



OFFICE OF THE ARCHBISHOP

April 2021

To our friends in the Muslim communities of the Edmonton area:

As-salamu alaykum! Peace be upon you!

It has become customary for me during this important season in your religious calendar, to send you a personal note and to share with you the official “Message for the Month of Ramadan and ‘Id Al-Fitr” published by our Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue.

This year’s message, entitled “**Christians and Muslims: Witnesses of Hope**” contains a powerful message reminding us that: “We, Christians and Muslims, are called to be bearers of hope, for the present life and for the life to come, and to be witnesses, restorers and builders of this hope, especially for those experiencing difficulties and despair. ”

What do these words mean for us, Christians and Muslims, living here in a place like Edmonton, where our two communities enjoy the blessings of peaceful co-existence and many positive and life-giving initiatives together? I hope you will permit me a couple of brief reflections on the theme of hope.

For several years now, I have been maintaining a blog entitled “Reason for Hope” through which I offer comments and reflections on issues affecting our everyday lives through the lens of Christian revelation rooted in our Sacred Scriptures.

One of the main themes that I present frequently in this blog is a theme that I think resonates equally true within Islam as with Christianity namely: the need to look beyond ourselves and our daily struggles, to God – who communicates His very self to us, who draws us out of ourselves and towards others, who invites us to participate, even now, in His plans for our world and for our own lives, and who fashions the horizon against which we view our lives correctly. We live not only for the moment but for eternity; we are concerned not with the fulfilment of self-centered and transient desires but with allowing God to fulfil His will in us. This is the basis for our hope both as Christians and as Muslims.

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In our current circumstances, the COVID pandemic has left many people experiencing a sense of helplessness, of being ensnared by circumstances too powerful to control. The feeling of isolation is widespread, or of being caught with no way out. This circumstance brings us to the realization that the reason for hope lies not within ourselves. It is found in the One in whose view each of us is precious, who will always come looking, and who has the power to rescue. The reason for hope is the divine love God holds for each and every one of us, without exception and without condition. If we choose daily to trust not in ourselves but in the love of God, we shall soon find welling within our hearts a hope that we know is real and that cannot be shaken.

Friends, this hope can be shared with others in so many simple and practical ways: “a telephone call, a message of support and comfort, a prayer, help in buying medicines or food, advice, and, to put it simply, the security of knowing that someone is always there for us in times of necessity.” As Christians and Muslims, living here in the Edmonton-area, separately and together, let us find ways to be witnesses of this hope in today’s world.

May this message from me and from our Catholic Church be a source of encouragement to you throughout your holy month of fasting, prayer and alms-giving; and let us re-commit ourselves in this time to the ways of dialogue, peace, friendship and hope.

With warmest regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Richard W. Smith". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

✠Richard W. Smith
Archbishop of Edmonton