

spirituality is not merely tolerance. It is not even acceptance. It is the feeling of a universal oneness. In the spiritual work upon the Divine not only in terms of our own God, but in terms of everybody else's God. Our spiritual life firmly and securely establishes the basis of unity and diversity. Spirituality is not merely hospitality to the other's faith in God but absolute acceptance of the other's faith in God as one's own."

Sri Chinmoy



Guru offers the opening meditation in the first plenary of the centenary Parliament of the World's Religions. August 28, 1993.

WITH THESE IMMORTAL WORDS GURU CAPTURED the essence of interfaith understanding in his own life during his first years in America. To this day, we cherish these words and share them with the world to bring about a profound illumination of the harmony among religions that has been attained through universal oneness.

The 1883 Parliament of Religions in Chicago marks the beginning of the modern interfaith movement, and will be linked forever to the name of the spiritual giant Swami Vivekananda. The divine Master, Sri Ramakrishna, shows us through his own living God-realisation that all spiritual paths lead to the same Supreme.

One century after Swami Vivekananda appeared at the Parliament of Religions, Guru opened the first plenary Parliament of the World's Religions in Chicago, 1993, with an intensely powerful silent meditation. During the week-long Parliament, attended by 8,000 people, there was a morning meditation and Peace Concert on August 2

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the week-long Parliament, attended by 8,000 people, with an early
morning meditation and Peace Concert on August 29.



At the United Nations, Guru offers the opening meditation of the Closing Ceremony of Spiritual Summit V. Among the spiritual leaders on the stage, Mother Teresa can be seen on Guru's left in the front row.

ALSO MENTIONED WAS GURU'S PARTICIPATION MANY YEARS EARLIER IN Spiritual Summit Conference V, held by the Temple of Understanding, a pioneering interfaith organization founded by Judith Hollister and Eleanor Roosevelt. Guru offered the opening meditation for the Closing Ceremony of the conference at the United Nations' Dag Hammarskjöld Auditorium on October 24, 1975. It was on this occasion that Guru met Mother Teresa for the first time. Guru's last meeting with Mother Teresa before she left the body also took place in America, at the Missionaries of Charity house in the Bronx, New York, on June 17, 1997. A few days later she wrote to Guru:

"Thank you for all you are to God, for the beautiful work you have done for the glory of God and the good of souls. I keep you in my prayers and I count on your continual support through your prayers and sacrifices so that we may do God's work with great love for His greater glory."

*God Bless you
Mother Teresa*



Pir Vilayat Khan garlands Sri Chinmoy at Columbia University, 23 April 1989.

THE GREAT SUFI MASTER PIR VILAYAT INAYAT KHAN, head of the Sufi Order in the West, first met Guru early in 1972, and thirty years later their deep spiritual friendship still endures. Pir Vilāyat has taught the spiritual oneness of religions, at the core of Sufi wisdom, all his life. A pillar of the interfaith movement, he also attended Spiritual Summit Conference V. On the occasion of Guru's 70th birthday, Pir wrote:

To My Beloved Brother Sri Chinmoy

*Wishing you, from the depth of my heart, a very Happy Birthday,
full of joy for all that you have meant to so many people all these years.*

And full of inspiration for the dawning of the future opening up into ever-new perspectives;

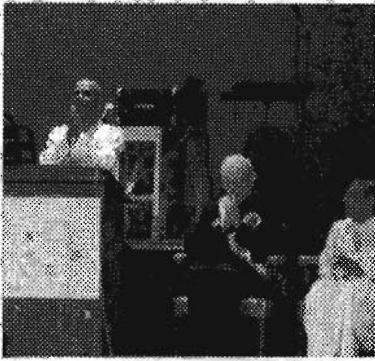
*Bringing the Divine sacredness amongst people in search of themselves,
so that they may find God in themselves.*

*In this very demanding world, our deep friendship has always been an inspiration,
and helped to bring me confidence in pursuing my mission.*

In the Divine Service,

In deep soul communion forever,

Pir Vilayat Khan



Father Luis Dolan deep in prayer as Guru gives the opening meditation at the Conference of World Religions, July 9, 1994. On the far right is a great saint of India and close friend of Guru's, Dada J. P. Vaswani, Spiritual Head of the Sadhu Vaswani Mission, to whom Guru offered the U Thant Peace Award on April 5, 1998.



At the Islamic Cultural Center of New York, Guru is shown with (left to right) Father Luis Dolan, Rabbi Joseph Gelberman, and the Jain master Acharya Sushil Kumar. September 21, 1993.

ALSO IN 1972, GURU OFFERED THE OPENING meditation in an outstanding Interfaith Service organized by Sri Chinmoy: The Peace Meditation at the United Nations at the Church Center for the United Nations. This service was an observation of the National Day of Prayer proclaimed by President Gerald Ford on July 24.

With Guru's inspiration, Sri Chinmoy: The Peace Meditation at the United Nations has held an Interfaith Prayer Breakfast each September since 1986 to commemorate the opening of the United Nations General Assembly. This day is officially proclaimed by the United Nations as the International Day of Peace. Each year the Interfaith Prayer Breakfast is hosted by the Ambassador of a Member State. It draws not only United Nations staff but Ambassadors and members of the delegations who come to pray and meditate for peace. The Ambassador of a large Eastern European country said one year, "We need this process in our country." Guru presented the U Thant Peace Award to the Executive Director of UNICEF, Mr. James Grant, at the annual Interfaith Prayer Breakfast on September 20, 1994.

Father Luis Dolan, a Catholic priest who was a lifelong peace-dreamer and tireless interfaith server, was Guru's dear friend. Father Dolan invited Guru to give the opening meditation at the Conference of World Religions held at Queens College of the City University of New York on July 9, 1994; Guru offered a musical performance on the following day. Father Dolan also invited Guru to take part in an interfaith service at the Islamic Cultural Center of New York on September 21, 1993 for the opening of the UN General Assembly. On November 21, 1996, Guru participated at Father Dolan's request in a small, intimate interfaith prayer service with United Nations Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali shortly before he left office.



**Guru lifts "The God Squad"
Monsignor Thomas Hartman
and Rabbi Marc Gellman.
May 23, 2001.**



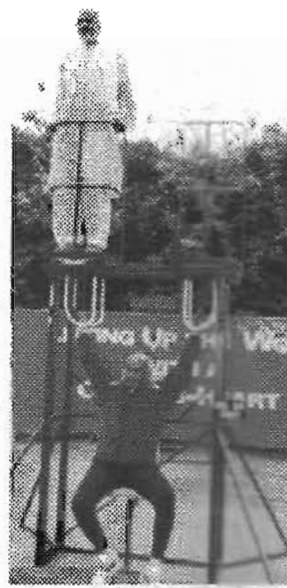
**Guru with
Monsignor Thomas Hartman
and Rabbi Marc Gellman.
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THE SRI CHINMOY TENNIS CLASSIC FOR Religious and Spiritual Teachers (a delightfully innovative tournament for men 55 years old and over) brought priests, pastors and rabbis to Aspiration-Ground for five successive years. It was first held on August 10, 1987. Lifting Up the World With a Oneness-Heart, a unique, worldwide and still-continuing programme, included an "interfaith lift" on October 30, 1988 in which Guru lifted seven spiritual leaders of different faiths.

One of the Catholic priests lifted on that day was Monsignor Thomas Hartman, whom Guru had first met in November 1983 when "Father Tom" interviewed Guru on his television show, "Outreach." Father Tom played tennis with Guru many times and participated in the first Sri Chinmoy Tennis Tournament for Priests on October 28, 1986 as well as the interfaith tennis classic just mentioned. Following a discussion of the Sri Chinmoy Oneness-Home Peace Run, Father Tom spoke from his heart:

"When you are privileged to meet a person of peace, your heart expands, your heart warms and you feel good about yourself and life. I've met such a person in Sri Chinmoy. It doesn't surprise me that he's once again calling us together from different faiths and corners of the world to realize our oneness and need to cooperate. Sri Chinmoy, you are a gift from God."

Guru's sweetest and most soulful friendship with Father Tom has blossomed through the years. Sri Chinmoy held another "interfaith lift" at Aspiration-Ground to honor Father Tom's birthday on May 23, 2001. Also present at the event was Rabbi Marc Gellman, Father Tom's close friend and co-host of their television show "The God Squad." After Guru lifted leaders of other faiths, the programme culminated with Guru lifting Father Tom and Rabbi Gellman together – one with each arm!



