

## **Building Bridges - excerpts**

with some editing

from the Keynote by Bishop Robert McElroy, Roman Catholic Diocese of San Diego

San Diego Regional Interfaith Collaborative Gathering of Religious Leaders

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### Ethos

The Vatican Council said that the fullness of truth subsists in the Catholic Church, but the avenues to truth are abundantly available in almost every faith community. That ethos undergirds this whole effort that you are undertaking.

### Religious Flourishing Key to the Soul of our Nation

One of the great problems that we have as a nation and a society now is this: Our soul in the United States is deeply at stake because our politics has been reduced to a set of transactions and ideologies. One of the great things the founders wrestled with was, How in a democracy do you lead people to look beyond individual self interest and look to the common good?

They believed it could only be done if there were religious flourishing in the society. Historically religious communities have played a pivotal role in making our politics one that looks to the good of the whole and asks, How are we called to bring to this world a new level of kindness, compassion, mercy, justice, understanding, truthfulness, courage and the bonds of unity? How can we build that kind of community here in this place? Because what binds us together is a sense of the transcendent.

### Levels and Dimensions to the Bonds of Union

Solidarity. In times of crisis, or in times when there are assaults on particular religious groups among us, it is crucial that we stand together, that we be public in doing that, that we stand up and say to forces of hatred, whatever they may be, and however uncomfortable it makes us to say that, to stand up and resist attacks on any religious group or any community in our midst. Anyone who attacks a faith of ours, attacks us all.

Collaboration. To be part of something that ministers to the whole community to a particular need. Faith is not something which primarily separates, it is something that primarily brings us together, and can very effectively bring us together in action.

Exploration. I think it is important for us as communities of faith to understand better what each other teaches, what the various faith communities teach because it is ignorance of that which feeds some of the greatest sinfulness in our midst, and some of the labeling, and some of the exclusion

Encounter. Encounter is when we actually believe that by coming to understand the faith of others we will encounter, in a deeper way, the truth. Other faiths can speak to us with the power or sometimes with an insight or a prism about the truth, that can bring us to a new level of understanding.

Accompaniment. Accompaniment means walking with each other, to understand that in the hearts and souls of every individual there are mysteries we will never understand. As in our Catholic faith, [so hopefully in all others]: you cannot be only Catholic if you do not seek to have that relationship with every human person and with every individual community and individual faith.