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Ceaseless Activity to Seek Peace in Living Together with Others. Catholics in Dialogue with Muslims

Abstract: Why hold a dialogue with Islam? What is (not) Islam? How to put the dialogue into action? These are the questions to be answered by the present paper. Since those engaging in a dialogue are always concrete, the answer to the first question is given within the framework of the Congregation of the Mission and the Vincentian Family acting with their social, educational and medical institutions in an Islamic »sea« and providing pastoral care to the Catholic minority. The answer to the second question consists of the view of the Catholic Church upon Islam and of the explanation of a Muslim woman what her religion is not. The main attention is given to the question how to put the dialogue into action. The answer is coming from the experience of the Indonesian minority where the dialogue comprises four areas: everyday life, activities, theological exchange and religious experiences. A dialogue is only successful if the participants' heart is in it.

Key words: dialogue between Muslims and Catholics, Islam, Catholic Church, Congregation of the Mission (CM)

Povzetek: **Vztrajno prizadevanje za mir v skupnem življenju z drugimi. Katoličani v dialogu z muslimani**

Zakaj gojimo dialog z islamom? Kaj je/ni islam? Kako uresničevati dialog? To so vprašanja, na katera odgovarja predavanje. Ker so nosilci dialoga vedno konkretni, je odgovor na prvo vprašanje dan v okviru Misijonske družbe lazaristov in Vincencijanske družine, ki delujeta v islamskem morju s svojimi socialnimi, šolskimi in zdravstvenimi ustanovami, pastoralno pa med katoliško manjšino. Odgovor na drugo vprašanje je sestavljen iz pogleda katoliške Cerkve na islam in iz muslimankinega pojasnila, kaj njena vera ni. Največ pozornosti je posvečene vprašanju, kako uresničevati dialog. Odgovor prihaja iz manjšinske indonezijske izkušnje, v kateri zajame dialog štiri področja: vsakdanje življenje, delovanje, teološko izmenjavo in religijsko doživljanje. Dialog je uspešen, kolikor je dialog s srcem.

Ključne besede: dialog med muslimani in katoličani, islam, katoliška Cerkev, Misijonska družba

Dialogue with Islam is one of the most challenging tasks of the Christians today. It is challenging for some reasons. *Theologically*, Islam and Christianity have the same monotheistic roots of faith as »Abrahamic religions«; but *historically*, Islam and Christianity do have many *memoria passionis* due to the so called »holy crusades« against each other for defending the holy land and for invasions in the past. *Philosophically*, Islam and Christianity pursue the same wisdom related to God, but there seems to be unfinished tension among them. *Sociologically*, people of both Islam and Christianity are altogether more than one third of the whole population of this planet; *politically*, the two of these religions are concerned with peace in the Middle East (Palestine and Jerusalem) and the growing fundamentalism which has always created terror and violence everywhere. Finally, from *human perspective* of everyday life, all of us are to seek ways of dialogue to bridge and to collaborate with one another to make the better world possible (Borrmans 1990).

If I may guess what sort of feeling we do have in our heart, when hearing about »Islam«, there are mixed perceptions. What we perceive about Islam is consciously or unconsciously overwhelmed by the recent news. What we heard about Islam is somewhat a blend between fact and bias. Islam has often been falsely identified with radical groups such as Hamas, Hizbollah, Jamaah Islamiyah, Taleban, Al Qaeda and the like. Countries in Africa, Asia, Australia, Europe and even America have had sad experiences with the presence of radical Islam groups. India with the tragedy of Mumbai, the Philippines with somehow unfinished conflicts in the South, and Indonesia with the growing radicalism of Islamic groups are facts that influence our understanding of Islam.

However, Muslims are statistically almost one fifth of the population of the whole world and nearly seventy percent of the Asian people. So, it would be unfair if we understood Islam from the perspective of the existence of radical or fundamental groups as mentioned above.

