Foreword

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Foreword

Founded in 1703 for the evangelization of the poor, the Spiritan Congregation considers inter-religious dialogue as integral to its mission in the contemporary world. Present in sixty countries around the globe, Spiritans live and minister in many different cultural and religious contexts where the encounter with different faith traditions offers unique opportunities for a dialogue of life, for mutual enrichment, for building bridges between people, and for collaborative grassroots initiatives towards the promotion of justice and the advancement of peace in society.

With the escalating violence today between the followers of different religions, often involving the systematic persecution of minority groups, the importance of interreligious dialogue takes on a new urgency. Pope Francis states unambiguously that “interreligious dialogue is a necessary condition for peace in the world, and so it is a duty for Christians as well as other religious communities” (Evangelii gaudium, no. 250). This dialogue, in the first place, is a conversation about human existence, a matter of being open to others, of accepting their difference, of sharing their joys and sorrows. “We can then join one another in taking up the duty of serving justice and peace, which should become a basic principle of all our exchanges. A dialogue which seeks social peace and justice is, in itself, beyond all merely practical considerations, an ethical commitment which brings about a new social situation” (ibid). In addition, interreligious dialogue has a vital contribution to make towards protecting our common home, defending the poor, and building networks of mutual respect and fraternity in a divided world (cf. Laudato Si, no. 201).

The articles in this present volume, published under the auspices of the Center for Spiritan Studies, Duquesne University, were first presented at an international forum on interreligious dialogue in Zanzibar in December 2018. This meeting brought together some fifteen Spiritans involved in inter-religious dialogue around the globe and a number of scholar practitioners with a view to sharing experiences, analyzing current approaches, identifying best practices, harnessing assets, and designing new strategies for presentation at the next general chapter of the Spiritan Congregation in Lichen, Poland, 2020. Written and compiled by Spiritans passionately committed to interreligious dialogue, I have no doubt that their insights, wisdom, and recommendations will be of interest to a much broader audience.

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SUPERIOR GENERAL.