

ARMENIAN
CATHOLICOSATE
OF
CILICIA
ANTELIAS-LEBANON



No.

Antelias,6 February 2008

From His Holiness Aram I
Catholicos of Cilicia
Antelias, Lebanon
Catholicosate of Cilicia
Armenian Orthodox Church

To Prof. Dr. H.R.H. prince Ghazi bin Muhammad bin Talal
And to distinguished Muslim leaders and scholars
Amman, Jordan

A Response to

"A COMMON WORD BETWEEN US AND YOU"

We join our voice to all those who have welcomed the letter of 13 October 2007, "An Open Letter and Call from Muslim Religious Leaders": a common call of one hundred thirty eight Muslim scholars from different parts of the Muslim world.

We read with great interest the invitation to dialogue and peace building. We warmly welcome the intention of the letter and the fundamental principles laid out for frank dialogue and closer collaboration. We firmly believe that Christians and Muslims together can bring a major contribution to building peace with justice. Our history together has shown that although religion may divide us, we continue to live together in the Middle East and other regions of the world. The Armenian people have, indeed, a rich history of living together with Islam since the Seventh Century in Armenia, in Cilicia and in the Middle East.

Living together harmoniously and meaningfully is the command of God. After creating Adam and Eve according to His "image", God said: "be fruitful, and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it" (Gen. 1: 28). We must respond responsibly and obediently to the call of God.

1) Christians and Muslims can shape a life together based on the love of God and love of neighbor, provided we apply the basic thrusts of our Scriptures in our particular contexts. For us Christians, God expressed His love by sending

ARMENIAN
CATHOLICOSATE
OF
CILICIA
ANTELIAS-LEBANON



No.....

Antelias,.....

His Son (John 3:16). Jesus Christ provided us with the content of our faith. Through teachings and His earthly life Jesus displayed for us the true meaning and concrete implications of love. He also showed us the way to love God and our fellow human being.

2) Love generates a quality of relationship. It urges us to build loving relations based on mutuality and reciprocity, which, in turn, engender respect and call for accountability. Being in relation with the loving God means remaining faithful to the imperatives of our faith. In both Holy Books, love of the neighbor is the beginning of just relation with the 'other'. According to the Gospel (Luke 10: 24-26) the word 'neighbor' does not mean 'proximity' or 'kinship'; the neighbor is the 'other' who is in need of our love, help and fellowship.

3) Relationship, reciprocity and accountability build community. Sharing life together implies building community. Human beings cannot live without community. As an expression of love towards God and towards neighbor, community building has been central to both Muslim and Christian teachings and way of life. We firmly believe, as we have stated on different occasions in ecumenical meetings, that a strong commitment to living together would help us to destroy the walls of prejudice, reassert each religion's integrity, and generate mutual accountability and common responsibility.

4) What sort of community shall we build together? In addition to their theological teachings our two religions have the rich experience and inner potential to transform mere coexistence into a broader community of shared values, interactive diversity, common participation and mutual trust. We must acknowledge, however, that we have differences which may not be easy to overcome. We must accept and respect the way we are, by suspending our desire to emphasize differences and committing ourselves to becoming communities of living together with the fear of God and not with the fear of one another.

5) We belong to one humanity and one world under one sovereign God . This profound sense of common belonging challenges us to act together sustained by mutual understanding and support. Religion today has gone beyond personal piety and has become a public reality. The love of God and love of neighbor must empower us in our God-given responsibility of working together for a society governed by love, justice, dignity and peace: the gifts of God to humanity.

ARMENIAN
CATHOLICOSATE
OF
CILICIA
ANTELIAS - LEBANON



№.....

Antelias,.....

Indeed, it is time to show the world that living together for Christians and Muslims, as well as working together on issues and challenges of common concern is possible.

With these thoughts and vision we propose to continue, with renewed impetus, Christian-Muslim dialogue and collaboration on local, regional and global levels within the framework of local churches, the Middle East Council of Churches and the World Council of Churches.

With best wishes,

A handwritten signature in red ink, appearing to read 'Aram I', is positioned above the printed name.

ARAM I
CATHOLICOS OF CILICIA

Antelias, Lebanon