Understanding is not *par excellence* knowledge. Understanding means conscience. By »conscience« I do not mean merely in a moral sense. Rather, it refers to human capacity to transcend sensible appearances. With conscience we have often discovered beauty or goodness behind thing or fact whose appearance is sensibly not likeable. Dealing with the vulnerable, for instance, has often been unlikeable experience. But, when you use your capacity to transcend physical appearance, you will find a wonderful witness of human virtues in their humble presence. So, with this meaning of understanding I would like to start to deal with dialogue with Islam. In doing so, I outline the paper with a simple method, »why, what, and how« we do dialogue with Islam.

1. On *why* of dialogue with islam

On March 30, 2000, Fr. Robert Maloney, the Superior General of Congregation of Mission, wrote a *letter* on the presence and apostolic commitment of the

Vincentian family in the Muslim world. Recalling that contemporary society becomes increasingly multicultural and multireligious, he encouraged the Vincentian family to be present and diligent to create contacts, dialogues, and mutual collaboration with the Muslims. Dialogues and collaboration can make sense of being Vincentian in many countries especially in Asia.

»The Islam that we encounter is simultaneously both unified and diversified,« Fr. Maloney remarked. »A simple glance at a map will show its sociological and cultural diversity from Morocco to Indonesia. This diversity is also seen within Muslim societies themselves, going so far as to give rise, at times, to grave internal conflicts. In some areas, relations with other religious bodies have taken an aggressive turn. Nevertheless, the violence and intolerance experienced in too many places should not conceal from us the reality of a significant number of believers who live their religion in peace and respect for others« (Maloney 2000, 102).

We are challenged to strive in a ceaseless effort despite difficulties and impossibilities of dialogues and collaboration between Christians and Muslims. »This Islamic reality, which encompasses not only the religious life of individuals but the whole complex of their social life, cannot leave us indifferent. It is, in fact, one of the most important challenges for the Church and society in many countries. Could our religious communities and societies not find ways to live in peace and collaborate sincerely? Would true religious liberty not be possible in every country? Will the disciples of Christ be able to proclaim the Good News while respecting the consciences of others, and, even more, will they, in their relations with others, live what they proclaim, despite difficulties? Can they expect, at the same time, that the disciples of Mohammed will be increasingly concerned about promoting respectful, fraternal attitudes toward those who do not share their faith?« (102).

On the one hand we have to be faithful to the Vincentian spirituality while on the other hand we have to do more dialogues and collaboration with Muslims. »Our Vincentian spirituality can help us see Muslims in a new way, while realistically acknowledging the difficulties, often tragic, unfolding in certain countries. It will be useful for us to refocus on St. Vincent's way of looking at the individual person. A spirit of dialogue is part of his heritage, as well as a spirit of seeking reconciliation between individuals and among human communities. A deep attitude of humility can help us discern patiently and prudently the values that others hold, values sometimes expressed in surprising ways. I want to encourage the Vincentian Family to move forward energetically in making contact with the followers of Islam and to witness among them to the spirit of the Gospel. I suggest that in the years ahead we engage in a deeper examination of the meaning of the Church's mission among Muslims and become involved in it more actively« (103).

What should we concretely do in dialogue with Islam? It is important to have a proper knowledge of Islam and of the Church's teaching on interreligious dialogue. »It will also be important for us to foster a basic understanding of Islam,

especially in our houses of initial formation and in our ongoing formation. The Congregation should also form some experts in Islam and interreligious dialogue« (103). Above all, as Vincentians seeking personal contact with Muslims, we should work with them in areas common to us, such as the service of the poor, the struggle for justice, and respect for human dignity. »Through high-quality meetings, shared life experiences and common work, prejudices will be overcome, and it will become possible to open channels of mutual respect and reconciliation, and to build peace and brotherhood in the human family« (103).

In the end of his letter, Fr. Robert Maloney puts up beautiful words urging us to continue commitment in fraternal dialogues with Muslims. »St. Vincent told us that love is inventive. So we should look for concrete ways to go out to men and women who do not share our faith, something which has been a part of our charism from the beginning. For centuries, the Vincentian Family has had a remarkable commitment to education and culture in many countries with an Islamic tradition. I am eager that we would continue this commitment today and broaden it to promote fraternal dialogue among all believers and people of good will, as the teaching of the Church since the Second Vatican Council invites us to do« (104).

