



Ecumenical Interfaith Committee Joint Committee on Franciscan Unity

“THE SULTAN AND THE SAINT” PEACEMAKING AT ITS BEST

by Donna Hollis, OFS, Our Lady of Guadalupe Region

*...They should go forth as witnesses and instruments of the mission among ALL people
...Fostering an open and trusting dialogue of apostolic effectiveness and creativity. (Rule 6)*

“Renewed and Confirmed: Live the Treasure!”

The ministry of the Ecumenical Interfaith Committee is to promote Christian unity among persons of different religious faiths. We are charged with taking action in search of mutual respect and common ground with our Brothers and Sisters, reaching out to build bridges of understanding and friendship designed to tear down the walls of isolation and fear.

As our Rule states, “...the Secular Franciscans with a gentle and courteous spirit accept all people as a gift of the Lord, and an image of Christ.” (Rule 13)

When I watched the premiere of the docudrama “The Sultan and the Saint” in Albuquerque, I was delighted to see that the Islamic Center and the Franciscan Order of Friars Minor were hosting this event together. 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 each on their own journeys when the unlikely meeting took place. It was a crossroad 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.

A dialogue took place after the film between the Muslim community and those who attended the event. This is where misconceptions are clarified and common ground begins in 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 and inquired if we could just sit down and dialogue to begin building bridges over any misconceptions and to begin to understand one another in solidarity. The Muslim women were very hospitable and eager to have dialogue. We had a very good introductory discussion with two of the Muslim women.

Soon after, we planned another meeting between more women from our Region and their community. The leader of the women’s group made a flyer that expresses peace and camaraderie among us. We are looking forward to forging new friendships and a lasting bond through these times of sharing.

As we began to tour the Mosque, I sensed a peace and ambiance of deep prayer.

We shared with the Muslim women the story and film of “The Sultan and the Saint,” with which they were not familiar. I asked if we could bring the film to the Mosque and view it together, inviting both our communities so there could be dialogue afterwards, in hopes of opening the door of respect even wider and deepening our bond. The women are very open minded and eager to watch it and to invite others; the door is opened to us to create peace and to build more bridges among us.

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 the refugees seeking refuge who come across our borders in El Paso, Texas, we continue to work together with other churches of other other denominations and faiths, working hand in hand with hospitality to the stranger and marginalized.

I encourage you to open the doors of your hearts and reach out to those who are in need and to those that are different from you; you will realize we do have common bonds and acknowledge a God with many names and faces!!

Pope Francis is a messenger of Peace – meeting with leaders of all faiths and embracing them as brothers 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 and open dialogue with those along the way.

May we allow God’s wisdom to help us
find unity among diversity
May we fully live the treasure of
who we are among others.

As we celebrate the 40th year of our OFS Rule this year, may we truly embody all that it means in its entirety by living out the words we profess.

The film “The Sultan and the Saint” is now on DVD. It can be ordered from Franciscan Action Network at <https://franciscanaction.org/article/purchase-sultan-and-saint-dvd-and-guide>