UNDERSTANDING SOME BASIC PRINCIPLES FOR PEACEFUL CO-EXISTENCE BETWEEN CHRISTIANS AND MUSLIMS: THE YOUTH IN FOCUS

INTRODUCTION

My dear KASWA members, students and invited guests, I am very encouraged that KASWA has embraced the idea of promoting peaceful co-existence among believers in West Africa. Today’s seminar is evidence of KASWA members’ determination to go beyond mere words to action in the promotion of peaceful co-existence.

The promoting of formal peaceful co-existence between Muslims and Christians was one of the pastoral options of the late Cardinal Porekuu Dery as soon as he became bishop of Wa. His love for Islam and Muslims made him to choose Wa as the seat of the ecclesiastical administration of Wa Diocese. Because of his intimate relations with Muslims he was able to acquire lands for the building of the Our Lady of Fatima Cathedral, St. Francis Xavier Senior High Seminary and the St. John the Baptist Primary and Junior High schools in Wa. The fact that he named his Cathedral after “Our Lady of Fatima” is a clear indication of his love for dialogue and peaceful co-existence with Muslims. The late Cardinal went further to encourage all his pastors to devote time for Muslims and to promote good relations between Muslims and Christians. The Cardinal was a pragmatic “father”. He knew that the best place to inculcate in pastors the interest in Islam and Muslims was the Seminary. Consequently, the Cardinal in consultation with the other bishops of the North and in their desire to implement the teachings of Nostra Aetate introduced Islam as a taught-subject in St. Victor’s Major Seminary. The idea was to empower seminarians with knowledge of Islam so that they can later engage meaningfully in Christian – Muslim dialogue in the parishes. The promotion of Christian – Muslim Dialogue became a pastoral imperative such that when TEPPCOM was founded, it immediately set up the TEPPCON Interreligious Dialogue Commission charged with animating the dialogue ministry in the Tamale Ecclesiastical Province. TEPPCON went further and encouraged each bishop to appoint a full-time priest for dialogue work and to establish a Diocesan Dialogue Commission.

The promotion of interreligious dialogue or peaceful co-existence in the Province has been the task of bishops, priests, religious and catechists. Today, the youth of the Province in the academia are up and doing and want to actively participate in the promotion of peaceful co-existence in our tertiary institutions. I am delighted that KASWA in collaboration with TEPPCON is the vanguard in this direction. Today’s seminar is the desire of KASWA to conscientize and to empower the literate youth to actually engage in promoting peaceful co-existence in the tertiary institutions and to find a WAY FORWAY in Christian-Muslim relations. I am happy to be part of this endeavor.

My dear friends, my purpose this morning is help us look into the Bible and the Qur’an to find the common values and principles for the promotion of peaceful co-existence in our institutions. Very often Christians and Muslims in dialogue spend unnecessary energy defending and advocating their religious ideals instead of drawing on and utilizing their “religious principles” to promote peaceful co-existence, and to jointly address both international and local issues. I have in mind
Gandhi as a model and light in this direction. When Gandhi wanted to overcome British colonialism he never used physical or material weapons. He employed the principle of “non-violence” as the means to achieve lasting peace. In the same way, if we want to overcome hatred which divides us, which consumes us, we must search and employ those common values and principles among Christians and Muslims as the spiritual weapons in the promotion of peaceful co-existence between Muslims and Christians in West Africa in general, and in the Northern Province in particular. These values and principles must be inclusive and universal. It is in this light that KASWA members have chosen as topic for this seminar: UNDERSTANDING SOME BASIC PRINCIPLES FOR PEACEFUL CO-EXISTENCE BETWEEN CHRISTIANS AND MUslims: THE YOUTH IN FOCUS.

Let me quickly add that there is no single Qur'anic attitude about peaceful co-existence, or to put it another way, there is no one Qur'anic judgment about peaceful co-existence. There are Muslims who use passages of the Qur'an to reject the promotion of peaceful co-existence between Muslims and other believers. We find extremists like Usāma b. Lādin who in the tradition of Ibn Taymiyya (d. 728/1328) and Sayyid Qutb (d. 1966) quote verses of the Qur`an (like Q 9:5) to reject peaceful co-existence with non-Muslims.

