

Katharine Mencini

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Introduction to World Religions

## Site Visit Report #2

With the semester coming to an end, it was time to attend a second religious site. This time I went to a dialogue at the campus rather than attending a more traditional service like I did for the first site report. The dialogue was a Christian-Buddhist encounter where Ven. Shih Ying-Fa, Abbot of Cloud Water Zendo, and Fr. Nicholas R. A. Rachford, Pastor of St. Nicholas Byzantine Catholic Church, discussed the meaning of compassion for each of their respective religions and how it deals with the contemporary society. The seminar was held in the Stocker Center on the campus of Lorain County Community College in a decent sized lecture style room. There were around 200 people in attendance. The people that were in attendance were dressed in very causal clothing with a handful that seemed to be a bit more dressed up. The age of the attendees was a wide range from around 20-60's.

Ven. Shih Ying-Fa was dressed in an elaborate red robe that was draped over a black shirt. The robe was worn to show one shoulder to be bare and the other side was held up with golden rope, he was also wearing sandals on his feet. The reason for the shoulder being bare you are showing respect for your teacher and that you let them know that you are willing to "shoulder a burden" for them. Fr. Rachford was dressed in plain black clothing with a large cross necklace. The reason for the clothing to be all black is to show detachment from all material things in the world. After both gave their dialogues, I thought that the two religions seemed to have more similarities with their view on compassion than I thought that they

would. But with the similarities came a few differences as well. Fr. Rachford made a point to say “live simply so other can simply live” and I feel as though this sums up the Catholic view on compassion. That we need to live our lives with the lives of others always in mind. I liked the way that Ven. Ying-Fa started his dialogue with the chant and the ringing of the bell. I also thought it was interesting how very clear he was to make known that the Buddhist live a way of thing through attachment and not detachment. Buddhists do all that they can to not get attached to the things that they believe to be unnecessary. But they do not want to be known as a religion that detaches itself from all others.

Growing up in a Catholic household it was much easier for me to follow along with Fr. Rachford as he spoke for the people. All of the stories and teachings he referred to were familiar to me and the years that I spent in Catholic schooling. Being raised Catholic made listening to Fr. Rachford a bit easier. But Ven. Ying-Fa was a very charismatic speaker so it made listening to him very interesting even though I needed to focus more than I need to for Fr. Rachford because the stories and teachings of Buddhism are much less familiar to me than the teachings of the Catholic. I did like the comparison that the Buddhists make for the lotus flower and that they make a point for compassion to be main goal for all people. I liked during the question and answer part of the night that both tended to agree on most of the questions especially the one about trying to rid the world of evil. Fr. Rachford explained a little better that he believes that the world can reach full compassion but there will still be evils since there has been so much corruption for so long.

Overall, I would have to say that I am happy that I decided to attend this dialogue for my second site project because it was a great way to relearn things about my own faith and to also see how they relate and go hand in hand with other faiths as well.