Quid nunc Vincentius? What would Saint Vincent do if he were living in our contemporary situation especially in Asia where 70% of populations are Islam? Would he not create more contact and dialogue with Muslims? Or, would he not encourage confreres to study about Islam and how to deal and collaborate with Muslims?

2. On *what of islam: understanding and misunderstanding*

The Vatican II launched the Declaration on the relation of the Church and the non-Christian Religion, *Nostra Aetate*, that changes our understanding as well as relationship with other religions. In the opening the document underlines the sense of unity among different people. The Catholic Church has been aware of the new sign of the times that humankind is drawn closer to each other. In the Declaration is a pretty short »document on Islam« that contains only two paragraphs. Meanwhile the first deals with appreciation toward Muslims, the second recalls historical experience of hostilities between Christians and Muslims and yet at the same time appeals to forget the past by working for mutual collaboration for peace and freedom.

Definition of Islam is »submitting oneself to God«. Everyone who submits himself/herself to God is called Muslim. In this sense, I would say that a Christian is a »Muslim« too. Islam is widely known by its two main branches (in reality there are many) *Sunni* and *Shia*. Both of them share the most fundamental Islamic beliefs and articles of faith. The differences between them initially stemmed not

from spiritual differences, but *political* ones. Over the centuries, however, these political differences have spawned a number of varying practices and positions which have come to carry a spiritual significance. *Sunni* Muslims make up the majority (85%) of Muslims all over the world. Significant populations of *Shia* Muslims can be found in Iran and Iraq, and large minority communities in Yemen, Bahrain, Syria, and Lebanon. Indonesian Muslims are mostly *Sunni*.

In a website I found a short article entitled *Top 10 Myths About Islam*, written by Christine Huda Dodge (2009), an American of Irish/English descent who has been a Muslim for the past 16 years. She is an educator and writer with over a decade of experience researching and writing about Islam on the Internet. Among other books she wrote was *The Everything Understanding Islam Book* (2009). According to her the ten myths about Islam are:

1. *Muslims worship a moon-god.* Some non-Muslims mistakenly believe that Allah is an »Arab god«, a »moon god«, or some sort of idol. Allah is the proper name of the One True God in the Arabic language.
2. *Muslims do not believe in Jesus.* In the Qur'an, stories about the life and teachings of Jesus Christ (called 'Isa in Arabic) are abundant. The Qur'an recalls his miraculous birth, his teachings, and the miracles he performed by God's permission. There is even a chapter of the Qur'an named after his mother, Mary (Miriam in Arabic). However, Muslims believe that Jesus was a fully human prophet and not in any way divine himself.
3. *Most Muslims are Arabs.* While Islam is often associated with Arabs, they make up only 15% of the world's Muslim population. The country with the largest population of Muslims is Indonesia. Muslims make up 1/5 of the world's population, with large numbers found in Asia (69%), Africa (27%), Europe (3%) and other parts of the world.
4. *Islam oppresses women.* Most of the ill-treatment that women receive in the Muslim world is based on local culture and traditions, without any basis in the faith of Islam. In fact, practices such as forced marriage, spousal abuse, and restricted movement directly contradict Islamic law governing family behavior and personal freedom.
5. *Muslims are violent, terrorist extremists.* Terrorism cannot be justified under any valid interpretation of the Islamic faith. The entire Qur'an, taken as a complete text, gives a message of hope, faith, and peace to a faith community of one billion people. The overwhelming message is that peace is to be found through faith in God, and justice among fellow human beings. Muslim leaders and scholars do speak out against terrorism in all its forms, and offer explanations of misinterpreted or twisted teachings.
6. *Islam is intolerant of other faiths.* Throughout the Qur'an, Muslims are reminded that they are not the only ones who worship God. Jews and Christians are called »People of the Book«, meaning people who have received previous revelations from the One Almighty God that we all worship. The Qur'an also

