

A MESSAGE FROM CADENABBIA

1. AS A GROUP OF MUSLIM AND CHRISTIAN SCHOLARS AND ACTIVISTS, MAINLY FROM SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA, SOUTH- AND SOUTHEAST ASIA, AFTER A PROCESS OF SOME MONTHS OF REFLECTION, WRITING AND SHARING PAPERS, WE MET TOGETHER IN VILLA LA COLLINA, IN CADENABBIA (ITALY), AT THE INVITATION OF THE KONRAD-ADENAUER-STIFTUNG (GERMANY), OCTOBER 1-4, 2009. WE JOIN OURSELVES WITH THOSE MUSLIMS AND CHRISTIANS WHO HAVE WELCOMED, STUDIED AND REFLECTED UPON THE "A COMMON WORD" DOCUMENT (ACW) AND WISH TO AFFIRM IT AS AN IMPORTANT FRESH IMPETUS TOWARDS WHAT WE HOPE WILL BE A NEW EXPERIENCE OF CHRISTIAN-MUSLIM RELATIONS. WE WISH TO ADD TO THIS DISCUSSION OF LOVE OF GOD AND NEIGHBOUR A CORRELATIVE EMPHASIS ON UNIVERSAL JUSTICE, ON RESPECT FOR THE DIGNITY OF EVERY HUMAN BEING, ON FREEDOM OF CONSCIENCE AND RESPECT FOR DIFFERENCE.

2. OUR SPECIFICITY AS A GROUP IS THAT WE ARE COMING FROM BOTH RELIGIOUS TRADITIONS, DEEPLY ROOTED IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA, AND SOUTH AND SOUTHEAST ASIA, WHERE THE VAST MAJORITY OF THE WORLD'S MUSLIMS LIVE; WHERE THERE IS A DEEP AND WIDE RICHNESS OF CHRISTIAN PRESENCE; WHERE THE EXPANSION IN BOTH FAITHS IS LIKELY TO OCCUR IN COMING DECADES; WHERE WE HAVE A CENTURIES-LONG EXPERIENCE OF LIVING TOGETHER IN PLURAL SOCIETIES. FROM THIS WE HAVE SOMETHING TO CONTRIBUTE TO THE WORLDWIDE DISCUSSION.

3. IN OUR AREAS PLURALITY OF RELIGION EXISTED BEFORE THE RISE OF CHRISTIANITY OR ISLAM AND HAS CONTINUED SINCE; INTO THIS SITUATION MUSLIMS AND CHRISTIANS IN THEIR OWN WAYS HAVE ENTERED. WHILST WE ACKNOWLEDGE THAT WE HAVE SPECIFIC DYNAMICS IN CHRISTIAN-MUSLIM RELATIONS, WE ALSO NOTE THAT WE ARE SUSCEPTIBLE TO INTERNATIONAL EVENTS, FORCES, PRESSURES AND INTRUSIONS.

4. IN OUR SOCIETIES, NOT ONLY CHRISTIANS AND MUSLIMS BUT ALSO FOLLOWERS OF OTHER WORLD- AND TRADITIONAL RELIGIONS LIVE SIDE BY SIDE, EVEN IN THE SAME FAMILY OR COMMUNITY, OVERWHELMINGLY IN HARMONY. WE THEREFORE HAVE SOMETHING TO CONTRIBUTE TO NEW CONTEXTS IN OUR REGIONS AND IN OTHER PARTS OF THE WORLD. IN VARIOUS CONFIGURATIONS IN OUR REGIONS WE HAVE EXPERIENCE RESPECTIVELY OF LIVING AS MINORITIES, AS MAJORITIES AND IN PLURALITY. THEREFORE WE HAVE A WEALTH OF EXPERIENCE OF AND ARE COMFORTABLE WITH MULTIPLE IDENTITIES AND BELONGINGS.

5. AS CHRISTIANS RESPONDING TO ACW WE HEAR THEIR ASSERTION THAT MUSLIMS ARE NOT AGAINST CHRISTIANS, AND WE IN RETURN AFFIRM AS CHRISTIANS THAT WE ARE NOT AGAINST MUSLIMS.

6. AS MUSLIMS WE AFFIRM THAT IN THIS RELATIONSHIP WE SHOULD BE "VYING WITH ONE ANOTHER IN GOOD DEEDS" AS THE QUR'ÂN EXHORTS US (SURAT AL-MA'IDA, Q 5:48).

7. TOGETHER WE AFFIRM THAT WE WILL RESPECT EACH OTHER, THAT WE WILL NOT SPEAK CONTEMPTUOUSLY AND WE RENOUNCE THE USE OF, OR INCITEMENT TO, VIOLENCE IN THE NAME OF GOD OR RELIGION.

