

Vatican Response to A Common Word

From the Vatican, November 19, 2007

Paper contributed by Cambridge Inter-Faith Programme: interfaith.cam.ac.uk

Your Royal Highness,

On 13 October 2007 an open letter addressed to His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI and to other Christian leaders was signed by one hundred and thirty-eight Muslim religious leaders, including Your Royal Highness. You, in turn, were kind enough to present it to Bishop Salim Sayegh, Vicar of the Latin patriarch of Jerusalem in Jordan, with the request that it be forwarded to His Holiness.

The Pope has asked me to convey his gratitude to Your Royal Highness and to all who signed the letter. He also wishes to express his deep appreciation for this gesture, for the positive spirit which inspired the text and for the call for a common commitment to promoting peace in the world.

Without ignoring or downplaying our differences as Christians and Muslims, we can and therefore should look to what unites us, namely, belief in the one God, the provident Creator and universal Judge who at the end of time will deal with each person according to his or her actions. We are all called to commit ourselves totally to him and to obey his sacred will.

Mindful of the content of his Encyclical Letter *Deus Caritas Est* ("God is Love"), His Holiness was particularly impressed by the attention given in the letter to the twofold commandment to love God and one's neighbour.

His Royal Highness
Prince Ghazi bin Muhammad bin Talal
The Royal Palace
AMMAN, Jordan

As you may know, at the beginning of his Pontificate, Pope Benedict XVI stated: "I am profoundly convinced that we must not yield to the negative pressures in our midst, but must affirm the values of mutual respect, solidarity and peace. The life of every human being is sacred, both for Christians and for Muslims. There is plenty of scope for us to act together in the service of fundamental moral values" (Address, to Representatives of Some Muslim Communities, Cologne, 20 August 2005). Such common ground allows us to base dialogue on effective respect for the dignity of every human person, on objective knowledge of the religion of the other, on the sharing of religious experience and, finally, on common commitment to promoting mutual respect and acceptance among the younger generation. The Pope is confident that, once this is achieved, it will be possible to cooperate in a productive way in the areas of culture and society, and for the promotion of justice and

peace in society and throughout the world.

With a view to encouraging your praiseworthy initiative, I am pleased to communicate that His Holiness would be most willing to receive Your Royal Highness and a restricted group of signatories of the open letter, chosen by you. At the same time, a working meeting could be organized between your delegation and the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, with the cooperation of some specialized Pontifical Institutes (such as the Pontifical Institute for Arabic and Islamic Studies and the Pontifical Gregorian University). The precise details of these meetings could be decided later, should this proposal prove acceptable to you in principle.

I avail myself of the occasion to renew to Your Royal Highness the assurance of my highest consideration.

TARCISIO CARD. BERTONE
Secretary of State

© CAMBRIDGE INTER-FAITH PROGRAMME

Republished with permission

The Matheson Trust