The Crusades, colonialism and the establishment of the state of Israel have made some contemporary Muslim exegetes to consider the Qur'anic verses that exhibit a more welcoming or tolerant attitude towards non-Muslims as abrogated by those that contain a harsher judgment of non-Muslims. However, we do find many Muslims who also use passages from the Qur'an to justify the promotion of peaceful co-existence with Christians and other believers. It is on the side of the majority of Muslims who want an interpretation of the Qur`an to suit the needs of the modern man in the interest of peace that I offer this reflection. I hope and pray that today’s seminar will challenge the Muslim youth of Ghana to streamline for themselves the kind of Islam that they want for Ghana. The future of Christian – Muslim relations in Ghana depends on our educated Muslim youth: Are they going to import the Saudi Arabia form of Islam into Ghana or are they are willing to adopt Islam to suit the Ghanaian context? In other words, the way forward for Christian – Muslim relations in Ghana in the 21st century will depend on the answer to the question: What kind of Islam do the educated Ghanaian Muslims want for Ghana?

My dear friends, the promotion of peaceful co-existence between Muslims and Christians is one of the goals of inter-religious dialogue. Inter-religious dialogue is about discovering the values and principles in our Sacred Scriptures and using them to build relationships or to repair relationships. Let us now look at some common values and principles from the Qur`an and the Bible that Christians and Muslims can utilize to promote peaceful co-existence through inter-religious dialogue.

AS-SALĀM (PEACE)

The Qur`an exhorts the Prophet to establish the reign of peace and righteousness and Allah’s Law on earth: “And if they incline to peace, you also incline to it, and trust in Allah. Truly, He is the All-Hearer, the All-Knower” (Qur`an 8:61).
God is called as-salām (Q 59:23). He is the one who provides an inner peace to those whom he guides (Q 6:125-7) and welcomes the true believers to the gardens of righteousness with the greeting: “Enter it in peace” (Q 50:31-4). God also bids greetings to be made to the Prophet with peace (“Salla Allahu alayhi wa sallama”) (Q 33:56). Peace is a gift of God and in the Qurān God begins peace with Noah, delegates it to Abraham, imparts it to both Moses and Aaron, instills it in Elijah and concludes by including all messengers as beneficiaries of the divine bestowal of peace (Q 37:79-181). Moreover, peace itself attends the coming down of the Qur`an on the Night of Power (Laylatul-Qadr) (Q 97:1-5). In short in the Qurān the purpose of God in all his dealings with human beings is to send down his peace on earth. Thus Muslims say: “salaamu alaykum” when entering a compound or house of another Muslim. Islam means “peace”

Jihad for Peace:

The following tradition (hadith) of Prophet Muhammad says that: “Once, having returned from one of his campaigns, the Prophet said: ‘We have now returned from the lesser jihad (fighting and war) and moving to the greater one’ which is the spiritual and moral jihad.

The tradition adds that the companions asked: “what is the greater jihad? The Prophet answered: “The struggle against one’s evil inclinations”. This is a deeper and more personal aspect of Jihad, which by its very principle is an inner struggle for “peace”, as compared to the outer physical struggle, as in a ‘jihad war’. Anyone, therefore, cannot attain real peace unless one undergoes a real “struggle” that begins from within.

On this level of greater jihad, interreligious dialogue can be a channel of peace if it encourages an internal struggle that purifies the heart of human beings, preparing the spirit for the great dialogue with God, with one self, and with people.

The Church sees in Jesus the fulfillment of the prophecy of Isaiah 9: 6-7 and calls Jesus: “The Prince of Peace”. In the sermon on the mountain Jesus promises his disciples: “Blessed are the peace makers, God will call them his children” (Mt 5:9). The first words of the Risen Lord to his disciples are: “Peace be upon you” (“As-salaamu alaykum” in the Arabic Bible) John 20:19. The parting words of Jesus to his disciples before his death are: “Peace is what I leave with you; it is my own peace that I give you. I do not give it as the world does” (John 14: 27) In Acts 10:36: Peter told the Cornelius and his household, the first Gentile Believers that Jesus came into the world to proclaim the Good News of peace, the Good News of reconciliation. In Jesus Christ there is no Jew or Greek, no male or female, no slave or freeman. All people are brother and sisters.

Peace is a gift of God but we must also pray for peace. This was the conviction of Pope John Paul II. In 1986 he called the First World Day of Prayer for Peace that brought together the leaders of the world’s major religions to pray for peace. The 25th anniversary of this great event is to be celebrated this 2011.

The 2009 elections in Ghana were a test case. We saw the yearning of Ghanaians for peace and their belief that it is only through prayer that Ghana can have peace. Muslims and Christians throughout the country prayed for successful elections. God answered our prayers and there was a peaceful transition of power without any violence.
My Dear friends, interreligious dialogue is about networking with other religious believers to build peaceful co-existence in the world. The events of the world have made interreligious dialogue not an option but necessity. Thus Hans Kung is right when he said: “There can be no peace in the world unless there is peace between believers of the various religions, and there can be no peace between the various religions unless there is dialogue between the various religious believers”. Unfortunately, Religion which is an extraordinary factor of unity and peace is sometimes abused and becomes a source of conflict. It can be used to justify and sustain the reasons for conflict: this is the case with the Croats, the Serbs and the Muslims in Bosnia. It is the case with the people of Armenia and Azerbaijan in the Caucasus. It is the case with the Hindus and the Muslims in India, and it is the case with the Catholics and the Protestants in Northern Ireland. It is the case with Muslims and Christians in Nigeria.

The axiom: “If you want peace prepare for war” is out of tune and outdated. It has in history caused only misery and pain: more harm than good. War is evil whenever it is directed outside, and the good of peace cannot be achieved with evil of the suffering that it inflicts.

My dear friends, we are Ghanaians first before we are Christians and Muslims. In African Traditional Religion water is a symbol of peace. For example, in Dagaaba traditional religion, water is offered to guests as a sign of peace; water is offered to the ancestors before any sacrifice to symbolize that the congregation has assembled in peace and for peace; water is used to quench fire, that is, to put an end to conflict. This is illustrated in the story of the Spider-farmer. Once day the spider invited farmers to help him in his farm work. He invited the termite but the termite told him that he would come on condition that he did not invite the hen. Next he invited the hen but the hen also told him that he would come on condition that he did not invite the hawk. He next invited the hawk and the hawk accepted the invitation but advised Spider not to invite the hunter. He went ahead and invited the hunter but the hunter said he would come but the spider should not invite the cobra. Next the spider invited the cobra but the cobra told the spider not to invite the stick. The spider invited stick but the stick strongly recommended the spider should not invite the fire. Finally, the spider invited the fire but the fire said he would come on condition that he did not invite the rain. The spider went ahead and invited the rain. The spider ignored all the conditions because his interest was to get his farm work done. The day came and all the hired hands arrived in the farm. While the hen was farming it was eyeing the termite. At the least provocation it jumped on the termite and swallowed it. The hawk was also spying the hen. When the opportunity came it grabbed it and flew with it onto a tree to have a good meal. The hunter noticed the hawk on the tree and took aim and brought it down with a good shot. As he burned down to collect it the cobra gave him a mortal bite. At that instant the stick saw the cobra in escape and beat it to death. Fire at this moment saw the stick and set it on fire. The fire escalated and began burning the farm. The rain could not stand it. It gathered thick cloths and sent down a heavy pour to quench the fire. There was peace. Conflicts are natural but whenever and whenever there is conflict, let us quench it with water. Water is peace in ATR!

**AL CADL (JUSTICE)**

Islamic social justice rests on the important Qur’anic concepts of ‘*dl (justice) and al-Ahsan (compassion). A life based on these is a balance one. Islam is a religion of balance, equilibrium,
of the middle way: “Truly, Allah enjoins justice and good deeds and giving (help) to kith and kin” (Qur’an 16:90)

Muslims must be just in economic dealings: “Give just measure and weight, and wrong not people in the things that are their due” (Q 7:85).

And even with enemies, Muslims are ordered to maintain justice as an expression of piety: “Be just: that is next to piety” (Q 5:8).

Not only are Muslims ordered in the Qur’an not to start aggression but also to meet aggression against themselves with only equal measures, lest they turn into aggressors: “And if you punish (your enemy), then punish them with the like of that with which you were afflicted. But if you show patience, this is indeed the best course for those who are patient.” Q 16:126

It is interesting to note that in the Qur’anic teachings on social justice (Q 17: 22 – 37), no where does the Qur’an say that non-Muslims who are at peace with Muslims should be discriminated against or treated as second-citizens. The only case is when, as belligerents, they have been subjected and are made to pay jizya (tribute) “in a state of humiliation” (Qur’an 9:29)

Muslims are ordered by the Prophet to offer support to their fellow Muslim whether he is the oppressed or the oppressor. When asked by his companions: “How could we support him when he is the oppressor?” the Prophet replied: “By preventing him from doing injustice. This is how you support him.”

The teachings of the Prophets and the Law in the Old Testament, and the teachings of Jesus Christ are summarized in Micah 6:8: “This is what the Lord requires of you: to act justly, to love tenderly, and to walk humbly with your God”. This is the meaning of religion. Justice is an absolute value which should cut across all religious and ethnic divisions. Any interpretation of religion that legitimizes or causes injustice cannot be other than ill-interpretation that deviates from religion. And to take side with the oppressed, irrespective of his religious community is not only to defend basic human rights, but also to defend the integrity of one’s own religious principles.

Christians and Muslims must work for peace and harmony in the world. But we must not forget that justice is essential for peace. There can be no lasting peace without justice. “Justice delayed is justice denied”. Our Christian and Islamic traditions teach us that no prayer is efficacious when there is injustice and oppression.

AL-LUTF (COURTESY)

“Invite (mankind, O Muhammad) to the Way of your Lord with wisdom and fair preaching, and argue with them in a way that is better. Truly, your Lord knows best who has gone astray from his Path, and He is the Best Aware of those who are guided” (Qur’an 16:125). This is the Qur’anic principle for peaceful co-existence or living together.

The Qur’an on many occasions enjoins the practice of courtesy: in speech – offering the greetings (Q 6:54; 24:61), returning greetings with equal or greater courtesy (Q 4:86): for example when someone greets you- as-salaamu alaykum, you must respond by adding more
blessings to the person – *wa alaykum as-salaam, wa rahmatullahi, wa barakaatuhu*, using gentle words (Q 17:53; 35:10), returning evil with good (Q 23:96; 41:34), arguing with opponents in a pleasant manner (Q 29:46), quiet speech (Q 31:19), modest behavior (Q 24: 30 - 31); respect for privacy (Q 24:27); and kindness to parents (Q 2:83; 4:36; 6:151; 17:23).

Charity is an important virtue in the Qur’an. Yet the Qur’an teaches that “*kind words and forgiveness are better than charity followed by injury*” (Q 2:263). Furthermore, the Qur’an calls the servants of the Merciful as those who walk lightly (that is, with humility) on earth and return the greetings of the ignorant with the greetings of peace (Q 25:63).

In 1 Peter 3:9, Christians are advised to be courteous: “*Do not pay back evil with evil or cursing with cursing; instead, pay back with a blessing, because a blessing is what God promised to give you when he called you*”.

Christians and Muslims should be *courteous* to one another if we are to promote peaceful co-existence. We should speak with courtesy. This means that one should give a chance to others also to speak. Speaking and listening are both important for peaceful co-existence.

**AL-MAWADDAH (AFFECTION)**

In the Qur’an the Christians are the closer in friendship and affection to the believers, that is the Muslims: “*And you will find the nearest in love to the believers those who say: “We are Christians”*” (Qur’an 5:82). In this verse we find a friendly attitude to Christians than with the Jews and polytheists. The reasons for this change of attitude are: among the Christians “*there are presbyters and monks and the fact they do not behave arrogantly*”.

In I Cor 16:14, St. Paul calls on Christians: “*Do all your work in love*”. The motivating force in all the endeavors of the Christian with other believers should be love.

In the work for peaceful co-existence Christians and Muslims must have the courage which will never retreat and the love which will never fail. Furthermore, we must go beyond mere tolerance to love. It is not enough to tolerate me but you should love me! The late Pope John Paul II of blessed memory said that it is not enough for Muslims and Christians to tolerate each other. They must go beyond tolerance to love – they must love each another. This is the only path to the new order of world peace.

**AT- TASAAMUH (TOLERANCE)**

“*There is no compulsion in religion*” (Qur’an 2:256). In this verse we find the view that religious coercion (ِیکرَح) is unfeasible and forbidden.

In the Meccan period of the Qur’nic revelations, we find one clear message: “Religion is to be proposed not imposed”; “*Say: Oh you disbelievers, I worship not that you worship, nor will you worship that which I worship. And I shall not worship that which you are worshipping, nor will you worship that which I worship. To you be your religion, and to me my religion*” (Q 109). This Surah recognizes the fact that there is an unbridgeable gap between Islam and the religion of the
Meccans. The Qur`an therefore appeals to the Meccans to refrain from practicing religious coercion against the Muslims of Mecca. It is important to note that the Qur`an does not in this Surah demand the suppression of Meccan polytheism. On the contrary it is a call to religious tolerance on the part of the Muslims.

In Q 15:85: “Surely the hour is coming; so pardon, with a gracious pardoning”. This verse seems to imply that the Prophet may leave the unbelievers alone because God will soon sit in judgment and inflict on them the just punishment. It is not his business to force people to become believers or to judge them. The same idea is expressed in Q 10:99: “And if your Lord had willed, whoever is in the earth would have believed, all of them, all together. Would you then constrain the people, until they are believers? It is not for any soul to believe save by the leave of God; and he lays abomination upon those who have no understanding.” Here again we see a call on the Prophet to leave matters of religious belief in the hands of God and that any attempt to spread his faith by coercion will be a useless exercise.

In the Constitution of Medina (‘ahd al-umma) we find the recognition that the Jews have a distinct and legitimate religion of their own (lil yahuud diinuhum wa-lil-mu’miniina diinuhum). Thus the Constitution of Madina tolerated the existence of religions either than Islam in the Arabian Peninsula. Islam is a religion of tolerance.

Col 4:6: “Be wise in the way you act towards those who are not believers, making good use of every opportunity you have. Your speech should always be pleasing and interesting, and you should know how to give the right answer to everyone”.

In this text Christians are encouraged to be tolerant towards those who are non-Christians. The Christian is of necessity a missionary; but he must know when and when not to speak to others about his religion and theirs. He must never give the impression of superiority and censorious criticism. In the opinion of St. Paul people can never be argued into Christianity, and for that matter into any reason.

In Romans 12:17: “If someone has done you wrong, do not repay him with a wrong. Try to do what everyone considers to be good. Do everything possible on your part to live in peace with everybody”.

In this verse St Paul gives the guideline for peaceful co-existence: To treat a person with kindness rather than vengeance is the way to move him. Vengeance may break his spirit, but kindness will break his heart. For St. Paul to stoop to vengeance is to be ourselves conquered by evil. Evil can never be conquered by evil. If hatred is met with more hatred it is only increased; but if it is met with love, an antidote for the poison is found. The only way to destroy an enemy is to make him a friend. Christians and Muslims are to make friends with one another.

AS-SABR (PATIENCE)

“And be patient with what they say, and keep away from them in a good way” (Qur`an 73:10)
All the Qur’anic prophets were men of patience. In the work of preaching God’s word, the prophet is bound to experience suffering, persecutions. What should be the response of the prophet face to face with those who believe differently from him? The Qur’an encourages patience. It is God who draws people to the faith. Hence God advises the Prophet to listen to what they (the unbelievers) say and keep way from them without conflicts.

In the Qur’an the Prophets can only deliver the divine message. It is not within their power to assure its acceptance or implementation (Q 16:35, 82; 28: 56; 29:18). Allah did not force people to accept his prophets and messengers. The prophets were told to communicate the message to their people. Daw’ah, Tabligh, Hiwar etc. are all ways to communicate the message. These are the basic ways of communication, and they are the only ways permissible. Aggression is never allowed in matters of faith. Among all the prophets Job (Ayyub) is the model of patience: face with sufferings he does not fight against God, he does not question God nor fight for God. For the Qur’anic Job God knows best and God’s time is the best.

Luke 21:19: “Everyone will hate you because of me. But not a single hair from your heads will be lost. Be patient, and you will save yourselves”

In the midst of sufferings, persecutions, violence the Christian must be patient because of his love for Jesus. Because of his faith in Jesus he sees death as a promise of paradise. Consequently, he is prepared to endure suffering, even death in order to be united with his Lord.

The promotion of peaceful co-existence through dialogue demands unending patience. Patience helps us to draw gradually nearer to one another, to replace indifference or hostility by real friendship, by true brotherhood even in spite of our different beliefs and opinions.

My dear KASWA members, these are descriptive and not prescriptive principles. It is my sincere hope that through inter-religious dialogue Christians and Muslims will appreciate and focus on our common and shared religious principles and values, and utilize these common resources to tackle common practical issues and problems, and to make significant contribution to solving them for the well-being of Ghana.

DIALOGUE OF THEOLOGICAL EXCHANGE

How can Muslims and Christian elite inculcate in their brothers and sisters the values of peace, justice, courtesy, affection, tolerance, patience? How can we promote these shared values and principles so that they can govern our relations?

The answer is - through the dialogue of theological exchange. The dialogue OF THEOLOGICAL EXCHANGE will help Christians and Muslims to dissipate prejudices, encourage mutual understanding, stimulate co-operation and deepen faith. In the dialogue of theological exchange Christians and Muslims come together to exchange ideas on their respective faiths for mutual spiritual enrichment. This is the area where the educated Christian and Muslim youth can greatly participate and help to promote peaceful co-existence between Christians and Muslims in Ghana. The study of common spiritual values like peace, justice,
courtesy, affection, tolerance and patience can become subjects of dialogue of theological exchange.

OBJECTIVES OF DIALOGUE OF THEOLOGICAL EXCHANGE

- To ensure peaceful co-existence
- To foster mutual understanding, appreciation and respect for each other’s faith
- To achieve mutual respect for fundamental human rights and freedom of religion
- To increase our communication with each other for better understanding, to remove stereotypes, hatred, and violence
- To find ways and means of cooperation for the benefit of our communities and for humanity at large
- To collaborate in programs and activities to promote values of goodness and virtue in the society.

WAYS OF PROMOTING DIALOGUE OF THEOLOGICAL EXCHANGE

The educated youth can promote dialogue of theological exchange through:

- The written word
- The internet
- The Radio
- Video/Films
- Drama
- Music
- The TV
- organizing symposia, seminars, workshops, talk, conferences etc

SOME CHALLENGES AND OBSTACLES TO OVERCOME

The educated youth are bound to face some challenges and obstacles as they engage in the dialogue of theological exchange. Some of the challenges and obstacles are:

1. **The weight of the Past**

   Relations between Christians and Muslims have not always been peaceful and serene. Tensions, conflicts, crusades and holy wars, have not been unknown. Nor should one forget the impact of colonialism or perceptions of it. We need to forget the past and work at healing the historical memories (Nostra Aetate, no 2, 3).

2. **Lack of self-criticism**

   Christians and Muslims must learn together to exercise self-criticism. Self-criticism is not a sign of weakness. It is really a proof of maturity. It can help to consolidate and
deepen relations between individuals and between communities. With regard to Christian-Muslim relations, where self-criticism is lacking, there is a tendency to be content with criticizing the others. This is a real obstacle to constructive and lasting relations.

3. Manipulation of Religion by Politics

We need to liberate religion from political and media manipulation. Muslims and Christians must not allow their religions to be hijacked by politicians for their selfish ends.

4. Religious Fanaticism or Extremism

Extremism is often characterized by intransigents towards co-religionists and others who hold different views or who have another concept of society. This frequently leads to violence. Some extremists go further, denying the right to religious freedom to those whose religious convictions differ from their own, and even excluding them from salvation. This attitude in no way promotes good Christian-Muslim relations.

5. Different approaches to Human Rights

“A difficulty in Christian-Muslim relations is constituted by different approaches to the theme of human rights, and especially to freedom of religion. Christians see human beings as having been created in God’s image and likeness. The Muslim vision is different. The human person is the servant of God (‘abdul-Allah), and remains so even when receiving God’s call to be khalifat or God’s vice-regent, among created things. Further Christians see man as created by God with certain inalienable rights. Prominent among these is the right to religious freedom. Again the Muslim perception is somewhat different. Man has no rights. Only God has rights! Indeed, some predominantly Muslims countries have their reservations regarding the United Nations 1948 Universal Declarations of human Rights which they see as an expression of Western culture. Muslims and Christians have no choice but to accept that we are in a world in which religious plurality is a fact. “There is no compulsion in religion” (Qur’an 2:256). Religion is therefore to be proposed, not imposed.

