

The Commission of Religious Leaders of New York City

Roman Catholic

-The Archdiocese of New York
-The Diocese of Brooklyn

**The New York
Board of Rabbis****The Imam's Council of
New York City
Metropolitan Area****The Council of Churches
of the City of New York**

-Protestant, Orthodox and
Anglican Churches

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Respect for Faith Traditions

We, as members of religious communities, have come together, in all our diversity and differences, recognizing the sacred dimension of each other, to create the *Commission of Religious Leaders of New York City (CORL)*. As an interfaith group that brings together representative from many faiths to share a witness in society for justice and equality, calls upon persons of all faiths to work together to improve the quality of life for with deep respect for all faith traditions even as we recognize that we adhere and are passionate for our own different beliefs.

Every faith group has a particular vision of truth which it feels is unique. Some faith communities feel that it is a part of their mission to share that truth with others who are not of that tradition. We do support the right of all religions to share their message in the spirit of good will. It is inappropriate, however, for one faith group to openly demean or disparage the philosophies or practices of another faith group as part of its proselytizing and must be done with a sense of humility and a respect for others.

We do not presume to pass judgment on the legitimacy of groups who rally around a particular ideology or theology. Many people draw spiritual sustenance from religious groups that span the spectrum of religious expression. We do, however, speak out when a religion uses activities that are harmful to the spirit of inter-religious respect and tolerance. We condemn proselytizing efforts which de-legitimize the faith tradition of the very person whose conversion is being sought. In our opinion such tactics go beyond the bounds of appropriate and ethically based religious outreach.

Groups that specifically target the members of one religion for conversion to their vision of faith, making the claim that in accepting it they are being more faithful to that faith when in fact those who are proselytizing may be undermining the fundamentals of the person's faith heritage. Such efforts are deceptive and dishonest. Furthermore, by incorporating symbols, rituals and prayers in their houses of worship and, sometimes, even calling their leaders by titles borrowed from the targeted tradition they seek to win over, are examples of deception. Many who are sincerely looking for a path back to their ancestral heritage but are being led to actually subvert it. These deceptive efforts are sometimes carried out on the most vulnerable populations. These techniques are tantamount to coerced conversions and are to be condemned.

We urge all religious denominations and bodies to respect the principles of religious diversity as the foundation of a society and foster interfaith understanding and cooperation in the Greater New York and throughout the United States.

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