

INTERVIEW

Schneider: 'Mass immigration is a plan to Islamise Europe'

RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

23_08_2025



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Monsignor Athanasius Schneider, titular bishop of Celerina and auxiliary bishop of the Archdiocese of Mary Most Holy in Astana, is one of the most authoritative voices in contemporary Catholicism. A fine essayist, he has just published *Fuggite le eresie. Una guida cattolica agli errori antichi e moderni*

(Flee Heresies. A Catholic Guide to Ancient and Modern Errors), which was released at the end of summer. Born in Kyrgyzstan, he spent his youth in the underground Soviet Church. Following the collapse of the USSR, he travelled to Rome to complete his studies, earning a doctorate in patrology from the Augustinianum Institute. Since 1999, he has taught at the seminary in Karaganda, where he is also the spiritual director and director of studies. He is president of the Liturgical Commission and secretary general of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Kazakhstan. Recently, an excerpt from one of his old lectures on immigration has been circulating again. The *Daily Compass* interviewed him.

In a 2018 lecture, Monsignor Schneider you stated: 'The phenomenon of so-called "immigration" represents an orchestrated plan prepared long ago by international powers to radically alter the Christian identity of European populations. These powers are exploiting the immense moral influence of the Church and its structures to achieve their anti-Christian and anti-European objectives more effectively. To this end, the very concepts of humanism and the Christian commandment of charity are being abused.' You also said, 'It is an invasion, a mass Islamisation of Europe.' Seven years on, do you uphold the same stand today?

We simply have to open our eyes and face reality as it is. Over the past ten years, some Western European countries, notably Germany and the United Kingdom, have encouraged a disproportionate influx of people from Muslim-majority countries, mainly classified as refugees. This process can be described as the resettlement of Muslim citizens in Christian European countries, orchestrated by senior political authorities in collaboration with certain international organisations. Indeed, the central EU authorities have publicly reprimanded European countries such as Hungary and Poland that have imposed restrictions on the admission of immigrants from Muslim-majority countries.

Do you therefore believe that the current migration phenomenon is the result of a larger plan by a political elite with a global objective?

This is confirmed by concrete political facts. Under the pretext of integration, Islamic religious practices are being introduced into schools and public life, such as halal food, public dinners to break the fast during Ramadan and Ramadan-themed advertising and festive lighting in predominantly Christian cities. Last year, for example, leading German politicians sent Ramadan greetings in the mainstream media, while the Catholic majority received no similar public message at the start of Lent. In many public nurseries and primary schools across Europe, teachers take children on guided tours of mosques and show them how to pray. If these same children were taken to Catholic churches to pray, there would undoubtedly be an unprecedented storm of protest.

Could you explain the concept of immigration as a 'global tool'?

In many traditionally Christian countries, the Islamic population is set to outnumber the native population in the near future. Muslim families are, on average, more prolific than European families and are characterised by polygamy, which is permitted by their religion. This is fuelling rapid and constant population growth. Furthermore, in several Christian-majority countries, Muslim figures already occupy positions of primary political influence.

When entire regions of Africa and the Middle East are deprived of resources, energy, and young talent, can promoting immigration really be considered a solution?

It is a huge mistake. Rather than promoting immigration, European governments should invest in humanitarian and economic projects that enable refugees and immigrants to remain in their own countries, improving their living conditions and thus contributing to the prosperity and progress of their homeland. Immigration driven by ideology and politics uproots people, deprives nations of their strength, and pushes them towards impoverishment and backwardness.

Can using the Word of God to justify mass emigration to Europe be called 'false exegesis'? For example, the Bible is often cited as proof that Jesus emigrated to Egypt. However, Jesus only emigrated because he was threatened by Herod, and he later returned home. The Jewish people were exiled to Mesopotamia several times, but they returned.

The people of Israel were forcibly taken to Babylon and held there as slaves. Today's immigrants to Europe are not taken there by force, nor do they live as slaves in Europe; on the contrary, they receive many social benefits and subsidies from European

governments. The Holy Family fled to Egypt to save the life of baby Jesus. The Old Testament tells of God's generosity towards refugees and foreigners. However, the same words of God state that foreigners must observe the religious commandments of the people of Israel and must not spread their idolatrous religion under any circumstances. Today, exegesis is carried out selectively for political and ideological purposes only.

Despite the martyrs of yesterday and today — from Father Jacques Hamel to the faithful of Nice who were victims of the 2020 attack — why does the Church in the West appear so cautious in denouncing the Islamist threat?

I believe that many Church representatives today are guided by political correctness. Interreligious dialogue is an ambiguous method. It calls for harmony between religions that does not exist in doctrine or morality and is often lacking in practice too. Furthermore, the Koran and Sharia law contain clear statements discriminating against non-Muslims, but these are never addressed. This type of 'dialogue' lacks sincerity; the problem of politicised Islam and the growing persecution of Christians, particularly in Islamic countries or at the hands of Islamic extremist groups, is rarely discussed.

Why is Catholicism the most persecuted religion?

The answer is simple: it is the one true religion, willed by God on earth. It is the only religion that possesses the fullness of truth and all the means of divine grace and salvation. Throughout history, Catholicism has been the target of attacks by political and ideological forces that reject Jesus Christ as the truth, the way and the life — that is, as the only saviour and master of humanity. People prefer to establish their own truth so that they can live as they wish. Ultimately, the persecution of the Catholic religion boils down to the motto, 'We do not want Christ to reign over us'. However, one thing is certain: there is no way or life without Christ.

If we consider Asia to be a 'bridge' between cultures and faiths, what responsibilities does the Church and its pastors have today compared to ten years ago in the face of the challenges of immigration?

Faced with the mass immigration of non-Christians, Church pastors once again have the opportunity and sacred duty to carry out Christ's divine commandment with zeal: to make all peoples disciples of Christ through true faith and baptism, and to teach them to live according to God's revealed commandments, as set out in the Gospel. The whole Church should make the words of the holy Apostle Paul their own and say: 'I am not ashamed of the gospel' (Rom 1:16) and 'Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel!' (1 Cor 9:16). In fact, failing to preach Christ to non-Christians is an omission in loving one's

neighbour because it deprives them of the greatest earthly happiness: knowing and loving Christ as their Master, Lord and Saviour.

So what should be done then?

True interreligious dialogue begins in daily life, between neighbours and families, and extends to those in the Islamic faith who sincerely seek the truth. With love and without imposition, they should be offered the proclamation of Christ, the only Saviour and Teacher of humanity. This is the Church's essential mission: to bring Christ to all people.