

TANGAZA COLLEGE
CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY OF EASTERN AFRICA

**SOCIAL JUSTICE AS A FOCUS FOR CHRISTIAN-
MUSLIM DIALOGUE**

**A LONG ESSAY SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF BACHELOR OF ARTS
IN RELIGIOUS STUDIES**

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DEDICATION

This Essay is dedicated to all the Catholics and Muslims of good will, who are ready to promote peace in the world through dialogue.

STUDENT DECLARATION

I, the undersigned, declare that this long essay is my original work achieved through my personal reading, scientific research method and critical reflections. It is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Ecclesiastical Degree of Baccalaureate in theology. It has never been submitted to any other college or university for academic credit. All sources have been cited in full and acknowledged.

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CHAPTER ONE

1.0 GENERAL INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 The aims and objectives	2
1.2 The Rational (why of the topic)	3
1.3 The Methodology	3
1.4 The Statement of the problem	3
1.5 Objectives of the Study	3
1.6 Research Hypothesis	4
1.7 Significance of the Study	4
1.8 The Scope and Limitation of the Study	4
1.9 Islamic Terminologies	5
1.10 Conclusion	6

CHAPTER TWO

2.0 CHRISTIAN FOUNDATION FOR DIALOGUE WITH MUSLIM	
2.1 History of Confrontation	7
2.2 Some foundations in Dialogue	10
<i>2.2.1 Christians and Muslims have a common monotheistic vision.</i>	11
<i>2.2.2 Christians and Muslims have high regard for the Word of God</i>	12
<i>2.2.3 The Christians and Muslims believe in Prophets.</i>	13
2.3 Church Documents	13
<i>2.3.1 The Vatican II Council</i>	13
<i>2.3.2 African Synod</i>	14
2.4 Some Letters to Muslims	15
2.5 Muslim Writers on Dialogue	18
2.6 Conclusion	19

CHAPTER THREE:

3.0 PRAYER, FASTING, ALMSGIVING	
3.1 Prayer (Al-Salat)	21
3.1.1 <i>Prayer as a Religious Duty</i>	21
3.1.2 <i>Prayer is the essence and Heart of Religion</i>	22
3.1.3 <i>Place of Prayer</i>	25
3.1.4 <i>The effects of prayer to a Muslim</i>	26
3.1.5 <i>Why to pray?</i>	27
3.1.6 <i>The purpose of Prayer</i>	27
3.1.7 <i>The kinds of prayer</i>	28
3.1.8 <i>The Friday (Juma) Prayer.</i>	29
3.2 The Fasting (saum)	31
3.2.1 <i>External fasting</i>	31
3.2.2 <i>Internal fasting</i>	32
3.2.3 <i>From whom fasting is expected.</i>	32
3.2.4 <i>Who is to fast</i>	33
3.2.5 <i>The benefits of fasting.</i>	34
3.2.6 <i>Fasting is a control of self in stages.</i>	34
3.2.7 <i>The spirituality of fasting</i>	35
3.3 Almsgiving (Al-Zakat)	36
3.3.1 <i>What do they become when they give Zakat?</i>	38
3.3.2 <i>Property of which Zakat is Obligatory</i>	40
3.3.2.1 <i>Agricultural produce including fruit crops.</i>	40
3.3.2.2 <i>Animals.</i>	40
3.3.2.3 <i>Saving-gold and silver</i>	40
3.3.2.4 <i>Machineries</i>	41
3.3.3 <i>Who are eligible to give Zakat?</i>	41
3.3.4 <i>The Theological understanding of Zakat.</i>	41
3.4 Conclusion	43

CHAPTER FOUR

4.0 PRAYERS, FASTING AND ALMSGIVING IN CHRISTIAN LIFE.

4.1 Prayer	45
4.1.1 <i>Prayer in the Old Testament</i>	46
4.1.2 <i>Prayer in the New Testament</i>	48
4.1.3 <i>The Prayer of Jesus</i>	49
4.1.4 <i>The principalities in prayer</i>	50
4.1.5 <i>Forms of Christian Prayer</i>	51
4.1.6 <i>Who are the Servants of Prayer?</i>	53
4.1.7 <i>Places for prayer</i>	53
4.1.8 <i>Expression of Prayer</i>	53
4.2 Fasting	55
4.2.1 <i>A Time of prayer</i>	56
4.2.2 <i>A Time of penance</i>	56
4.2.3 <i>A Time of sharing</i>	57
4.3 Almsgiving	59
4.3.1 <i>A Religious Act</i>	59
4.3.2 <i>Almsgiving as a form of piety</i>	60
4.4 Conclusion	61

CHAPTER FIVE

5.0 A COMMON GROUND FOR MUSLIMS AND CHRISTIANS TO DIALOGUE AND ACT TOGETHER

5.1 Introduction	62
5.2 The Family	62
5.3 Work Place	63
5.4 Underdevelopment	64
5.5 The Political Sector	64
5.6 Study	65

5.7 The Great Turning Point	65
5.8 The Mass Media	66
5.9 Interreligious Prayer Meetings	66
5.10 Social Immoralities	68
5.11 Conclusion	68
6.0 GENERAL CONCLUSION	69
7.0 BIBLIOGRAPHY	70

