



## *Secretariat for Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs*

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Dear Friends,

My name is Fr Al Baca and I am the newly appointed Executive Director for the Secretariat for Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs for the USCCB. I am not from the East Coast but grew up in and have lived all my life in Orange County, California. I was ordained to the diocesan priesthood in 1989 and have served in several parishes and variety of ministries since arriving here. In 2005 I was sent to Rome to study and receive a Licentiate in Sacred Theology with a specialization in Ecumenism. Of importance to this Office, I was the Episcopal Vicar for Ecumenism and Interreligion for 10 years in the Diocese of Orange.

Beginning my term of assignment here, I am indebted to Fr John Crossin for the dedication, care and energy he put to the Church's mission entrusted to him as former Executive Director. He is in a long line of directors who have helped further the call of dialogue both ecumenical and interreligious called for by the Second Vatican Council. Each director has worked with dedicated staff and bishops to break down the walls of division and restore the unity that was once ours.

More than ever, the work of dialogue is important for the Church and in the world. Not a day goes by where there isn't some ecumenical and/or interfaith event or initiative happening in Rome or some other part of the world. Following the mandate of the Gospel and guided by the *Decree of Ecumenism* and *Nostra Aetate*, a path of dialogue, understanding and reconciliation has been placed before us.

Ecumenism works toward re-establishing the full unity of Christians that over centuries has been lost. Christ's plea to the Father that they may all be one is taken seriously as we search to heal the wounds and divisions of the present and one day back again to a unity of faith, worship and common life.

Interreligious dialogue establishes friendship and cooperation with all religions outside of the Christian family in order to seek the good of every person and of society. And now we look at a new category of people who self-identify simply as spiritual: the "nones." Today, we carry a special burden and a joy in caring for and building up the whole human family.

Pray for all of us in the Secretariat for Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs and our bishops as we continue the work of reconciling, healing, building and restoring unity with and among each other, faith communities, and the seekers. Let us do what is in our power to support the prayer of Christ that all may be one.

Fr Al Baca

Executive Director of the Secretariat for Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs