

Bishops' House Corran Esplanade Oban PA34 5AB

March 22nd 2023

Dear Friends,

Once again, I have the privilege to send you the annual message from the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue for the holy month of Ramadan and the festival of Eid which you will celebrate towards the end of April.

This year the letter considers the challenges and threats that we face as Muslims and Christians working towards a world where love and friendship lead to a peaceful and friendly coexistence. While recognising that there are important differences between us in religion, ethnicity, language and politics, it is the attitude that we adopt to these differences that ultimately matters.

The letter notes that differences can be perceived as threatening but immediately stresses that while we all have the right to our unique identity and components, we cannot ignore what we have in common. "The various peoples constitute a single community. We have one origin, for God made the whole human race to live over the face of the earth. We also have one final goal, God." (Nostra Aetate, 28 October 1965, n. 1).

The letter notes that as people of faith we can experience negative attitudes and behaviours from others "suspicion, fear, rivalry, discrimination, exclusion, persecution, polemics, insults, and slander, to name just a few."

In particular the letter identifies social media as a forum where these harmful attitudes find a home and become a vehicle for a culture of hate. As Pope Francis stated in Fratelli Tutti: "Social aggression has found unparalleled room for expansion through computers and mobile devices".

Interfaith dialogue provides us with the opportunity to counter this social aggression by educating future generations at home, in schools, in places of worship and on social media in the values of respect, goodness, charity, friendship, mutual care for all, forgiveness and cooperation for the common good.

In the meantime, in my own name, in the name of the Scottish Catholic Bishops and indeed the whole Catholic community I join my good wishes with those of the Dicastery for Interreligious Dialogue in wishing you a spiritually fulfilling Ramadan and a joyful celebration of 'Id al-Fitr.

Yours sincerely

+Bia Megee

+ Brian McGee, Bishop of Argyll and the Isles, President of the Scottish Bishops' Committee for Interreligious Dialogue