

DICASTERY FOR INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUE
MESSAGE FOR THE MONTH OF RAMADAN AND 'ID AI-FITR
1445 H. / 2024 A.D.

Christians and Muslims:
Extinguish the Fire of War and Light the Candle of Peace

Vatican City

Dear Muslim brothers and sisters,

Once again we greet you on the occasion of the month of Ramadan with a message of closeness and friendship, aware of the importance of this month for your spiritual journey and for your family and social life, which also embraces your Christian friends and neighbours.

We are pleased to know that our yearly *Message* to you for Ramadan is an important means of strengthening and building good relations between Christians and Muslims, thanks to its diffusion through traditional and modern media, particularly social media. For this reason, it would be beneficial to make this *Message* better known among both communities.

We would have liked to share with you some considerations on a different theme from the one we have chosen to address. Yet the growing number of conflicts in these days, ranging from military combat to armed clashes of varying intensity involving states, criminal organizations, armed gangs and civilians, has become truly alarming. Pope Francis recently observed that this increase in hostilities is in fact transforming “a third world war fought piecemeal” into “a genuine global conflict”.

The causes of these conflicts are many, some long-standing, others more recent. Together with the perennial human desire for domination, geo-political ambitions and economic interests, a major cause is surely the continuing production and commerce in arms. Even as part of our human family suffers grievously from the devastating effects of the use of these arms in warfare, others cynically rejoice in the great economic profit deriving from this immoral commerce. Pope Francis has described this as dipping a morsel of bread in the blood of our brother.

At the same time, we can be thankful that we also possess immense human and religious resources for advancing peace. The desire for peace and security is profoundly rooted in the soul of every person of good will, since no one can fail to see the tragic effects of war in the loss of human lives, the toll of serious injury and the throngs of orphans and widows. The destruction of infrastructure and property makes life hopelessly difficult, if not impossible. Sometimes hundreds of thousands of people are displaced in their own country or forced to flee to other countries as refugees. Consequently, the condemnation and rejection of war should be

unambiguous: every war is fratricide, useless, senseless, and dark. In war, everyone loses. Once again, in the words of Pope Francis: “No war is holy, only peace is holy”.

All religions, each in their own way, consider human life sacred and thus worthy of respect and protection. The states that permit and practise capital punishment are, fortunately, becoming fewer each year. A reawakened sense of the respect for this fundamental dignity of the gift of life will contribute to the conviction that war must be rejected and peace cherished.

Albeit with their differences, religions acknowledge the existence and the important role of conscience. Forming consciences to respect the absolute value of the life of each person and his or her right to physical integrity, security and a dignified life will likewise contribute to the condemnation and rejection of war, any war and all wars.

We look to the Almighty as God of peace, the source of peace, who in a special way loves all those who devote their lives to the service of peace. Like so many things, peace is a divine gift but at the same time the fruit of human efforts, especially in preparing the conditions necessary for its establishment and preservation.

As believers, we are also witnesses to hope, as we recalled in our 2021 Message for Ramadan: “Christians and Muslims: Witnesses of Hope”. Hope can be symbolized by a candle, whose light radiates security and joy, whereas fire, uncontrolled, can lead to the destruction of fauna and flora, infrastructure and the loss of human lives.

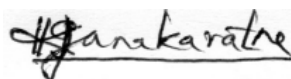
Dear Muslim brothers and sisters, let us join in extinguishing the fires of hatred, violence and war, and instead light the gentle candle of peace, drawing upon resources for peace that are present in our rich human and religious traditions.

May your fasting and other pious practices during Ramadan and the celebration of ‘Id al-Fitr that concludes it, bring you abundant fruits of peace, hope and joy.

From the Vatican, 11 March 2024



Miguel Ángel Cardinal Ayuso Guixot, MCCJ
Prefect



Msgr Indunil Kodithuwakku Janakarātne Kankanamalage
Secretary