

## **“Be the change you want to see in the world”**

**1. Faced with the horror of Friday November 13, our hearts stricken and filled with compassion, we and our communities have prayed according to our respective religious traditions,** and continue to do so. Together, we express our pain, which directs us firstly towards the victims’ families and loved ones. May they receive hope and peace in their hearts. We entrust to God the merciful, and to divine blessing, the victims of Paris, Saint-Denis, and the many other places in which innocent people have been murdered in similar fashion. May their blessed memory be kept alive.

**2. Faced with the risk of the spread of murderous frenzy, we join with all French people and all those who, over and above any partisan consideration, desire peace, the daughter of justice.** Genuine peace, which echoes divine harmony, is such a precious asset! In the light of this, we turn to prayer and call on believers to be men and women of prayer, in accordance with our declaration of October 27, 2011: “To desire peace is to recall that it is a gift of God; that is why, each according to his or her faith, we pray for peace among men to grow.” (Declaration: *Aujourd’hui, la paix est urgente !* ‘There is an urgent need for peace today’). We pray for our authorities entrusted with the mission of justice, as well as for the police, gendarmes and military personnel who stand with courage in the front line for our safety.

**3. Faced with senseless crimes of barbarity, we cry out in anger and sadness that the holy name of God has been scorned and despised** by criminal acts that are wholly incompatible with any invocation of the divine. With one heart, we forthrightly declare together the message of Pope John Paul II, the instigator of the Assisi gathering almost thirty years ago: “Any use of religion to support violence is an abuse of religion. Religion is not and must not become a pretext for conflict (...) Religion and peace go together: to wage war in the name of religion is a blatant contradiction...” We wholeheartedly make these words of the Pope our own. Consequently, together we commit to walk in the ways of peace set out in the “Assisi Decalogue for Peace” signed on January 24, 2002 by 200 representatives of different religions worldwide.

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**4. Faced with the absurd folly we have just lived through, as representatives in Ile-et-Vilaine of Christianity, Judaism, Islam, and Buddhism, we commit in particular to the following four points: combating ignorance, teaching respect, promoting dialogue, and developing the spirituality of the heart.**

### ***Combating ignorance***

5. In our respective places of worship, we refuse absolutely to engage in any preaching or instruction liable to lead to violence, anti-Semitism, Islamophobia, racism, extremism, or any form of guilt by association. We encourage training in order for the teaching given to be based on genuine knowledge of our respective religions.

6. In view of the incoherence of certain quasi-religious messages, we wholeheartedly assert that the true meaning of our “sacred” texts derives not from the letter alone, but from the spirit, which can sometimes remain hidden when the letter is read literally. To combat ignorance, we commit firmly to adopting an interpretation of passages which at first sight

allude to violence, in any form whatsoever, in the light of a common conviction of faith and wisdom inherited from our wise ones: all human beings are brothers and sisters, called to love one another and recognize that the divine spark dwells within them all.

7. The philosopher Paul Ricœur, who had ties to Rennes, urged others to engage in this work of interpretation, thanks to which preaching and religious instruction nurture a proper knowledge of God and divine truths, kindly disposed humility, efficacious love for every human being, sincere tolerance for the convictions of others, and love for our neighbour that is lived out in action.

### ***Teaching respect***

8. Aware that many of our contemporaries, particularly young people, are seeking meaning to life, we wish to implement religious education that teaches respect for others, by revealing the richness and spiritual beauty of every human individual, from the start of their life through to their death.

9. We are firmly committed to respecting the sacred nature of human life. No human being may grant themselves the right to kill another. Our religions assert this: “You shall not kill” (The Bible, Exodus 20:13); “Refrain from killing living creatures” (one of the five Buddhist Precepts); “kill not the life which Allah has made sacred” (Quran, Surah 6:151). Each human being is, in truth, infinitely precious.

10. We are committed to encouraging respect for each culture and the works of art that express it. To this end, we encourage familiarization with these cultures and learning to discern the wisdom they bear within them.

