

Catholic-Muslim Forum
II Seminar
Baptism Site (Jordan), Monday 21 Wednesday 23 November 2011
On Reason, Faith, the Human Person. Christian and Muslim
Perspectives

Introductory Remarks by His Eminence Card. Jean-Louis Tauran
President of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue

Dear Muslim and Catholic Friends,

I wish to thank His Royal Highness Prince Ghazi bin Muhammad for his remarks as well as for the warm welcome and the work done to make this encounter possible in such meaningful place for us Christians. My gratitude goes also to all the staff of Prince Ghazi for their valuable help.

Following the First Seminar of the Catholic Muslim Forum held in the Vatican in November 2008, we are now meeting in Jordan after three years.

In the meantime, we have not remained inactive. Even if in a very summary way, I would like to recall some meaningful events:

From 15 to 17 December 2008, the Coordinating Committee established by the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue and the World Islamic Call Society which had its headquarters in Tripoli (Libya) organized a Colloquium in Rome on “Responsibility of Religious Leaders especially in time of crisis”.

The Mixed Committee for Dialogue of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue and of al-Azhar held its annual meeting at al-Azhar headquarters on 23 - 24 February 2010, on the theme "The

phenomenon of confessional violence: Illuminating the phenomenon, its causes, and proposals of solutions with special reference to the role of the religions in this regard."

The Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue and the Centre for Inter-Religious Dialogue of the Islamic Culture and Relations Organization held their seventh Colloquium in Tehran from 9 - 11 November 2010 on the theme "Religion and Society Today: Christian and Muslim Perspectives."

The Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue (P.C.I.D.) and the Royal Institute for Interfaith Studies (R.I.I.F.S.) of Jordan held their second Colloquium in Rome from 18 to 19 May, 2011 on the theme of the Colloquium: "Human and religious values shared by Christians and Muslims for a common education. "

Other scheduled colloquia have been postponed for internal or external reasons, but will resume as soon as possible, meanwhile the dialogue with the al-Azhar has been frozen at the demand of the authorities of this institution.

As you know, the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue sends messages to Muslims in the occasion of *'Id al-Fitr* concluding the month of Ramadan: this tradition dates back to 1967. Afterwards, in the nineties, the P.C.I.D. began to send similar messages to believers of other religions. This Message is distributed throughout the world and constitutes an important occasion of dialogue and friendship between Christians and Muslims. The themes of the message in the last three years have been: "Christians and Muslims: Together in overcoming poverty (2009); "Christians and Muslims: Together in overcoming violence among followers of different religions" (2010); and "Christians and Muslims: Working together for mankind's spiritual dimension" (2011).

The Day of reflection, dialogue and prayer for peace and justice in the World "Pilgrims of Truth, Pilgrims of Peace", which took place in Assisi October 27, 2011, on the 25th Anniversary of World Day of Prayer for Peace which had taken place in the same city of Saint Francis, has given a strong message to our world: religions, if understood and practiced properly, constitute a resource for justice and peace. On that occasion Pope Benedict XVI affirmed "... there is a way of understanding and using religion so that it becomes a source of violence, while the rightly lived relationship of man to God is a force for peace..." therefore the need for dialogue. "The denial of God corrupts man, robs him of his criteria and leads him to violence". His Holiness concluded, "I would like to assure you that the Catholic Church will not let up in her fight against violence, in her commitment for peace in the world. We are animated by the common desire to be 'pilgrims of truth, pilgrims of peace'."

The theme of this Seminar: "Reason, Faith and the Human Person, Christian and Muslim perspectives" offers us the possibility to further examine and deepen the topic of our first seminar: "Love of God, Love of Neighbor and its two-fold articulation: "Theological and spiritual foundations" and "Human dignity and mutual respect".

In this meeting of ours, the human person will be central, considered in the light of reason (I sub-theme) and in the light of faith (II sub-theme), proposing both conceptual and practical conclusions regarding human dignity, especially in some of its basic dimensions, such as the value of human life and the role of personal conscience for fundamental choices.

In the context of the three crisis which are threatening our world: hunger, energy and finances, it is imperative that believers recall that we are all creatures of God, Author of our life. God has entrusted to us the

resources of the earth for the happiness of everyone. If we are God's creatures it means we are brothers and sisters and we have to respect the human person, his or her dignity.

We believe that a universal common good exists. In the past, the notion of common good was circumscribed to a single nation within the borders of a territory. Now, we have what we call globalization, and the notion of common good has been enlarged to include all of humanity. As believers, Muslims and Christians have to enlighten those who bear the heavy responsibility of leading societies to discern the degree of humanity of their decisions.

If we recognize the singularity of the human person, his or her vocation, we are all compelled, leaders and ordinary people, to ask if politics, economy, laws are at the service of the human person, created by God who wants humanity to be a family. Yes, we have to indicate, not only in words but by deed, that happiness does not mean to have more, but to be more; that there is much more joy to give than to receive.

This is the best way to overthrow the idols which seem to enslave our societies: money, power, prestige. This is a great mission we have to accomplish. Inspired by the uniqueness of the landscape of this part of Jordan, place of the beginnings, let us start anew and discover together again the marvel of the universe: men and women called to see God at the end of their pilgrimage on this earth.