

Christians and Muslims. Believers in God, Faithful to Humanity.

PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUE

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Message on the Occasion of Id Al'Fitr for the end of Ramadan (1417/1997)

Dear Muslim Friends,

It gives me great pleasure, as President of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, to present to you once again my heartfelt greetings at the end of Ramadan.

This period offers an opportunity for Christians to visit their Muslim friends to exchange greetings, and this helps to strengthen bonds of friendship that already exist and to create new ones. This annual message thus becomes like a bridge between Christians and Muslims which is constantly being built and consolidated. We thank God for this and we pray that the relations between Christians and Muslims may continue to grow stronger.

It is faith, that trusting and obedient submission to God, which has motivated your fast during the month of Ramadan. Muslims and Christians, we define ourselves as "believers" and, together with Jews, we see in Abraham a model for our faith.

It was through faith that Abraham put his entire trust in God and obeyed His every command: he left his native land, his tribe, his father's family, to journey towards an unknown country. It was through faith that, without hesitating, he was ready to offer his son, when God put him to the test. This is why Abraham is such an outstanding model of complete dedication to God.

Following the example of Abraham, Jews, Christians and Muslims strive to give to God the place in their lives which is His due as Fount and Origin, Master and Guide, and Ultimate Destiny of all beings. Yet, they are aware too that there are also other believers, men and women with religious sentiments, who are worthy of respect. It is, in fact, in the name of God that every authentic believer shows respect for each human person. Religion cannot be thought to authorise us, on the basis of our differences, to adopt negative attitudes towards one another.

This is not to say that we should overlook differences, but do we not have common concerns? How are we to transmit religious values to the next generation? How are we to educate young people to respect the faith of others when it differs from their own? How can we give common witness, in a way which is credible, to those who do not believe in God? How can we commit ourselves to the service of humanity, to every person and to the whole person, on the basis of our faith in God? Such are the questions and challenges that face us, Muslims and Christians, as humanity prepares to enter a new millennium. It may be necessary for Christians and Muslims to meet more often in order to search together, before God, for answers to these questions.

While extending to you, on behalf of the Catholics in the world, cordial wishes of peace and joy, I renew the expression of my friendship.

Cardinal Francis Arinze President Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue