

ARCHBISHOP'S OFFICE  
2121 COMMONWEALTH AVENUE  
BRIGHTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02135 3193

November 3, 2005

My dear friends in the Muslim community,

Once again, it is my pleasure to offer my prayerful best wishes as you prepare to celebrate the Feast of 'Id al-Fitr, and to provide you a copy of the Holy See's "Message to the Muslim Community at the End of Ramadan." As I wish to extend my greetings to as many members of the local Muslim community as possible, I would appreciate it if you would distribute this letter and the Holy See's message to the members of your mosques or Islamic centers.

This past October 28 was the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Catholic Church's "Declaration on the Church's Relation to Non-Christian Religions," often called by its Latin title, *Nostra Aetate*. This document from the Second Vatican Council encourages members of the Catholic Church to enter into positive relations with the members of other religions. In particular Catholics and Muslims are urged to set aside the painful events and misunderstandings of the past in order to move into a future of positive regard and respect.

The years since the publication of *Nostra Aetate* have been fruitful ones for Catholic-Muslim relations. Certainly we are both very grateful for the dialogue that has been established and deepened in many parts of the world. As you know, our beloved Pope John Paul II made reaching out to Muslims a hallmark of his pontificate, and Muslims throughout the world responded with respect and gratitude. The fruits of this mutual outreach were evident in the touching words of condolence which Muslims extended to Catholics at the time of the Pope's death. May John Paul's example inspire us to continue the work of strengthening the bond between Christians and Muslims.

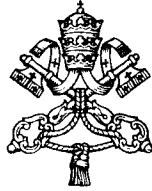
It is encouraging to know that warm and respectful working relations continue to be developed between members of the Archdiocese of Boston and the local Muslim community. In addition to our ongoing dialogue, the Interreligious Leaders Group has been a very helpful support when issues of particular concern to our religious communities arise. Our working together on issues concerning the common good and supporting relief efforts for the victims of Hurricane Katrina and others in need are a sign of a shared vision for humanity. Please be assured of my personal commitment to continue these collaborative efforts in our local communities, they enrich our society and increase the understanding and respect between our religions.

The enclosed greetings from the Holy See are signed by Archbishop Michael Fitzgerald, President of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue. You may be interested to learn that Archbishop Fitzgerald will be a guest of the Archdiocese of Boston in March, and he will be participating in a two-day symposium on interreligious dialogue, which is being co-sponsored by Boston College and Brandeis University. As details of the symposium are finalized, you will be contacted by our Office for Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs so that you may have the opportunity to participate in the various programs that are being planned.

With best wishes, I remain

Sincerely,

  
Archbishop of Boston



**PONTIFICAL COUNCIL  
FOR INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUE**

**ARCHBISHOP MICHAEL L. FITZGERALD**  
President

*Continuing on the Path of Dialogue*

**MESSAGE FOR THE END OF RAMADAN**  
‘Id al-Fitr 1426 A.H. / 2005 A.D.

**Vatican City**

Dear Friends,

1. As *'Id al-Fitr* comes round again, at the close of the month of Ramadan, I wish to offer to all of you, in whatever part of the world you may be, my very best wishes for a Happy Feast.

2. It has become a tradition for the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue to send a message to our Muslim brothers and sisters on the occasion of the end of Ramadan. The message has usually been signed by the president of the Pontifical Council. In 1991, on account of the first Gulf War, the good-will message was signed by His Holiness Pope John Paul II. He wrote about the need for “a sincere, profound and constant dialogue between believing Catholics and believing Muslims, from which there can arise a strengthened mutual knowledge and trust”. These words are surely still relevant today.

3. On 2 April of this year Pope John Paul II completed his earthly life. Many Muslims around the world, with Catholics and other Christians, followed closely the news of the Pope's last illness and his death, and official delegations of Muslims, political and religious leaders from many countries, attended his funeral in Saint Peter's Square. Many had appreciated deeply the Pope's constant efforts on behalf of peace. A Muslim journalist who had had occasion to meet personally with Pope John Paul II wrote: “I am not exaggerating when I say that the death of Pope John Paul II has been a great loss for the Catholic Church and for Christians in general, and also for Christian-Muslim relations in particular. There can be no compensation for this loss other than to follow in his footsteps and to continue in the way that he has traced out with the faith and courage of Assisi in 1986, Assisi where lie the remains of Saint Francis, pioneer among Catholics of Christian-Muslim dialogue”.

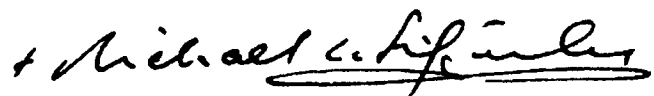
4. It was faith in God and confidence in humanity that impelled the late Pope to engage in dialogue. He constantly reached out to brothers and sisters of all religions with respect and a desire for collaboration, as had been encouraged by the Second Vatican Council in its Declaration *Nostra aetate* of

which the fortieth anniversary occurs this year. His commitment in this regard was actually rooted in the Gospel, following the example of the Lord Jesus who showed his love and respect for each person, even for those who did not belong to his own people.

5. Following the teaching of the Vatican Council II and continuing on the path taken by Pope John Paul II, His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI, when receiving the representatives of other religions who attended the celebration for the beginning of his Pontificate, stated: "I am particularly grateful for the presence in our midst of members of the Muslim community, and I express my appreciation for the growth of dialogue between Muslims and Christians, both at the local and international levels. I assure you that the Church wants to continue building bridges of friendship with followers of all religions, in order to seek the true good of every person and of society as a whole". Then, making reference to the conflicts, violence and wars present in our world, the Pope emphasized that it is the duty of every one, especially those who profess to belong to a religious tradition, to work for peace, and that "our efforts to come together and foster dialogue are a valuable contribution to building peace on solid foundations". Pope Benedict XVI concluded by saying: "It is therefore imperative to engage in sincere and authentic dialogue, built on respect for the dignity of every human person, created, as we Christians firmly believe, in the image and likeness of God" (*cf. Gen. 1: 26-27*) (*L'Osservatore Romano*, 4 May 2005).

6. Encouraged by these words of the Pope, it is for us to strengthen our engagement in building up good relations among people of different religions, to promote cultural dialogue and to work together for greater justice and enduring peace. Let us, as Christians and Muslims, show that we can live together in true fraternity, striving always to do the will of Merciful God who created humanity to be one family.

Once more I express to you my warmest greetings.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Michael L. Fitzgerald". The signature is written in a cursive style and is underlined.

Archbishop Michael L. Fitzgerald

*President*