11. We are persuaded that respect is authentic only if we respect freedom of conscience and religious freedom. We therefore acknowledge that this freedom should be a right in all countries.

### ***Promoting dialogue***

12. Each religion opens up a path of justice and forgiveness. Consequently, the diversity of our religions represents a rich resource, thanks to which we can together seek and find the paths of justice and forgiveness, without which peace remains illusory.

13. We are determined to promote a culture of dialogue and meeting. We commit to organizing regular meetings between believers of different faiths, and with non-believers, in order for this mutual respect and knowledge to increase. This will enable us to share values that are not only humanistic and humanitarian, but also shared, vital, essential common truths as to human existence and our common destiny.

14. We wish to promote a lucid view of the ancient and recent history that has been a source of conflict, contempt and discrimination between individuals. This view is an invitation to be vigilant in order not to repeat the errors of the past. It may also contribute to us finding the right interpretative keys to our “sacred” texts.

15. Dialogue is also an opportunity to acknowledge the benefits of ancient history, in particular by discerning in it those contributions of our religious traditions to our country that

have helped to make it a land of justice, freedom, shelter for refugees and love for the most vulnerable.

### ***Developing an inner spirituality***

16. Faced with the seeds of violence that may lie within our hearts, we reiterate the importance of prayer and the inner life; these are sources of peace and gentleness towards one another.

17. We invite all well-intentioned and responsible men and women to progress in spirituality and prayer: these are vital in the heart of our society, crushed as it is by excessive consumerism and stress.

18. We are convinced that the inner life and familiarity with religions nurture merciful and compassionate attitudes. The latter make it possible to accommodate differences and establish brotherly relations. They also provide strength to respond to evil actions with good.

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19. Inspired by the words of Gandhi: “Be the change you want to see in the world”, we commit to changing anything in us and in our actions that is detrimental to authentic brotherliness. We wish to make our contribution to better community life by adopting this prayer from the oldest monotheistic religion: “Send out your light and your truth: let them lead me” (The Bible, Psalm 43:3). We resolve to meet each autumn to discuss our “sacred” writings, debate the commitments we have made in this Declaration, and consider our actions in line with our religious missions, in order to promote peaceful and blessed fraternity in Rennes, the district of Rennes and Ille-et-Vilaine.

Rennes, Saturday, November 21, 2015

### **Signatures**

Monseigneur Pierre d’Ornellas  
*Archbishop of Rennes, Dol and Saint Malo*

Fr Jean Roberti  
*Archpriest, Orthodox Church of Rennes*

Pastor David Buick  
*Christ Pour Tous,  
Regional protestant prison chaplain*

Pastor Jacky Leprat  
*Le Thabor Evangelical Church, Rennes*

Mr Zaidouni Mohamed Iqbal  
*Preacher, Chaplain,  
President of the Muslim Religious Council  
of Brittany*

Mr Maurice Mlekuz  
*Permanent deacon to the Diocese of Rennes*

Fr Gareth Randall  
*Priest in the Anglican Church*

Pastor Olivier Putz  
*For the Presbyteral Council  
United Protestant Church*

Mrs Ann Nusimovici  
*President of the Rennes Jewish Community*

Mr Ahmed El Ghazi  
*Imam, Avicenne Islamic Cultural Centre, –  
Villejean – Rennes*

Mr Moulay Said Essecri  
*Imam, E aqwa Islamic Cultural Centre –  
Le Blosne – Rennes*

Mr Brahim Essouyri  
*Imam, Islamic Cultural Centre, Ennour – Rennes*

Mr Mohammadou al Amine Dicko  
*Imam, Espoir-Amal – Rennes*

Mr Birinci Temel  
*Imam, Turkish Islamic Cultural Centre –  
Noyal/Châtillon-sur-Seiche*

Ms Virginie Simard  
*President, Buddhist Cultural Centre,  
Rennes*