective scriptures, teachings, and living witnesses can respond to the deep wounds of our world with healing, resilience, and shared commitment to peace.

The Cambodian context adds special depth to this colloquium. The life and legacy of **Maha Ghosananda**, a revered late monk known as the “Gandhi of Cambodia,” embody the power of nonviolence and spiritual resilience in the face of profound suffering. His inspiring teachings through the *Dhammayietra* (**Peace Walks**) continue to guide interfaith efforts for peace, compassion, and reconciliation.

#### **IV-Peace and Reconciliation in action**

Also central to Cambodia's voice for peace is **Mr. Tun Channareth**, a Catholic activist and **1997 Nobel Peace Prize recipient** for the **International Campaign to Ban Landmines**. Sr. Denise Coghlan, his colleague and mentor at the Reflection Center in Siem Reap, will share his journey from landmine survivor to global advocate for justice and disarmament.

An important expression of this commitment is the Catholic Church's active membership in the **Cambodian Interreligious Council (C.I.C.)**, a platform that brings together leaders from various religious traditions to foster understanding, unity, and cooperation. Within the C.I.C., Catholic leaders from all three ecclesiastical jurisdictions regularly participate in interfaith dialogues, joint peace-building initiatives, and community events that promote harmony and reconciliation among Cambodia's diverse religious communities.

This consistent and sincere collaboration among Cambodia's religious communities particularly the close and peaceful relations among Catholics is increasingly as a **model of interreligious harmony**. At a time when religious conflict persists in many parts of the world, Cambodia stands as a witness that dialogue, mutual respect, and shared service can build lasting peace and reconciliation.

The Catholic Church in Cambodia remains fully committed to walking together with all religious traditions, not only in words but through concrete actions of justice, peace, and love in Cambodia society. This shared journey continues to inspire hope and unity in Cambodia and offers an encouraging example for interfaith relations globally.

By fostering respectful dialogue and spiritual solidarity, the 8th Colloquium invites participants to renew their commitment to peacebuilding and strengthen interreligious collaboration for a better world.

*Phnom Penh, May 18, 2025*