



In the Name of Allah, the Most Compassionate, the Dispenser of Grace

Khutbah

Islamic Center of Michiana – South Bend, IN

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World Interfaith Harmony Week and Solidarity Against Islamophobia

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الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ الَّذِي شَرَعَ لِلنَّاسِ مَا فِيهِ مَصْلَحَتُهُمْ فَأَمَرَهُمْ بِكُلِّ مَا فِيهِ نَفْعُهُمْ وَنَهَاهُمْ عَنِ كُلِّ مَا يَضُرُّهُمْ، وَأَشْهَدُ أَنْ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَحْدَهُ لَا شَرِيكَ لَهُ، وَأَشْهَدُ أَنَّ سَيِّدَنَا مُحَمَّدًا عَبْدُهُ وَرَسُولُهُ الَّذِي أَعَزَّهُمْ بِهِ بَعْدَ الذَّلَّةِ وَجَمَعَهُمْ بِهِ بَعْدَ الْفُرْقَةِ. اللَّهُمَّ صَلِّ وَسَلِّمْ عَلَى عَبْدِكَ وَرَسُولِكَ سَيِّدَنَا مُحَمَّدٍ وَعَلَى آلِهِ وَأَصْحَابِهِ أَهْلِ النَّجْدَةِ وَالشَّهَامَةِ. أَمَّا بَعْدُ، فَيَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ حَيْثُ مَا كُنْتُمْ، فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ يَعْلَمُ سِرِّكُمْ وَعَلَانِيَتَكُمْ.

During the past week religious communities all over the world have once again been celebrating what is known as World Interfaith Harmony Week.

World Interfaith Harmony Week was proclaimed by the United Nations through a resolution adopted by the General Assembly on 20 October 2010 as an annual event to be observed during the first week of February. In proclaiming this worldwide observance, the United Nations has recognized the imperative for dialogue between different faiths

and has encouraged all communities to use the first week of February to spread “the message of interfaith harmony and goodwill in churches, *masajid*, synagogues, temples and other places of worship.” The UN has furthermore called for the message of interfaith harmony to be based on “love of God and love of one's neighbor (*hubbu Allah wa hubbu al-jar*) or on “love of the good and love of one's neighbor, each according to their own religious traditions or convictions”.

Interfaith Harmony Resonates Fully with the Message of the Qur’an

It is my considered view that both the idea as well as the message of the World Interfaith Harmony Week resonates fully with the teachings of Islam. A paradigmatic Qur’anic verse that supports the notion of interfaith harmony and benevolence towards those who do not share our faith commitment is verse 8 of *Surah al-Mumtahina* in which God, the Lord of Compassion, proclaims:

لَا يَنْهَاكُمُ اللَّهُ عَنِ الَّذِينَ لَمْ يُقَاتِلُوكُمْ فِي الدِّينِ
وَلَمْ يُخْرِجُواكُم مِّن دِيَارِكُمْ
أَن تَبَرُّوهُمْ وَتُقْسِطُوا إِلَيْهِمْ
إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ الْمُقْسِطِينَ

**God does not prohibit you from showing kindness to
and dealing justly with those (people of other faiths)
who do not fight you on account of your religion,
nor drive you from your homes.
For God loves those who are just and fair (Q60:8)**

According to the renowned classical commentator of the Qur’an, Isma`il Ibn Kathir (d. 1373), the above verse was revealed at a time when relations between Muslims and those who did not share their faith in Islam was strained and at an all-time low. In support of his contention ibn Kathir cites a prophetic tradition (*hadith*) recorded in the authentic collections of Imam Bukhari, Imam Muslim and Imam Ahmad, in which Asma’ the daughter of Abubakr al-Siddiq refused to let her mother, Qutaylah, into her house and also rejected her mother’s gifts because she was not Muslim. Concerned by this abrasive behavior of Asma’ towards her non-Muslim mother, her sister ‘Aisha, the Prophet Muhammad’s beloved wife, questioned him about it. It was in this context and in response to this unkind and intolerant approach to the fact that her mother had chosen not to embrace Islam, that Allah, the Lord of Compassion and Mercy, revealed the above verses to clarify the situation. Asma’s behavior towards her non-Muslim mother was unequivocally rebuked and a sublime standard of conduct towards all peace-loving non-Muslims was decreed.

The import of the above verses is crystal clear and emphatic. If those who do not share our faith in Islam choose to live with Muslims in amity and friendship then it is incumbent upon us to reciprocate by adorning our behavior towards them with kindness and justice. For Allah loves those who are just and not chauvinistic and prejudiced in their comportment towards others.

The Outpouring of Interfaith Solidarity Against Islamophobia

In response to the commendable call by the United Nations for the observance of World Interfaith Harmony Week, I would like to, in this *khutbah*, briefly reflect on the great outpouring of interfaith solidarity that we have witnessed across the United States during the past week.

Ironically this momentous surge in interreligious solidarity was prompted by a few tragic events that took place during the past week.

The first was President Donald Trump's executive order that temporarily banned citizens (whether refugees or not) who are native to seven Muslim majority countries from entering the United States. Literally hours after this executive order, in the early hours of Saturday morning 28 January 2017, the Islamic Center of Victoria in Texas, was burnt to the ground by unknown attackers. A day later, on Sunday 29 January 2017, six worshippers were killed and eight others injured by a lone gunman at the Grand Mosque in Québec, Canada.

We condemn these acts of hatred and Islamophobia and make *du`a* and pray for the repose of the souls of the victims and extend our sincere condolences to their loved ones.

At this difficult time in our history we can find great solace in Allah's promise in the Glorious Qur'an in *surah al-Inshirah*, chapter 94 verses 5 and 6 where Allah, the Lord of Compassion, proclaims

فَإِنَّ مَعَ الْعُسْرِ
إِنَّ مَعَ الْعُسْرِ يُسْرًا

**Indeed with every difficulty comes ease,
And again with every difficult comes ease. (Q94:5-6)**

It is striking to note that the above Qur'anic verses speak of ease together *with* hardship, which means that adverse circumstances might themselves point to new openings.

Such new openings of ease, *yusr* or *taysir*, hope and transformation were clearly witnessed by the outpouring of interreligious solidarity and love that we witnessed during the past week across the United States and indeed the world. There are numerous stories about Christians, Jews, and Hindus, people of faith and of none, reaching out in solidarity

and love to their Muslim compatriots at this challenging time. I would like to briefly reflect on a few of them.

In the immediate aftermath of the burning down of an Islamic Center in Texas the local Jewish community invited the Muslims to perform their five daily ritual prayers (*salawat*) in their synagogue.

Within hours of receiving the news of the burning down of the Islamic Center, people from all religious backgrounds raised one million dollars for its reconstruction. Moreover, people from diverse religious backgrounds have been making donations to the Council of American Islamic Relations (CAIR), the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) and other human rights agencies to fight the temporary ban on citizens from seven Muslim majority countries in the US federal courts.

During the past week hundreds of protests and demonstrations against the 90-day immigration ban on seven Muslim majority countries were held in major cities throughout the US. At one such protest in Boston, the *adhan* (call to prayer) was made from the Trinity Church to show support for Muslims. In addition to this, interfaith prayer vigils were convened across the US in solidarity with Muslims and many statements of concern have been issued. A statement from the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops reads as follows:

We recognize that Friday evening's Executive Order has generated fear and untold anxiety among refugees, immigrants, and others throughout the faith community in the United States. In response to the Order, we join with other faith leaders to stand in solidarity again with those affected by this order, especially our Muslim sisters and brothers. We also express our firm resolution that the Order's stated preference for "religious minorities" should be applied to protect not only Christians where they are a minority, but all religious minorities who suffer persecution, which includes Yazidis, Shia Muslims in majority Sunni areas, and vice versa.

