



CATHOLIC BISHOPS' CONFERENCE

ENGLAND AND WALES

Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue Message for the End of Ramadan 2012

'ID AL-FITR 1433 H. / 2012 A.D.

Educating young Christians and Muslims for justice and peace

Dear Muslim friends,

1. The celebration of *'Id al-Fitr*, which concludes the month of Ramadan, accords us at the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue the joy of presenting to you warm greetings. We rejoice with you for this privileged time which gives you the opportunity to deepen obedience to God, by fasting and other pious practices, a value equally dear to us.

This is why, this year, it seemed opportune to us to focus our common reflection on the education of young Christians and Muslims for justice and peace, that are inseparable from truth and freedom.

2. If the task of education is entrusted to the whole of society, as you know, it is first and foremost, and in a particular way, the work of parents and, with them, of families, schools and universities, not forgetting about those responsible for religious, cultural, social, and economic life, and the world of communication.

It is an enterprise which is both beautiful and difficult: to help children and young people to discover and to develop the resources with which the Creator has endowed them with and to build responsible human relationships. Referring to the task of educators, His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI recently affirmed: "For this reason, today more than ever we need authentic witnesses, and not simply people who parcel out rules and facts... A witness is someone who first lives the life that he proposes to others." (Message for World Day of Peace, 2012) Besides, let us also remember that the young themselves are responsible as well for their own education and for their formation for justice and peace.

3. Justice is determined first of all by the identity of the human person, considered in his or her entirety; it cannot be reduced to its commutative and distributive dimension. We must not forget that the common good cannot be achieved without solidarity and fraternal love! For believers, genuine justice, lived in the friendship with God, deepens all other relationships: with oneself, with others and with the whole of creation. Furthermore, they profess that justice has its origin in the fact that all men are created by God and are called to become one, single family. Such a vision of things, with full respect for reason and openness to transcendence, urges all men and women of good will, inviting them to harmonize rights and duties.

4. In the tormented world of ours, educating the young for peace becomes increasingly urgent. To engage ourselves in an adequate manner, the true nature of peace must be understood: that it is not limited to the mere absence of war, or to a balance between opposing forces, but is at one and the same time a gift from God and a human endeavour to be pursued without ceasing. It is a fruit of justice and an effect of charity. It is important that believers are always active in the communities they belong to: by practising compassion, solidarity, collaboration and fraternity, they can effectively contribute towards addressing the great challenges of today: harmonious growth, integral development, prevention and resolution of conflicts, to name just a few.

5. To conclude, we wish to encourage young Muslim and Christian readers of this Message to cultivate truth and freedom, in order to be genuine heralds of justice and peace and builders of a culture which respects the dignity and the rights of every citizen. We invite them to have patience and tenacity necessary for realizing these ideals, never resorting to doubtful compromises, deceptive short-cuts or to means which show little respect for the human person. Only men and women sincerely convinced of these exigencies will be able to build societies where justice and peace will become realities.

May God fill with serenity and hope, the hearts, families and communities of those who nurture the desire of being 'instruments of peace'!

Happy Feast to you all!

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