

# MUSLIM – CHRISTIAN DIALOGUE

## INTRODUCTION

Some experiences of relationships between Muslims and Christians from Pakistan and the need of inter-religious dialogue.

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St. Francis of Assisi, even in an age darkened by the Crusades, saw areas of convergence between Christians and Muslims and hence advocated an approach of respect and love. In the first rule given to his friars he writes: *“The brothers who go among the Muslims must not take action against them, nor cause disputes, but must submit themselves to all and therefore even to the Muslim authorities.”*

The Second Vatican Council on November 20, 1964 issued the declaration on the Relation of the Church to non-Christian Religions *Nostra Aetate*. *“Although in the course of centuries many quarrels and hostilities have arisen between Christians and Muslims, this most sacred Synod urges all to forget the past and to strive sincerely for mutual understanding.”*

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*“The memorable meeting in Assisi, the city of St. Francis, October 27, 1986 between the Catholic Church and representatives of other world religions shows that men and women of religion, without abandoning their own traditions, they can still engage in prayer and work for peace and the good of humanity. The church must continue to strive to preserve and promote at all levels of this spirit of encounter and collaboration with other religions.”* (John Paul II, *Ecclesia in Asia*, V, 31).

Friars all over the world with renewed commitment for interreligious dialogue marked the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the above event, *in the Spirit of Assisi*.

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Franciscans all over the world are engaged in inter-religious dialogue in the spirit of St. Francis. Order's Commission, *Service for the Dialogue* through three books, *Life as Dialogue* has animated friars all over the world for dialogue.

The International Community in Istanbul is engaged in Inter-religious and Ecumenical dialogue in various forms.

The Franciscans of the "Custody of the Holy Land." The Franciscan Mission in Morocco.

All over Europe, Friars have shown great hospitality and fraternal attitude towards emigrants among others the members of other faith traditions.

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The Multicultural and Pluralistic context of India and Indonesia provides great environment for the Friars to interact and work together with the members of Hindus and Muslims.

Friars in the Philippines the only Christian majority country in Asia are engaged in Inter-religious dialogue in the Mindanao. Friars in Sri Lanka, Korea, Thailand, other countries in the region and African continent take inter-religious dialogue as an integral part of their Franciscan presence and apostolic life.

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## **Need and Importance**

### **INCREASING RELATIONS AMONG BELIEVERS**

The challenge that Christians and Muslims face in their countries today is: *how to build a harmonious and peaceful life*

*in societies that are racially, ethnically, linguistically and religiously pluralistic in their composition.*

Christianity and Islam has realized that dialogue cannot be anymore an optional activity. Thus, refusing dialogue would mean rejecting new relationships and choose to remain isolated. Once we have recognized in other religions some action of God, the other religions become allies to collaborate with and not enemies to overcome.

Enlighten leadership of both religions through various encounters have realized that dialogue enables them to participate in the realization of God's plan for the world.

For the Churches in Asia dialogue with other religions has helped to prepare the ground for Interreligious actions for justice and peace, which has enabled the local Churches of Asia to fulfill their prophetic role more effectively, defend the shared human and spiritual values, promote integral human development and to face the challenge of militant religious fundamentalism.

## **FORMS AND VARIETY OF DIALOGUE WITH ISLAM**

### **FOUR FORMS OF DIALOGUE:**

1. The dialogue of life, where people strive to live in an open and neighborly spirit, sharing their joys and sorrows, their human problems and preoccupations.

2. The dialogue of action, in which Christians and others collaborate for the integral development and liberation of people.

3. The dialogue of theological exchange, where specialists seek to deepen their understanding of their respective religious heritages and to appreciate each other's spiritual values.

4. The dialogue of religious experience, where persons, rooted in their own religious traditions, share their spiritual riches, for instance with regard to prayer and contemplation, faith and ways of searching for God or the Absolute.

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## **5. IT'S DEMANDS AND CHALLENGES**

**some of the more important challenges to dialogue**

**are:**

- Insufficient grounding in one's own faith.
- Insufficient knowledge and understanding of the belief and practices of other religions, leading to at times to misrepresentation.
- Socio-political factors or some burdens of the past
- Self-sufficiency, lack of Openness leading to defensive or aggressive attitudes
- A lack of conviction with regard to the value of Inter-religious

dialogue, which some may see as a task reserved to specialists, and others as a sign of weakness or even a betrayal of the faith

- Suspicion about the other's motives in dialogue.
  - A polemical spirit when expressing religious convictions
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- Intolerance, which is often aggravated by association with political, economic, racial and ethnic factors.
  - Certain features of the present religious climate, e.g., growing materialism, religious indifference, and the politicizing of religions.

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## FRUITS AND RESULTS ON INTER-RELIGIOUS DIALOGUE

- **Interreligious Dialogue has enhance quality of life:**

Both religions have realized that their religions will be known by the good it delivers, namely the quality of life that it enables its followers to lead, rather than the doctrine it proclaims.

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- **Interreligious Dialogue: An effective force against fanaticism.**

Sectarianism and fanaticism has marked some of our countries with violence often destroyed civilization and sent the whole nation to despair. The growing efforts for dialogue are signs of great hope that a new beginning of tolerance, mutual respect and understanding has come.

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- **Eliminating Prejudices:**

As regards the fruits of interreligious dialogue what stands out is the deeper knowledge, acceptance and love of other partners in dialogue. This helps us to eliminate the prejudices against others. This is leading to mutual understanding and appreciation.

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### **Human Liberation as the fruit of Dialogue**

Dialogue is dealing with all aspect of human existence. In the context of massive poverty and the religiosity of the masses, Church is making efforts for dialogue for peace.

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**St. Francis urgently invites us to commit ourselves to the realization of God's vision of the world, a world where all creatures can live in peace and harmony.**

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