

“The Sultan and the Saint”

Peacemaking at Its Best

***“They should go forth as witnesses and instruments
of her mission among all people,
... fostering an open and trusting
dialogue of apostolic effectiveness and creativity.”***

Article 6, The Rule of the Secular Franciscan Order

As an Ecumenical Interfaith Committee, we are promoting Christian unity in persons of different religious faiths. We are delegated to take action in search for mutual respect and common ground with our brothers and sisters reaching out to build bridges of understanding and friendship that is designed to tear down the walls of isolation and fear.

When I viewed the premiere of the Docudrama “The Sultan and the Saint” in Albuquerque, I was delighted to see that the Islamic Center and Franciscan Friars, OFM, were hosting this event together. Watching the film brought clarity and understanding of what peacemaking is all about on a realistic down-to-earth level. The Sultan and St. Francis were on a journey of their own when the unlikely meeting took place. It was a crossroads moment for them that changed history. They were both men of faith, one an itinerant Christian preacher and the other the ruler of a Muslim Empire.

Dialogue between the Muslim community and those of us that attended the event occurred after the film. This was an opportunity to clarify misconceptions. Common ground began here in the realization of our faith and acceptance of God/Allah as our Creator.

In my Region, two of us initiated a meeting with the Islamic Center in El Paso, Texas recently. We inquired if we could just sit down and dialogue and begin building bridges by addressing any misconceptions and, therefore, understand one another in solidarity. We had a very good introductory discussion with two of the Muslim women who were very hospitable and eager to have dialogue with us.

Soon after, we planned another meeting with more women from our region and their community. The leader of the women’s group made a flyer that expresses peace and comradery. Through our time together, we are looking forward to forging new friendships and a lasting bond.

As we began to tour the Mosque, I sensed a peace and ambiance of deep prayer. We shared with the Muslim women about the story and film of “The Sultan and the Saint”; they were not familiar with it. I asked if we could bring the film to the Mosque, view it together by inviting both of our Communities, and have dialogue afterwards. It is our hope the doors would be opened even wider with respect and deepening our bond. The women are very open minded, eager to watch it, and excited to invite others. Bridges are being built!

QUR'AN: 3:64 – “Say, O People of the Book {Christians and Jews}!
Come to a common word between us and you.”

1 Thessalonians 5:11 – “*Therefore encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing.*”

With regard to our brothers and sisters seeking refuge in El Paso Texas, we continue to work with other denominational churches and faiths seeking to help the stranger and marginalized.

I encourage you to open the doors to your hearts and reach out to those who are in need and to those that are different than you. You will realize we do have common threads and acknowledge God has many names and faces!

Pope Francis is a messenger of Peace. He meets with leaders of all faiths and embraces them as Brother and Sisters. Can we do likewise?

St. Francis traveled far and wide without boundaries with his love for all people as an opportunity of encounter, opening dialogue with those along the way.

May we allow God's wisdom and courage to help us find unity among diversity.

The film, “The Sultan and the Saint”
www.sultanandthesaintfilm.com

“**Agents of Peace**” An Interfaith conference to celebrate the Unity and common life we share In the Holy One. To be held May 3-5, 2018 at Roslyn Retreat Center in Richmond, Virginia. This conference is led by Masud Ibn Syedulillah and Garrett Mettler, both Episcopal Priests. Masud is a member of the Joint Committee on Franciscan Unity. For information and registration go to www.rootsandbranchesprograms.org

“**Christians Building Bridges with Spiritual Neighbors**” one day workshop, To be held July 14, 2018. Sacred Heart Church in Jacksonville, Florida sponsored by St. Bonaventure Fraternity. Donna Hollis, OFS, speaker

Pax et bonum,

Donna Hollis, OFS,
Ecumenical/Interfaith Committee
Regional Minister, Our Lady of Guadalupe Region