- commands Muslims to protect from harm not only mosques, but also monasteries, synagogues, and churches — because »God is worshipped therein.«
7. *Islam promotes »jihad« to spread Islam by the sword and kill all unbelievers.* The word Jihad stems from an Arabic word which means »to strive«. Other related words include »effort«, »labor«, and »fatigue«. Essentially Jihad is an effort to practice religion in the face of oppression and persecution. The effort may come in fighting the evil in your own heart, or in standing up to a dictator. Military effort is included as an option, but as a last resort and not »to spread Islam by the sword«.
 8. *The Quran was written by Muhammad and copied from Christian and Jewish sources.* The Qur'an was revealed to the Prophet Muhammad over a period of two decades, calling people to worship One Almighty God and to live their lives according to this faith. The Qur'an contains stories of Biblical prophets, because these prophets also preached the message of God. Stories are not merely copied, but the oral traditions are referred to in a way that focuses on the examples and teachings that we can learn from them.
 9. *Islamic prayer is just a ritualized performance with no heartfelt meaning.* Prayer is a time to stand before God and express faith, give thanks for blessings, and seek guidance and forgiveness. During Islamic prayer, one is modest, submissive and respectful to God. By bowing and prostrating ourselves to the ground, we express our utmost humility before the Almighty.
 10. *The crescent moon is a universal symbol of Islam.* The early Muslim community did not really have a symbol. During the time of the Prophet Muhammad, Islamic caravans and armies flew simple solid-colored flags (generally black, green, or white) for identification purposes. The crescent moon and star symbol actually pre-dates Islam by several thousand years, and wasn't affiliated with Islam at all until the Ottoman Empire placed it on their flag.

3. On *how* of dialogue with islam

*D*ialogue and Mission, a document of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, (1984) speaks of four forms of dialogue, without claiming to establish among them any order of priority:

1. The *dialogue of life*, where people strive to live in an open and neighborly spirit, to share 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.

In November 2008, Islamic and Catholic experts met at the Vatican City, after years of chilly relations due to the growth of fundamentalism. Everything has now resumed, thanks to the address of Benedict XVI in Regensburg, where he affirmed that religion embraces reason and excludes violence. The most urgent theme in that dialogue is religious freedom. Every community may be guaranteed to proclaim and spread its faith. On the first day of the meeting, they addressed theological-spiritual themes; on the second day, they discussed »Human dignity,«, exploring issues related to human rights, religious freedom, and religious respect, possibly alluding to the freedom to convert and change religions.

»This encounter between Muslim and Catholic experts in November is a start, and is a positive for the mere fact that it is being held: dialogue is better than indifference and reciprocal silence. In recent years, an important change has taken place. At first, the letters from the Muslim scholars requested a dialogue that would be exclusively, let us say, theological. But this ran the risk of being unproductive. The Holy Father and Cardinal Tauran stressed that dialogue would have to include the problems of daily life and the rights of conscience. One of the Muslim participants, Tariq Ramadan, agreed on this point. Christians and Islam obstructed by fundamentalism... Both religions claim to bear a message of truth, and are called to proclaim it and spread it in mission. But the ways in which this is to be done must be specified. Using means unworthy of religion, or that is prohibited, must be excluded. The Muslims, for example, accuse the Christians of conducting proselytism by doing »favors« for the poor, and asking for conversion in exchange. But it is unjust to block advancement while permitting a religion to spread. The idea that is promoted in the Muslim world, »the truth has all rights, falsehood has no rights,« is also unjust. On the basis of this, the possibility for non-Islamic religions to spread is practically excluded. To this is connected the disdain toward apostates – as happened with the baptism of Magdi Cristiano Al-lam – who are viewed as traitors, instead of seekers of truth. Having schools is also important for both religions, and therefore this right must be defended, and must not be denigrated as proselytism. My impression is nonetheless that this dialogue can be fruitful if it respects three dimensions: 1) It must begin, and continue for years; 2) At the end, concrete documents must be drawn up, and distributed as widely as possible; 3) Maximum authority must be given to these documents produced« (Samir 2008).

