



Alliance
for
Shared Values

November 26, 2025

Message of Condolences on the Passing of Father Thomas Michel

We are saddened to learn the passing of Father Thomas F. Michel, S.J., one of the most influential figures in Catholic-Muslim dialogue of the past half-century. Father Michel dedicated his life to building bridges between Christianity and Islam, embodying the vision of Nostra Aetate that called believers to "to work sincerely for mutual understanding and to preserve as well as to promote together for the benefit of all mankind social justice and moral welfare, as well as peace and freedom."

With a doctorate in Islamic Thought from the University of Chicago and thirteen years leading the Vatican's Office for Religious Relations with Muslims under Pope John Paul II, Father Michel brought both scholarly rigor and warmth of his heart to interfaith engagement. He taught Christian theology to Muslim university students in Türkiye and Islam to Christian audiences worldwide—a rare representative of reciprocal witness.

Father Michel became the foremost Catholic authority on the writings of Bediuzzaman Said Nursi, revealing profound convergences between Islamic and Christian spirituality in his works such as *Risale-i Nur: Said Nursi's Advice for Modern Believers*. His encounter with the Hizmet movement in 1988 blossomed into a friendship with Fethullah Gülen Hocaefendi spanning over three decades. He witnessed firsthand the movement's commitment to education, dialogue, and service, writing extensively on its contributions to interfaith understanding. He is the author of *Peace and Dialogue in a Plural Society: Contributions of the Hizmet Movement at a Time of Global Tensions*.

He was among the officials who welcomed Hocaefendi to the Vatican for his historic meeting with the late Pope John Paul II in 1998. He was assigned to take part in planning a university in Şanlıurfa, which Hocaefendi proposed to the Pope to build collaboratively, where Muslim, Christian and Jewish students would study all three Abrahamic religions together.

Father Michel understood that dialogue means not merely talking but listening, studying together, and working jointly for the common good. Among his many precious publications, his book *A Christian View of Islam* remains essential reading for all who seek authentic encounter across religious boundaries.

We extend our deepest condolences to Father Michel's family, to the Society of Jesus, the Catholic world, and all who knew and loved Father Michel. We pray that Father Michel's life example continues to inspire all who believe in the critical role that interreligious dialogue plays in building mutual understanding, respect and friendship among members of the world's diverse faiths.

About Alliance for Shared Values

The Alliance for Shared Values (AFSV) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit that serves as a voice for cultural organizations affiliated with Hizmet, a civil society movement inspired by prominent preacher and peace advocate Fethullah Gülen. The Alliance strives to promote peace and social harmony by helping reduce misinformation and false stereotypes about any or all ethnic, cultural and religious communities. To learn more about the Alliance, please visit www.afsv.org.

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