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## Christians and Muslims: beneficiaries and instruments of divine mercy

Vatican City, 17 June 2016 – The Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue today published its message for Ramadan and 'Id al Fitr 1437 H/2016 B.C., taking as its theme "Christians and Muslims, beneficiaries and instruments of divine mercy". In the text, signed by Cardinal Jean-Louis Tauran and Bishop Miguel Angel Ayuso Guixot, M.C.C.J., respectively president and secretary of the dicastery, the prelates write on behalf of Christians around the world to express to Muslims their best wishes for a "spiritually rewarding fast, supported by good deeds, and for a joyful feast".

"A theme that is close to the hearts of Muslims and Christians alike is mercy", the text begins. "We know that Christianity and Islam both believe in a merciful God, who shows His mercy and compassion towards all His creatures, in particular the human family. He created us out of an immense love. He is merciful in caring for each of us, bestowing upon us the gifts we need for our daily life, such as food, shelter and security. God's mercy is manifested in a particular way, however, through the pardon of our faults; hence He is the One Who pardons (al-Ghâfir), the One who pardons much and always (al-Ghafour)".

To underscore the importance of mercy, the message recalls that His Holiness Pope Francis declared a Jubilee Year of Mercy to be celebrated from 8 December 2015 to 20 November 2016 as a "favourable time to heal wounds, a time not to be weary of meeting all those who are waiting to see and to touch with their hands the signs of the closeness of God, a time to offer everyone, everyone, the way of forgiveness and reconciliation. Your pilgrimage (hajj) to the Holy places, mainly Mecca and Medina, is surely a special time for you to experience God's mercy. In fact, among the well-known aspirations addressed to Muslim pilgrims is: 'I wish you a blessed pilgrimage, praiseworthy efforts and the pardon of your sins. Making a pilgrimage to obtain God's pardon for sins, both for the living and dead, is truly a salient custom practice among believers".

"We, Christians and Muslims, are called to do our best to imitate God. He, the Merciful, asks us to be merciful and compassionate towards others, especially those who are in any kind of need. So too He calls us to be forgiving of one another. When we gaze upon humanity today, we are saddened to see so many victims of conflicts and violence – here we think in particular of the elderly, and children and women, especially those who fall prey to human trafficking and the many people who suffer from poverty, illness, natural disasters and unemployment. We cannot close our eyes to these realities, or turn away from these sufferings. It is true that situation are often very complex and that their solution exceeds our capacities. It is vital, therefore, that all work

together in assisting those in need. It is a source of great hope when we experience or hear of Muslims and Christians joining hands to help the needy. When we do join hands, we heed an important command in our respective religions and show forth God's mercy, thus offering a more credible witness, individually and communally, to our beliefs", concludes the text, in the hope that the Merciful and Almighty God may "help us to walk always along the path of goodness and compassion".

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