6. Reciprocity
The right to religious freedom applies to individuals and also to religious communities. It is a right not only to be demanded but also to be given. It includes both the right to practice a religion and the right to share that religion with others. The exercise of this right should have no territorial boundaries. It applies to all countries whether they are predominantly Christian or predominantly Muslim. A religion should not ask for religious freedom for its followers in one country while denying the same right to other believers in a country where it is the religion of the majority. This is what reciprocity is all about. Our elders say: “Dog fall and dog fall is dog play” or “The right hand washes the left hand and the left hand washes the right hand”.

**CHANGE OF ATTITUDE**

The promotion of peaceful co-existence between Muslims and Christians demands a transformation of hearts, a change of attitude.

The fundamental principle that peace depends on equality of arms must be replaced by another, which declares that true and solid peace of nations consists not in equality of arms but in **mutual trust alone**. This means that peace and happiness in the world depend on our attitude: “Your Attitude determines your Altitude”

**Attitudes Defined:**

Attitudes are the established ways of responding to people and situations that we have learned, based on the beliefs, values and assumptions we hold. Attitude becomes manifest through our behavior.

**Attitude Drives Behavior**

- Attitudes drive behavior. Your body language is a result of your mental attitude. By choosing your attitude you get in that mood and send out a message that everyone understands, consciously or unconsciously.
- Almost always, you have a choice as to what attitude to adopt
- There is nothing in any normal work situation that dictates you must react one way or another. If you feel angry about something that happens, for instance, that’s how you choose to feel. The choice is yours!

**Attitude Is Infectious**

- Your attitude is the first thing people pick up on in face-to-face communication. Just as laughing, yawning, and crying are infectious, attitude is infectious.

- Somehow just by looking or feeling, you can be infected by another person's attitude, and vice versa. When you are operating from inside a really useful attitude, such as enthusiasm, curiosity, and humility, your body language tends to take care of itself and sends out unmistakable signals of openness.

**Attitude Motivation**
- Attitude motivation is about how people think and feel. It is their self-confidence, their belief in themselves, their attitude to life - be it positive or negative.

**ALL TRUTH TO MAKE LIFE 100%**

**ABCDEFHGIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ**

**IS EQUAL**

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22

| Hard work  | H+A+R+D+W+O+R+K | 8+1+18+4+23+15+18+11 = 98% |
| Knowledge  | K+N+O+W+L+E+D+G+E | 11+14+15+23+12+5+4+7+5 = 96% |
| Love       | L+O+V+E | 12+15+22+5 = 54% |
| Luck       | L+U+C+K | 12+21+3+11 = 47% |

(don't most of us think this is the most important???)

Then what makes 100%?

Is it Money? ... NO!!!! [M+O+N+E+Y = 13+15+14+5+25 = 72%]

Leadership? ... NO!!!! [L+E+A+D+E+R+S+H+I+P = 12+5+1+4+5+18+19+9+16 = 89%]

Every problem has a solution, only if we perhaps change our attitude.
To go to the top,
to that 100%,
what we really need to go further...a bit more...

**ATTITUDE**

A+T+T+I+T+U+D+E 1+20+20+9+20+21+4+5 = 100%

It is OUR ATTITUDE towards Life and Work that makes OUR Life 100%

Interreligious dialogue is not just discussions; it is an ATTITUDE, a spirit of friendship, a wish to meet the other, to listen and learn from the other while remaining true to one’s faith. If
Christians and Muslims are peaceful, just, courteous, loving, tolerant and patient the world will be a better place to live in happily together.