CHAPTER ONE

1.0 GENERAL INTRODUCTION

Our world today has become a global village whereby you can communicate with another person who is far away as if he is next to you. This is due to advancement in science and technology. We can call this advancement a 'relationship' in which we relate to each other easily. We are relational being and therefore in spite of all our differences in colour, race, language, tribe, culture or religion, we remain relational and united, in front of our Creator. For this reason, being relational does not come from ourselves but as a gift from God and hence, it is unavoidable.

Being relational is our way of life, our vocation. Being relational is one of the characteristics of God towards us. By God creating us in His own image, He shows us a beginning of a particular relationship. God speaks to His people and His people respond to Him. This relationship can be called 'vertical relationship'.

There is also a 'horizontal relationship' whereby, being created in God's image, we take God's character of communion thus become relational being to each other. We actually become social human beings. We end up in a society, building social institution, which helps us to be relational. These societies differ from one place to another depending on demands of the environment. Such societies or institutions may have some conflicts and even wars, which may be psychological or physical.

From this point of view, dialogue is encouraged to ease these tensions and therefore to continue living together in a way that God want us to live. Human beings are also different but it is through dialogue that they are able to live together and to respond to

God's call, which is being in communion with Him. Without dialogue human beings cannot achieve anything. We are called for a dialogue with each other, firstly between God and ourselves, secondly between ourselves, so that all may be one people as God is One (Jn 17:21).

Considering the above fact, my essay will be based on the social justice as a focus for Christian Muslim dialogue. There are many sections that can be dealt with and thus I chose social justice because it affects the whole of our daily lives in the society.

My pastoral experience brought me into direct contact with Muslims in Senegal and Mauritania. This experience has kept challenging me day after day and hence I saw it better to know more about Islamic religion in depth.

1.1 The aims and objectives

The aim of this topic is to have something researched and written, to deepen my knowledge about Christian Muslim dialogue. Moreover, to present some material which may be of enrichment to the reader especially on how to go about Christian-Muslim dialogue.

On the other hand the increasing rise of the hostility between the Christians and Muslims poses a challenge to the whole world on how to remain united. The hostility seems to create both psychological and even physical tensions, which end up in wars. Consequently, the study that I am going to do is a comparative study of the Muslims and Christians on prayer, fasting and almsgiving and to try and see where the two can have a common ground in dialogue.

1.2 The Rational (why of the topic)

It is true that many people have written about Christian Muslim dialogue in general. However, I feel that it is good to put more effort on Social Justice as it affects our society today. We cannot also escape the reality of our Muslims brothers and sisters and thus, the earlier we learn to live together the better.

1.3 The Methodology

My methodology will be as follows; my main research will be Library work. In this, I will use different books, magazines and pamphlets from our libraries. I will also try to get some materials from some particular Muslim. I will also use a lot of experience, which I have had when I was living with Muslims in West African.

1.4 The Statement of the problem

Social Justice as a focus to Christian Muslim dialogue. This is a challenge not only to the church but also to the whole world as this Religion is growing rapidly. In the past centuries, dialogue has not been very smooth.

1.5 Objectives of the Study

- To help strengthen the Muslim-Christian dialogue.
- As a future missionary, to know more on Christian-Muslim dialogue because I am interested in working with them.
- To know some of the important Islamic teachings

1.6 Research Hypothesis

The following hypotheses are important in order to realise the above objectives.

- Christian-Muslim dialogue makes social justice to be felt in our modern world.
- Christian-Muslim dialogue can bring peace in a world full of conflicts.
- Common ground for dialogue can enhance social justice and peace.

1.7 Significance of the Study

It is evident that Christians live house to house with the Muslims all over the world. It is important to be aware that these two religions in the world are different but have so much in common such that they can benefit each other in faith if they concentrate on their communality. As we commit ourselves into this important task, it is important to make our world more relevant for all regardless of religion in order for all to be pulled by us and say *'look, the way they love each other'*, while they are not of the same blood.

The most important significance is my own personal interest in making myself at home with the Muslims, ready to serve them and to be a star in this continuous dialogue. This short presentation and reflection on the subject will make me more sensitive and open to the faith of others and therefore be able to work with them and live in harmony. When this work is completed, I hope that it will be helpful to all those who will come across it, to be more open to other Religions especially Islam.

1.8 The Scope and Limitation of the Study

In my research work, I am going to study on prayer, fasting, and almsgiving in Muslim and Christian perspective and I will try to look for a common ground in which

dialogue can emerge. Although my research is limited as stated above, I hope that it will be applicable in different situations.

Due to lack of very detailed books on this topic, I will use some French books. Limited the books may be I will try to make use of them and also interview with some Muslims.