8. WE RECOGNIZE AND DO NOT PRETEND TO RESOLVE THE THEOLOGICAL AND IDEOLOGICAL DIFFERENCES, IN ALL THEIR DIVERSITIES, WITHIN AND BETWEEN OUR TWO FAITH COMMUNITIES, AND YET WE AFFIRM WITH FULL ACCORD THE ONENESS OF GOD WHOM WE SERVE WITH OUR WHOLE BEING.

9. WE ACCEPT THE CHALLENGE OF ACW TO "LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOUR AS YOURSELF," WHICH WE UNDERSTAND AS APPLYING TO THE OBLIGATION TO BUILD SECURE "NEIGHBOURHOODS" IN THE WIDEST SENSE OF THAT TERM. THIS REQUIRES US TO CONFRONT TOGETHER THE CHALLENGES WHICH INCLUDE POVERTY AND ILLITERACY, ENVIRONMENTAL DEGRADATION AND DISEASE, HUMAN-RIGHTS VIOLATIONS, GENDER DISCRIMINATION AND ETHNIC CONFLICT.

10. WE WANT TO SPEAK AND ACT WITH UTMOST RESPONSIBILITY BECAUSE WE KNOW FROM FIRSTHAND EXPERIENCE IN OUR REGIONS THE CONSEQUENCES THAT CAN FLOW FROM "EASY WORDS."

11. WE DEPLORE THE ACTIONS OF EXTREME GROUPS WHO ABUSE THE NOBLE TEACHINGS OF OUR RELIGIONS, AND MANIPULATE RELIGIOUS SENTIMENTS; AND THE MASS HYSTERIA THAT CAN LEAD TO VIOLATIONS OF INDIVIDUALS AND COMMUNITIES. WE RECOGNIZE THAT THERE IS A RESPONSIBILITY UPON MAJORITY COMMUNITIES TO UPHOLD THE HUMAN RIGHTS AND DIGNITIES OF MINORITIES WITHIN THEIR SOCIETIES.

12. WE CHOOSE NOT TO BE PRISONERS OF THE NEGATIVE ASPECTS OF OUR HISTORY AND THE BITTER MEMORIES WE MAY HAVE INHERITED. RATHER, INSPIRED BY THE HOPE OUR RELIGIONS GENERATE, WE COMMIT OURSELVES TO CONSTRUCTING A MORE POSITIVE FUTURE. THOSE WHO HAVE THE BURDEN OF LEADERSHIP IN OUR COMMUNITIES BEAR A PARTICULAR RESPONSIBILITY NOT TO SUCCUMB TO STEREOTYPE AND PREJUDICE, BUT TO MAINTAIN A CONSTRUCTIVE VISION.

13. WE CANNOT TALK OF LOVING OUR NEIGHBOUR WITHOUT SEEKING TO KNOW, TO UNDERSTAND AND TO EMPATHIZE WITH MEMBERS OF OTHER FAITHS AND CULTURAL COMMUNITIES. THEREFORE:

- WE CALL UPON THOSE RESPONSIBLE FOR EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS TO REVIEW AND IMPROVE WHEREVER NECESSARY EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES, SYLLABI AND THE TRAINING OF TEACHERS.
- IN TURNING TO THE EDUCATION AND TRAINING OF RELIGIOUS LEADERS FROM BOTH OUR TRADITIONS, WE CALL FOR AN OPEN AND INCLUSIVE APPROACH BOTH TO CONTENT AND INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS, WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF THE CULTURE WITHIN WHICH THEY ARE WORKING.
- SIMILARLY, WE ACKNOWLEDGE THE POWERFUL ROLE PLAYED IN SOCIETY BY ALL FORMS OF MEDIA AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY, AND CALL ON THOSE WHO USE AND CONTROL THEM TO PLAY A RESPONSIBLE, INFORMED AND CONSTRUCTIVE ROLE.

14. WE COMMIT OURSELVES TO ADDING OUR VOICES AND OUR RESOURCES TO THE PROCESS TO WHICH ACW HAS NOW GIVEN NEW ENERGY, TO PROMOTE LOCAL, REGIONAL AND GLOBAL SOCIETIES WHICH CAN TRULY BE EXPERIENCED AS NEIGHBOURHOODS, IN WHICH ALL MEN AND WOMEN ARE RESPECTED EQUALLY AND ACCORDED THEIR FULL DIGNITY AS THE NOBLE CREATURES OF GOD. LOVE OF GOD DEMANDS OF US LOVE OF NEIGHBOUR; WITHOUT LOVE OF NEIGHBOUR THERE IS NO LOVE OF GOD.

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