An important and demanding declaration was published at the end of the meeting by the Vatican and by representatives of the 138 Muslim scholars. Among other things, it affirms respect for life and dignity of each person, man or woman, which involves, among other things, respect for freedom of conscience and religion; the rejection of discrimination on account of faith; the importance of bearing witness through prayer to the transcendent dimension of life in an increasingly secularized world; an affirmation of the duty to give young people a solid

moral, civil, and religious education, and teach them about the faith of others. The declaration also speaks of the possibility of creating a permanent mixed committee, and announces a second forum to be held within two years, in a Muslim majority country.

3.1 Living our Everyday Life

What do we mean by dialogue? What is dialogue when it is lived in everyday life?

Some years ago, I was asked to give a talk on our Christian commitment to interreligious dialogue in an activity of Christian-Islam dialogue held by a Protestant denomination The Christian Church of Eastern Java (GKJW). The participants were 45 Muslims, 45 Protestants, and 10 Catholics from various places in Indonesia. The activity was sponsored by both GKJW and a Christian organization from Germany. Dialogue lasted a month with various programs of exposure. For 45 Muslims there are programs of exposure in Catholic or Christian communities for a week; and 45 Protestants went to Islamic communities. I repeated Pope John Paul's teaching that »each member of the faithful and all Christian communities are called to practice dialogue, although not always to the same degree or in the same way« (Gioia 1997, 235-236). A Catholic, a simple woman spoke up and said to me, »Father, I agree on the importance of interreligious dialogue, but I can't discuss the Trinity with my Muslim neighbors. I'm a housewife, mother of four children. I would probably explain our faith badly. It is too difficult for me.« I answered that she was right and the Church doesn't expect her to do theological discussions with Muslims. But I said, »You can teach your children that God also loves Muslims and others, and you can reinforce that teaching by your attitudes, charities, as well as acceptance and tolerance. Dialog is our perennial call to live peacefully with people from other faiths.« (Riyanto 2010, 478-481)

I feel that many of the members of our community might react to the Church's encouragement to dialogue in a way similar to this woman. We feel that we are not trained for it, and we are worried that in any theological exchange we might quickly be in over our heads. Even more than 40 years after the Second Vatican Council, many Christians still have a very restricted idea of what the Church is referring to by the term »dialogue« (Michel 2008).

Already in 1979, the Asian bishops sought to put the emphasis on dialogue as it should be practiced by ordinary Christians (that is, by »non-experts«). The Asian bishops gave priority to the »dialogue of life«, which they said was »the most essential aspect of dialogue«. According to the Asian bishops, the dialogue of life occurs when: »Each gives witness to the other concerning the values they have found in their faith, and through the daily practice of brotherhood, helpfulness, open-heartedness and hospitality, each show themselves to be a God-fearing neighbor. The true Christian and [their neighbors of other faiths] offer to a busy world values arising from God's message when they revere the elderly, conscientiously rear the young, care for the sick and the poor in their midst, and work together for

social justice, welfare, and human rights.« (Rosales and Arevalo 1997, 109-112)

The bishops are moving away from the idea of dialogue seen as mainly a way »*talking or discussing*« to one of »*a way of living together*«, with the emphasis on »*sharing life*« in the context of daily living. In my reflection (Riyanto 2010), dialogue is concretely sort of beautiful activities such as:

- *sitting together*: »*silaturahmi*« (visiting and extending hands of blessing and respect), sharing, negotiating, and discussing;
- *standing together*: respecting one another and promoting equality and rights;
- *working together*: building the better life of society in various fields such as education, health service, economy, and politics;
- *experiencing ups and downs of everyday life*: cultivating the sense of solidarity, friendship, brotherhood, neighborhood;
- *meditating together* [I don't use the term »*prayer*«]: learning and listening to each other about spiritual experience of God and extending God's love to one another;
- *journeying together*: ceaselessly searching the truth in a way that one experiences freedom and love only in God he discover!