SOME CONCLUDING REMARKS

- Dialogue with Muslims varies from place to place because of the different forms or interpretations of Islam.
- There are many factors in the world which can change the dynamism of inter-religious dialogue over which we have no control e.g. the Danish caricature; the Pope’s address in Germany, the mass media portrayal of Muslims and Islam, etc.
- In each religion there is incompatibility between faith and practice, confessing with the lips and believing in the heart, between theory and practice. The contradictions should not deter us from forging ahead.
- In each dialogue community we must identify the “voices of conscience” and work with them and try to bring the negative forces or indicators on board the dialogue boat with patience.
- Unfortunately, it is the groups who hold the most extreme views who get the most publicity. Those who worked quietly behind the scene for peace are seldom noticed. But these are the beacons of hope in dialogue.
- Dialogue will also depend on how much both Christian and the Muslim leadership are exposed to the outside world.
- The Islamic heritage is rich in sources and materials that offer a vast array of principles and values relevant for dialogue. These sources can be utilized both by Muslims advocating and by those opposing dialogue in support of their respective positions.
- When a religious state exists or an attempt at a religious state is made, there is bound to be inequality, discrimination and denial of freedom (Israel, Hamas, Iran, Saudi Arabia, and Sudan).
- In order to increase interreligious harmony, peace and cooperation, we must emphasize dialogue. We may differ on the issues of faith and practices, but we should never misrepresent each other’s faith. We should not be involved in distorting the teachings of other faiths and defaming other people. We must not label other faiths and their adherents as terrorists and fundamentalists. Let us deal with the problems instead of getting involved in propaganda.
- It is often said, and rightly so, that ignorance of the other breeds enmity and resentment. But it is also true that ignorance or misunderstanding of one’s own religious resources is often responsible for misconceiving and thus mistreating the other; each feeds into the other.

VOICES OF REASON IN INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUE

- “Jesus and Muhammad are friends in heaven. Let us be friends on earth”, Dr. Muhammad Daud Rahbar (A Pakistani)
- In 1960 the then premier of Northern Nigeria, the Sarduana of Sokoto said: “We believe that the existence of the two world religions side by side in peace and
friendship is not merely possible of achievements, but is well within our powers to achieve”
- Badshah Khan: “The Holy Prophet Mohammad came into this world and taught us: ‘That man is a Muslim who never hurts anyone by word or deed, but who works for the benefit and happiness of creatures. Belief in God is to love one’s fellowmen’” (Afghanistan)

8th September, 2010

GOOD WILL MESSAGE TO THE MUSLIMS OF THE UPPER WEST REGION ON THE OCCASION OF THE CELEBRATION OF THE FEAST OF EIDUL-FITR AFTER THE FAST OF RAMADHAN (1ST SHAWWAL 1431/10TH SEPTEMBER 2010)

My Dear Muslim brothers and sisters, “As-salaamu alaykum!”

God has given you once again the season of grace (i.e the Fast of the month of Ramadhan) during which you have proved to the modern man that “man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God” (Mt. 4:4).

I would like to warmly and sincerely congratulate you for having successfully completed the trying month-long fast of Ramadhan. The fruits of this fast (barka da Sallah) will certainly benefit not only Muslims but all Ghanaians. I know you have prayed for peace in Ghana and God who is all merciful will certainly answer your prayers.

My Dear Muslim Friends, as I journeyed with you spiritually in some of your tafsirs given by the Islamic scholars in the Radio Programmes during the Fast of Ramadhan, I was fascinated and captivated by this Hadith (Saying) of the Prophet Muhammad:

“My Lord has commanded me to do nine things:
To be sincere in private as well as in public,
To practice moderation in wealth as in poverty,
To be just when angry as well as when satisfied,
And that I should pardon anyone who oppresses me,
And that I give to anyone who deprives me,
And that my silence should be meditation,
My discourse edification,
And that I should regard everyone with consideration.”

I pray and hope that as you emerge from this period of fasting, prayer and meditation this saying of the Prophet will form the basis and rationale for a new vision of Interreligious Dialogue in Ghana.
The true reason for our finding it hard to live together, Christians and Muslims, is to be found not from outside of us but in our interior contradictions. Our lives do not reflect what we believe. True faith is part and parcel of one’s life and urges one to treat all – men and women – as brothers and sisters, Adam’s off springs.

May the joy and peace of Eidul-Fitr resonate from your hearts and homes and spread through out the whole Ghana. Happy Eidul-Fitr!

Most Rev. Paul Bemile,
CATHOLIC BISHOP OF WA

REFERENCES

Wilde C. and McAuliffe, Jane Dammen: Encyclopedia of the Qur’an, vol. 4. 416

Rev. Fr. Aloysius Nuolabong

19th February 2011, WA