The above are only a few of the many inspirational stories that have accompanied the past week of anxiety and distress for American Muslims. I would like to conclude with a local Michiana story. A statement of gratitude issued yesterday by the Islamic Society of Michiana's President, Dr. Zubayr `Ali and Imam Muhammad Sirajuddin to our local Michiana neighbors best captures this story. Part of the statement reads as follows:

Here, at the Islamic society of Michiana, our inboxes have been flooded with letters from nearby churches, synagogues, the Bar association, individual persons, and the South Bend Mayor's office offering their unconditional support and words of encouragement. Many have also made small donations and delivered baked goods for our Sunday school children. To all of you out there who have contacted us, and to everyone else, we thank you from the bottom of our hearts.

Conclusion

One of our challenges in the next few weeks and months will be to sustain this interfaith harmony, love and solidarity. I therefore call upon the congregation of the ISM to rise to this challenge by redoubling individual and collective efforts in reaching out to neighbors with love and compassion. We need to tend to the seeds of faith in our hearts with love, and continue to water it with hope and prayer. May Allah grant us the insight to clearly see the ease, *taysir*, and openings embedded within our current challenges.

We call on peace and justice-loving people in North America and all over the world to continue to raise their voices against hate, prejudice and bigotry and to use this lamentable moment in world history as a turning point to build a more compassionate and just world order.

At this sacred time of jumu`ah please join me in a special supplication:

***Ya Rahman* - O Allah, the Compassionate the Ever Merciful,**

We express gratitude for Your Grace,
for providing Your Protection, and for empowering us with Your Strength.

We find ourselves in the midst of heated disagreements, turmoil and uncertain times,

And while we feel deep distress about developments in this country and our world,
we continue to firmly hold onto hope.

***Ya Rabb al-Hidaya* - O Allah, our Sustainer and Guide,**

We stand together in unity, and pray for Your guidance.

We pray for our nation, especially those who are filled with fear,
those who are vulnerable and those who are marginalized.

We pray for our leaders - Grant them wisdom and discernment as they lead us,
so that peace, justice and freedom may forever abide in our midst.

***Ya Karim wa Mujib al-Dawat* – O Allah, the Generous and the One who responds to prayers,**

We pray that people of all cultures, those of all faiths and of none,
forge a common bond in true harmony,
to banish hatred and bigotry and to safeguard our freedoms.

We call on You to remind us to live aware,
to remove from us frustration, resentment and judgment –
and replace it with patience, peace and inspired understanding.

Ya Salam - O Allah, the Source of Peace and the Utterly Just,

We beseech you to look with compassion on the whole human family.
Take away teachings of arrogance, division and hatred,
break down the walls that separate, and reunite us in bonds of love.

May we always defend the vulnerable and marginalized
and respect the dignity of all human beings no matter their faith or worldview.

May we always strive for justice and reconciliation
and build relationships of mutual responsibility.

Allahumma anta al-Salam, God Thou art peace

wa minka al-Salam, and Peace emanates from Thee

fa hayyina Rabbana bi al-Salam,
Allow us to live and subsist in peace

Bi rahmatika Ya Ar-hamar-Rahimin,
For You are the Most Compassionate and Most Merciful

Nas`aluka bi Asma`ikalHusna, Ya Rabb al-Nas wa Rabb al-`Alamin
We ask this in all of Your beautiful and Holy names, Lord of all Humankind

Allahumma Amin

بَارِكْ اللهُ لِيْ وَلَكُمْ فِي الْقُرْآنِ الْعَظِيْمِ، وَنَفَعِنِيْ وَإِيَّاكُمْ بِمَا
فِيهِ مِنَ الْآيَاتِ وَالذِّكْرِ الْحَكِيْمِ، وَتَقَبَّلْ مِنِّيْ وَمِنْكُمْ تِلَاوَتَهُ
إِنَّهُ هُوَ السَّمِيْعُ الْعَلِيْمُ، أَقُولُ قَوْلِيْ هَذَا وَأَسْتَغْفِرُ اللهُ الْعَظِيْمَ
لِيْ وَلَكُمْ، وَلِسَائِرِ الْمُسْلِمِيْنَ وَالْمُسْلِمَاتِ وَالْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ
وَالْمُؤْمِنَاتِ، فَاسْتَغْفِرُوهُ فَيَا فَوْزَ الْمُسْتَغْفِرِيْنَ وَيَا نَجَاةَ
التَّائِبِيْنَ.