Shall we not be dying together too? If we live in peace with others, it will be beautiful that we will also die in the same peaceful way others experience. In other word, dialogue is nothing other than ceaseless activity to seek peace in our living together with others.

3.2 Cultivating the sense of being together

I live in a seminary located in a periphery of a small town, called Malang, East Java. Our seminary is surrounded by Muslims. Until now there aren't any difficulties in our relationship. As ordinary people who live in a suburb we feel close to each other. We form a group or community consisting of more or less 40 families. This group of families meets every Saturday evening respectively in a family who wins »*arisan*« (an activity of collecting money in a small amount from each member of the group, then share that money to the lucky one after a simple procedure of play). Our seminary belongs to this group; seminarians take actively a part of such an activity every Saturday evening. By doing so, the seminarians are doing something good to cultivate the sense of being together. Neighborhood means brotherhood. We do experience that living out the spirituality of brotherhood can be broadened not just within our community but also with people of other faiths with whom we share the same feeling as brothers and sisters.

Our seminary provides several different assignments of pastoral activities. One of them is called »*kampung pastoral*« which is a pastoral activity that makes seminarians involve themselves in activities of *kampung* (village). We believe that being together means involving oneself into everyday life of other people. When we involve ourselves, we cheer and experience what others cheer and experience in their daily lives. Our house is also surrounded by five mosques big and small. Ev-

ery time of the call to pray starts (there are five times, even at 4 a.m.!) there is extremely big noise, since there are dozen of loud-speakers producing a strong voice of *Adhan* (a call to pray). Unfamiliar ear would feel badly disturbed. To be honest, this is very disturbing. How do we get familiar and not feel being disturbed? Just stay calm, be still, and enjoy!

Once I experienced a beautiful moment. It happened during my travel to China. We were leaders of private universities in our region of East Java. In a hotel I stayed in a room with an Indonesian Muslim colleague, a professor of sociology. We are friends to each other. After a long journey to the Great Wall we were tired and went back to our hotel. In a small room he took his stuffs and said that he would pray just beside his bed (there were two beds). I said, »Great, I should do the same!« So, he started to pray and so did I. Honestly I did find that it was a moment of the beauty of our being together. We just do what we should do according to our own faith and, again, it was beautiful.

3.3 Befriending others

My daily activities are mainly learning and teaching. I teach some philosophical subjects in Widya Sasana College of Philosophy and Theology at Malang, in which more than 400 students are preparing themselves to priestly ordination. Learning and teaching philosophy has always been a challenging task for me. Besides, I am invited to give lectures in a state university to deal with »phenomenological research« in Ph.D program (University of Airlangga) and also in Islamic universities (Surabaya and Malang) as visiting professor of philosophical subjects.

Whereas in Widya Sasana College I work with professors from religious congregations as well as diocesan priests, in universities where I engage in lectures I get occasion to meet people and intellectuals of different religions mostly Islam. This is a blessing and an interesting experience to me. I got friends of Muslims from different branches of Islam. In Indonesia there are two main groups of Muslims. The first one is called »Nadlatul Ulama« (NU) whose perspective of doctrine is more popular and rooted in ordinary people's tradition of life. It is the largest Islamic organization in Indonesia. The second biggest one is »Muhammadiyah« whose doctrine is somehow puritan and intellectual. Both share Sunni school. In my experience the Catholics can go with both NU and Muhammadiyah. They are good friends and are also active in working together with people from other faiths. When I work with them I feel alright. They are just simple and enthusiastic. Befriending Muslims is indeed beautiful. I also teach in both NU and Muhammadiyah universities. Mingling with Islamic scholars is a joy and blessing for me hoping that the same joy they gain while learning philosophy with my humble presence.

