

Blessed are the Peacemakers: The First San Fernando Valley Interfaith Solidarity March

By Bryanna Benedetti-Coomber
with Sr. Deborah Lorentz, SSS



**“Blessed are the peacemakers,
for they will be called children of God”
~ Matthew 5:9**

The First San Fernando Valley Interfaith Solidarity March took place on Sunday, September 10 in commemoration of the 16th anniversary of the September 11 attacks. The march symbolized solidarity and unity among people of all faiths who reject violence in the name of religion. The march was attended by over 500 people who braved the SFV Valley heat to stand in solidarity with one another.

The two mile march began at the Our Lady of Grace Catholic Church on the corner of Ventura and White Oak, followed by brief stops at Temple Judea, St. Paul's United Methodist and St. Mary Assyrian Church on Lindley Avenue and ending at the Islamic Center of Reseda on Victory Blvd. The march included a litany of speakers, from religious leaders, to politicians, to social activists. The crowd participants also came from a diversity of backgrounds, ages and religious affiliation, and held signs avowing unity within this diversity, including: ""We Are the Caring Majority" and "There's Only One Humanity."

Sponsors of the march included the Institute for Religious Tolerance, Peace and Justice; Muslim Women Speakers; Caring Across Generations; Faith-based Los Angeles Alliance; as well as several local places of worship in the Roman Catholic, Christian, Muslim, and Jewish communities in the San Fernando Valley. They shared their mission for the March in this statement:

That we stand with our brothers and sisters in support of their right to worship freely here in the United States and to live peaceful lives among their neighbors. The image is for people of all faiths, people with no faith, to link arms together

protecting each other, and their houses of worship and ensure the freedom of religion for all of our people. On this day we will celebrate and promote this solidarity.

(Interfaith Solidarity March Flyer)

God calls each of us to be co-creators of peace in this world as peacemakers among our neighbors - to strive to create peace through reconciliation and to transform division into cooperation. It is a call to be active and engaged in our families and communities: to welcome the stranger as a fellow child of God despite differences.



Sisters of Social Service and Associates join with the International Thomas Merton Society in marching for peace and solidarity. Photo courtesy of SSS Discerner Mary Grace Nicolas.

Several of our Sisters and Associates from the Los Angeles area attended the SFV Valley March, living into God's call to be co-creators of peace. In this time of great division and rampant hatred of the other in our world and especially in our country, we are called to draw together to love one another as God loves us (John 13:34).

Although the Interfaith Solidarity March is over, the presence of the Divine among us still lingers and the hope of for peace in our divided world remains strong.

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Sisters of Social Service

4316 Lanai Road, Encino, CA 91436 (818)285-3355

www.sssla.org