

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS
TO REPRESENTATIVES OF DIFFERENT RELIGIONS**
Clementine Hall

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[...]The theme of mercy is familiar to many religious and cultural traditions, where compassion and nonviolence are essential elements pointing to the way of life; in the words of an ancient proverb: "death is hard and stiff; life is soft and supple" (*Tao-Te-Ching*, 76). To bow down with compassionate love before the weak and needy is part of the authentic spirit of religion, which rejects the temptation to resort to force, refuses to barter human lives and sees others as brothers and sisters, and never mere statistics. To draw near to all those living in situations that call for our concern, such as sickness, disability, poverty, injustice and the aftermath of conflicts and migrations: this is a summons rising from the heart of every genuine religious tradition. It is the echo of the divine voice heard in the conscience of every person, calling him or her to reject selfishness and to be open. Open to the Other above us, who knocks on the door of our heart, and open to the other at our side, who knocks at the door of our home, asking for attention and assistance. [...]