



CATHOLIC BISHOPS' CONFERENCE

ENGLAND AND WALES

Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue

Message for the end of Ramadan 2010

'ID AL-FITR 1431 H. / 2010 A.D.

Christians and Muslims: Together in overcoming violence among followers of different religions

Dear Muslim Friends,

1. 'Id Al-Fitr, which concludes Ramadan, presents, once again, a favorable occasion to convey to you the heartfelt wishes of serenity and joy on behalf of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue.

Throughout this month, you have committed yourselves to prayer, fasting, helping the neediest and strengthening relations of family and friendship. God will not fail to reward these efforts!

2. I am delighted to note that believers of other religions, especially Christians, are spiritually close to you during these days, as is testified by the various friendly meetings which often lead to exchanges of a religious nature. It is pleasing to me also to think that this Message could be a positive contribution to your reflections.

3. The theme proposed this year by the Pontifical Council, *Christians and Muslims: Together in overcoming violence among followers of different religions*, is, unfortunately, a pressing subject, at least in certain areas of the world. The Joint Committee for Dialogue instituted by the Pontifical Council and al-Azhar Permanent Committee for Dialogue among the Monotheistic Religions had also chosen this topic as a subject of study, reflection and exchange during its last annual meeting (Cairo, 23 - February 24, 2010). Permit me to share with you some of the conclusions published at the end of this meeting.

4. There are many causes for violence among believers of different religious traditions, including: the manipulation of the religion for political or other ends; discrimination based on ethnicity or religious identity; divisions and social tensions. Ignorance, poverty, underdevelopment are also direct or indirect sources of violence among as well as within religious communities. May the civil and religious authorities offer their contributions in order to remedy so many situations for the sake of the common good of all society! May the civil authorities safeguard the primacy of the law by ensuring true justice to put a stop to the authors and promoters of violence!

5. There are important recommendations also given in the above mentioned text: to open our hearts to mutual forgiveness and reconciliation, for a peaceful and fruitful coexistence; to recognize what we have in common and to respect differences, as a basis for a culture of dialogue; to recognize and respect the dignity and the rights of each human being without any bias related to ethnicity or religious affiliation; necessity to promulgate just laws which guarantee the fundamental equality of all; to recall the importance of education towards respect, dialogue and fraternity in the various educational arenas: at home, in the school, in churches and mosques. Thus we will be able to oppose violence among followers of different religions and promote peace and harmony among the various religious communities. Teaching by religious leaders, as well as school books which present religions in an objective way, have, along with teaching in general, a decisive impact on the education and the formation of younger generations.

6. I hope that these considerations, as well as the responses which they elicit within your communities, and with your Christian friends, will contribute to the continuation of a dialogue, growing in respect and serenity, upon which I call the blessings of God!

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