



CBCP Statement on Marawi, Terrorism and Dialogue

*"Turn from Evil and Do Good,
Seek Peace and Pursue It" (Ps. 34:14)*

TO ALL PEOPLE OF GOOD WILL:

Greetings of peace in the Almighty and Most Merciful God.

We, the Catholic Bishops of the Philippines, wish to enjoin your assistance and collaboration. We all cry from our hearts: War in Marawi, never again! War in Marawi, no more! We therefore call for the return to normalcy and peace in Marawi and its environs as soon as possible. We wonder whether the continued state of Martial Law, much more its extension, will bring this about.

We believe that the war in Marawi is not religious. We have heard and read truly stunning stories of how Muslims have protected and helped Christians to escape from almost certain death. Even now Christians are assisting thousands of Muslims who have fled from Marawi for safety. These are indisputable signs that there is no religious war.

Condemnation of Terrorism and Violent Extremism

For this reason as Catholic religious leaders we condemn in the strongest terms possible, as did Islamic religious scholars in Mindanao, the violent extremist Maute group in Marawi. Its leaders and members have pledged allegiance to ISIS. They have contradicted the fundamental tenets of Islam by abducting and hostaging, maiming and killing the innocent.

Dialogue for Peace, the Common Word

Join us then, beloved people of good will, in conducting intra-faith dialogue among our respective co-religionists so that our various faiths may not be exploited and abused for the sake of terrorism or violent extremism. Let parents, schools, churches and mosques ensure that none may be lured by the recruitment efforts of terrorists. Let us teach the young and the old that our faiths are meant for peace. No religion teaches the killing of innocent people, simply because they belong to another religion.

Join us and let us continue the inter-religious dialogue called for by hundreds of Islamic leaders throughout the world. In 2007 they called for peace between Muslims and Christians when they wrote their famous open letter on "the Common Word" to Christian religious leaders. How true their words were! The Muslim leaders wrote:

The basis for peace and understanding already exists. It is part of the very foundational principles of both faiths: love of the One God and love of neighbor.



This is the commandment of God in Deuteronomy 6:4-5.

Hear, O Israel! The Lord is our God, the Lord alone! Therefore, you shall love the Lord, your God, with your whole heart, and with your whole being, and with your whole strength.

Our Lord Jesus, who is also revered as prophet in the Qur'an, cited this scriptural text and elaborated on it in Mark 12:28-31.

One of the scribes ... asked him, "Which is the first of all the commandments?" Jesus replied, "The first is this: 'Hear, O Israel! The Lord our God is Lord alone! You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.' The second is this: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no commandment greater than these."

He further commanded us: "Love one another as I love you" (John 15:12).

Praxis of Love and Gratitude

Loving our neighbor needs action. Let us together invest our resources to helping the thousands of people who have fled from the horrors of Marawi. Let us pray for the safety of trapped civilians and of those abducted and hostaged by the terrorists. Let us be vigilant and alert, helping our security forces thwart the threats of terrorism in other areas of Mindanao. Let us help the government rebuild the city of Marawi so that its citizens may return and restore their broken lives.

With profound gratitude we acknowledge the priceless generosity of kind donors from different faiths, both local and foreign, who promptly responded to meet the needs of the people of Marawi who have fled to safer areas. We appeal for more help especially for those home-based displaced people who are not yet adequately served.

Maryam, the mother of Jesus, is praised and honored in the Qur'an and by many Christians. Catholics believe that 100 years ago she appeared to three children in the village of Fatima, which is the very name of the daughter of the prophet Muhammad. To the prayers of Maryam, we commend our efforts for peace and harmony between peoples of different faiths.

"Let us respect each other, be fair, just and kind to one another and live in sincere peace, harmony and mutual good will" (see the Common Word letter).

May the God of peace be with you!

On behalf of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines,

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