**Guru with Imam Dr.
Ibrahim Abdul-Malik.
May 26, 2001**



**Guru with
The Ven. Dr. K. Piyatissa
May 23, 2001**

Some of the other spiritual leaders of different religions that Guru has lifted at Aspiration-Ground include Imam Dr. Ibrahim Abdul-Malik, Interfaith Officer of the Imams' Council of New York (May 26, 2001), the Venerable Dr. Karunegoda Piyatissa of Sri Lanka, Abbot of the New York Buddhist Vihara (October 30, 1988 and May 23, 2001), the Venerable Ashin Sayadaw Indaka, Head Monk of the America-Burma Buddhist Association (May 26, 2001) and Pandit Ram Lall, President of the Arya Samaj of North America. At the astonishing weightlifting programme held at York College on November 27, 1998 Guru lifted a group of a dozen spiritual leaders with a standing calf raise!





Guru gives the opening meditation at the Interfaith Celebration of Commitment to the Work of the United Nations. At the far left are the Very Reverend James Morton, Secretary-General Kofi Annan and Mrs. Annan.

THE VISION OF INTERFAITH COOPERATION HAS MADE IT POSSIBLE FOR all religious traditions to draw closer spiritually to the United Nations by together offering prayers for global peace and the fulfilment of the oneness-dream of the work of the World Body. On the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the United Nations, Guru offered the opening meditation at the Interfaith Celebration at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine on October 21, 1995.

This event gave birth to a new annual interfaith observance, the majestic or "solemn" interfaith ceremony. This observance, held in the presence of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, is called an "Interfaith Celebration of Commitment to the Work of the United Nations." Held at St. Bartholomew's Church in New York, these services have been held on April 25, 1997 - to welcome Secretary-General Kofi Annan to office - and on September 16, 1998 and September 16, 1999.



Guru with Dr. Diana Eck, Director of The Pluralism Project, at Harvard University. September 10, 2000.

In recognition of his inspiring achievements in many fields, Guru received an award from Dr. Diana Eck on September 10, 2000. A stellar authority not only on interfaith understanding but also on the religion and spirituality of India, she is Professor of Comparative Religion and Indian Studies at Harvard University, and Founder and Director of The Pluralism Project. The Pluralism Project has recorded the new religious diversity of America and held high the need for us to embrace each other with all our differences. Diana Eck, a beloved friend who has claimed the cause of interfaith understanding as her very own, is a spiritual seeker to whom Guru declared on that memorable evening,

"In you I see God-hunger in measureless measure."

It was on American soil that Guru offered the U Thant Peace Award to Nobel Peace Laureate His Holiness the Dalai Lama on May 28, 1997. Guru lifted another pre-eminent Buddhist, the Most Venerable Maha Ghosananda, Supreme Patriarch of the Cambodian Buddhist Sangha and world-renowned peace activist and teacher of nonviolence, on September 6th, 1990 at the Performing Arts Center in Providence, Rhode Island.

When Maha Ghosananda first saw Guru at the 1993 Parliament of Religions, he rushed toward Guru with the childlike spontaneity found in saints and holy people, flung his arms around him, and lifted Guru in both arms!



Guru presents the U Thant Peace Award to the Very Reverend James Parks Morton. July 31, 2001.

Guru presented his most esteemed and dear Brother-Friend the Very Reverend James Parks Morton, one of the great interfaith leaders of our time, with the U Thant Peace Award and lifted him overhead on July 31, 2001. Dean Morton, Founder and President of the Interfaith Center of New York and Dean Emeritus of the Cathedral of St. John the Divine, declared:

"The quality of peace that exudes from Sri Chinmoy is extraordinary. Peace is having a divine spirit which is what allows you to work and work and work and, at the same time, lifts you, so that work seems effortless. That peaceful effortlessness is the essence of spiritual peace. The real peace of this wonderful man, Sri Chinmoy, has both sides — very hard work and this effortlessness. I am overwhelmed by this."

The very word "interfaith" is extremely significant and precious, as it embodies both oneness and faith. Guru's path of oneness accepts, honors and identifies itself with individuals of all religions and with the religions themselves. As Guru so powerfully affirms in his book *My Religion*, written on the eve of the New Millennium:

*My religion
Deeply and equally values
All the religions of the world,
For it knows that each religion
Is a beautiful, powerful
And fruitful branch
Of God's Life-Tree.*

*My religion
Lovingly and cheerfully
Bows to all the other religions,
For each religion is a direct God-representative
Here on earth.*

Lee Chin moy