3.4 Working together for justice, peace and charity

In the words of the Asian bishops »working together for social justice, welfare, and human rights« is one of the manifestations of the dialogue of life. All aro-

und the world, Christians are striving, together with the followers of other religions, to build peace and to establish just societies. *The Daughters of Charity in Indonesia* as well as in countries of Asia Pacific have always done something beautiful in making efforts of collaboration for justice and peace in the society. In Indonesia, for instance, they are working together with the Muslims in many different areas of apostolate such as empowering women workers and women from villages, rendering health service or giving scholarship for poor children, taking care of leprosy persons, offering relief help to the survivors whenever there is natural disasters, etc. *Society of Saint Vincent de Paul, CM fathers, and Vincentian family* are also working hand in hand with different Islamic groups to give assistance to the poor especially the vulnerable and victims of disasters.

I do believe that no any single institution can handle effectively promotion of justice, peace, and love in society. Christians should be aware of the importance of collaboration. Every stage of our initial Vincentian formation must also seek ways and create possibilities that being man of collaboration is *par excellence* one of the most crucial requirements to be achieved by candidates.

3.5 A dialogue from the heart

Has God desired enmity between Christians and Muslims? The roots of the natural affinity that should exist between Muslims and Christians go back to the very Scriptural origins of Islam. Indeed, the Qur'an states: »The closest in affection to [Muslims] are those who say: »We are Christians,« for among them are priests and monks and they are not arrogant.« (5:82) This perception of divinely-willed friendship and cooperation between Muslims and Christians was expressed on the Christian side when the Catholic Church, in declaration *Nostra Aetate* (no. 3), urged Christians and Muslims to move beyond the suspicions and conflicts of the past in order to work together to carry out a common mandate: »For the benefit of all, let them together preserve and promote peace, liberty, social justice, and moral values.«

I do agree with Tom Michel (2008) who gives a comment that »the long history of conflict, oppression, violence, and war between Christians and Muslims must be understood as acts perpetrated by those who *failed to live according to the teaching of their respective faiths* or else the misguided actions of those whose theological vision was too narrow to recognize God's work of grace within the other community«. In other word, dialogue with Muslims needs to start *from the heart*. Heart locates physically in the center of our body. As the center heart becomes so important to the physical structure of human existence. What comes up from heart is what comes up from human being. So, heart is indeed the representative of the human presence. But, heart is also symbol of love. That means the good things which are out of heart expresses love. Mind thinks, ear listens, mouth speaks, eye sees, and heart loves, contemplates, and meditates.

Virtues of heart are simplicity, meekness, humility, courage as well as charity and love. When saying that dialogue with Muslims starts from the heart, I mean we need to start from love and charity, not prejudice nor judgment. These virtues

shape our ways of self-communication. They make friendship, solidarity, brotherhood, neighborhood, and togetherness possible. Such virtues make others feel to be accepted and welcome as they are. These virtues are essential elements in dialogue with Muslims. When I say that in dialogue we also need virtue of courage, I mean courage to transcend our inferior and superior mentality as Christian. Christians who live in the midst of Muslims as majority have inferiority as predominant feeling; and those who are majority seems to easily have superiority over the Muslims. To some extent, Christians are to be courageous to initiate to seek concrete ways of cultivating dialogues with Muslims regardless of difficulties and obstacles.

Dialogue is possible when we start from the heart. This is my simple conviction sprung from »the well« of experience of everyday life. By »the well« I mean love of God from which blessing and every good thing flow to our daily life. God is love. There will be no peace on earth, if there is no love. There will be no love, if there is no dialogue. And, so do our living and being together with Muslims. There will be no dialogue, if it does not start from the heart. We need dialogue with love. In this following song, it is said clearly that peace on earth starts with »me« and »us«. Loving others begins with our deep and personal experience of being loved by God.

*By Sy Miller and Jill Jackson, »Let There be Peace on Earth«
Let there be peace on earth, and let it begin with me.
Let there be peace on earth, the peace that was meant to be.
With God our Creator, we are family.
Let me walk with my neighbor in perfect harmony.
Let peace begin with me; let this be the moment now.
With every step I take, let this be my solemn vow:
To take each moment, and live each moment, in peace eternally!
Let there be peace on earth, and let it begin with me.*

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