



Sikh Dharma of the West

Sikh teacher Yogi Bhajan and his wife present a symbolic Sikh gift to Pope John Paul II. Rome, 1983.

## A gift from Yogi Bhajan

*SIKH LEADER URGED POPE JOHN PAUL II TO CALL AN INTERNATIONAL GATHERING OF RELIGIOUS LEADERS*

In 1986, Pope John Paul II convened a multifaith prayer service in Assisi, Italy. Leaders of all the world's religions came to the birthplace of St. Francis to pray for world peace. Some observers claim that the Assisi gathering has proven to be the most important multi-faith worship service in history. We measure its significance by the sheer volume of interfaith activity it has triggered around the world.

The seeds that inspired this historic gathering were sown by an important Sikh leader. Until his death last year, Siri Singh Sahib Harbhajan Khalsa Yogiji (known also as Yogi Bhajan) was the Chief Religious and Administrative Authority for the Sikh Dharma of the West.

An expert in world religions, Yogi Bhajan made an enormous contribution to the international interfaith movement. In 1972, he met with Pope Paul VI at the Vatican. During the audience, the Sikh leader encouraged the Pope to call an international gathering of religious leaders and spiritual teachers. Yogi Bhajan suggested that the Pope was the most suitable leader in the world to host such a meeting.

When Yogi Bhajan met with Pope John Paul II in 1983 and 1984, he repeated his suggestion. In 1986, this interfaith dream came to fruition.

In some parts of the world, we are now witnessing the beginnings of a Sikh-Christian dialogue. Scarborough Missions, for example, has conducted site visits to Sikh temples in Toronto. And Sikh ministers are regular participants in Scarborough Missions' world religion retreat days for high school students.∞



**"If all the religious traditions worked together to combat the brokenness in our world, there would be a tremendous outpouring of goodness and love, of compassion and mercy, of forgiveness and reconciliation, and of justice, respect and dignity for all. The result would be universal peace."**

*Scarboro missionary  
Fr. Raymond O'Toole*

*Fr. O'Toole has worked in Canada as a member of Scarborough Missions' leadership Council and is past coordinator of the Scarborough Missions Interfaith Desk. He has also worked in Brazil and Hong Kong. Today, he is again in Hong Kong (photo above), actively involved in interfaith dialogue.*