

FANATICISM: CAUSES, EFFECTS AND SOLUTIONS

3rd Global Conference on World's Religions after September 11 to tackle issues of division among religions and terrorism-induced fear of faith

Montreal, September 15, 2016 – The 3rd Global Conference on World's Religions after September 11, which will take place today at the Palais des Congrès in Montreal, explores the concept *From Faith to Interfaith* and in particular, focuses on the issue of fanaticism and how to combat it. The aim of the conference is to reinforce the positive role of religion in modern life, despite recent terrorist attempts in Paris, Ankara and Brussels to use it as a veil for aggression and hate.

At the conference, the first-ever *Universal Declaration of Human Rights by the World's Religions* will be released. "Religious extremism is causing an antagonistic division between and within secular and religious realms. The discourse on human rights can serve as an effective antidote to the rise of extremism," said Dr. Arvind Sharma, Birks Professor of Comparative Religions at McGill University and convenor of the 3rd Global Conference on World's Religions.

Highlights of the conference include its keynote speakers:

- **Karen Armstrong**, Historian of religion and author of the bestseller *A History of God* and more recently *Fields of Blood: Religion and the History of Violence*.
- **Gregory Baum**, Professor Emeritus of Theology Ethics at McGill, he has served as theological advisor during the Second Vatican Council and has devoted his career to inter-faith dialogue.
- **Deepak Chopra**, M.D. and world-renowned speaker and author in the field of mind-body healing. He wrote more than 80 books, including 22 *New York Times* bestsellers. His most recent book is *Super Genes*. In 2016, he and Oprah Winfrey launched the *21-Day Meditation Experience*.
- **Harvey Cox**, Professor Emeritus of Religion at Harvard University. He is the author of the bestseller *The Secular City*. At the conference, he will sign copies of his new book *The Market as God*.
- **Phil Fontaine**, National Chief of the Assembly of First Nations in Canada from 1997 to 2009 and President of Ishkonigan.

- **Susannah Heschel**, Professor of Jewish Studies at Dartmouth College. She is also the daughter of the late Abraham Joshua Heschel, one of the 20th century's most important Jewish thinkers.
- **Amir Hussain**, Professor of Theological Studies at Loyola Marymount University, specialist in contemporary Muslim societies and author of *Muslims and the Making of America*.
- **Sri Sri Ravi Shankar**, Spiritual leader and ambassador of peace. He created the Art of Living Foundation, one of the world's biggest NGOs, which is active in more than 150 countries.
- **Charles Taylor**, Philosopher and Professor Emeritus at McGill University. He is the author of *A Secular Age* and *Sources of the Self* and co-chaired the Bouchard-Taylor Commission in Quebec.

An evening performance of sacred dance and music from different religious traditions of the world will also be held to celebrate the unveiling of the Declaration.

Building on the discussions and ideas shared in the 2006 and 2011 conferences, the third global conference on World's Religions After September 11 will address concerns raised by the portrayal of religion in negative terms since the events of September 11, 2001. The conference aims to highlight religion as a positive force for human flourishing.

About the Global Conference on World's Religions

The 1st Global Conference on World's Religions after September 11 was organized in September 2006 with the theme *Can religion be a force for good?* The conference attracted participants from 84 countries, and many distinguished speakers including Karen Armstrong, Shirin Ebadi, Huston Smith, and Seyyed Hossein Nasr. The positive outcome of the event encouraged the organizers to hold a 2nd Global Conference, in September 2011, which was inaugurated by His Holiness the Dalai Lama. It was also addressed by Tariq Ramadan, Robert Thurman, Deepak Chopra and Steven Katz. The theme of this conference was *Peace through religion*. The 2016 conference is the third in this series. Visit www.worldsreligions2016.org to learn more.

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