1.9 Islamic Terminologies

Allah – The Name of God

Hadith – Saying of the prophet Mohammed

Imam – He who stand before – Leader of prayer

Islam – to Surrender to the will of God

Rahman – a name of God, the all-encompassing Divine Mercy.

Salat – The canonical daily prayer, which is obligatory for all Muslims to perform five times a day.

Sahih – Literally means ‘the correct book’ the title given to the canonical collections of *Hadith* - accepted by the Sunni community as being authentic.

Shahadah – Literally means ‘bearing witness’ It refers to the two testimonies of faith in Islam: “there is no divinity but God and Mohammed is the messenger of God”

Surah- A chapter of the Qur’an

Umma – The community, usually identified with Islamic people but also applied to the followers of other prophets and therefore other religious communities

Wudu – Ablution required before the daily prayers and usually made before entry into a Holy place.

Zakat – Religious tax which is obligatory and constitutes one of the pillars of Islam.

Juma – Salat al-jumah – The congregational prayers of Friday performed at midday.

Fard – That which is obligatory upon a person according to the dicta of the Shariah

Wajib – that act which is obligatory for a Muslim according to the injunctions of the religion. The term is used mostly but not exclusively in the domain of Law.

Sunnah – The tradition of the prophet embracing his manner and ways of doing and acting in different circumstances in life.

1.10 Conclusion

In this chapter, we have seen the importance of dialogue in our society and that we need to enhance for the good of the society. We have learned that there is an issue to be addressed and this is why in the second chapter we are going to see the confrontation of the two Religions in history, the Muslim's stand and that of the Christians.

CHAPTER TWO

2.0 CHRISTIAN FOUNDATION FOR DIALOGUE WITH MUSLIM

2.1 History of Confrontation

In the first centuries and even in the first years of their co-existence, Christians and Muslims discovered and explained their divergence and their disagreements so much to sense, all that which was uniting them.

In the beginning of his prediction, the Prophet Mohammed did not take any hostile attitude towards the Christians. As he presented himself as the Sent of God, the unique God. He was conscious of continuing, conforming, prolonging and completing the great Prophetic tradition transmitted from the time of Abraham, Moses and Jesus. We find even in the Qu'ran the texts explaining the kinship between the faithful and in consequence, the real sympathy of the prophet and his companions in regard to "the people of the book" and hence the Koran says "we had sent Jesus, the Son of Mary and we had put in their heart what they were to follow..." (Sourate 57,27), the Qu'ran continues to say, "And you will find certainly that the most disposed and loving of the faithful are those who say, 'we are Christians.' It is that among them are the priests, monks and they never swell of pride." (Sourate 5,82).

However, in spite of all the convergences, more conflicts are seen between Muslims and Christians. The Christians refuse to recognise the mission of Mohammed and the Qu'ran shows these ruptures and conflicts.

Very often, in history, there was the polemic reflux, which dominated. There were aggressive attitudes, which were from the Christians towards the Muslims. The two sides,

Muslims and Christians have been having prejudiced ideas about each other and therefore religious wars. Nobody wanted to know the essence and the message of the other and each tried to water down the others' message.

We need to say that the Muslim-Christian dialogue was not favoured by historical circumstances: flux and reflux of the Muslim's conquest in 7 and 8th centuries. The Christians fought through crusades, and the Muslims advanced from The Middle East, towards Mediterranean and they managed to conquer the whole of North Africa and advanced to Spain but the Spanish army pushed them back.

It is clear that the contact between Christians and Muslims is not reduced to political confrontations and military ones. There was a very important exchange of cultures between the Christian community and the Muslim community in Baghdad, Spain, Europe in the fields in Philosophy, Medicine, Science, Literature and Politics.

From the religious point of view, each community seems more determined to defend its own doctrine and never interested in the others. Not many centuries ago, in which, things started changing profoundly about these relations.

Christians like Father Michel Lelong have written a lot about these relationships.

Father Michel Lelong says:

We cannot resign to the climate of mistrust and reciprocal accusations between human beings who all believe in unique God, just and merciful and who under the different forms give themselves to the prayer of praise and thanksgiving to the creator. There is no way of knowing clearly and loyally all that separates and differentiates the Muslims and the Christians to look also and to look together at that which profoundly unites them.¹

¹ Madeleine Demorlaine, Anne-Marie Medous, with collaboration of National centre of teaching about Relations with Islam, *Un Seul Dieu, tout frère: Jalon pour un dialogue entre Chrétiens-Musulmans*, Paris: Chalet, 1975, p 57

In the Vatican II document, “the church looks also with esteem of the Muslims, who adore one God, living and subsistent, merciful and all powerful, creator of heaven and earth and who spoke to his people.”²

Our cohabitation is difficult. Why can't we fight the egoism that is making us not to live together and the individualism, which is rampant?

The dialogue at the religious level is also difficult and we have proposed very little. Actually, the first condition to arrive at this dialogue is to know ourselves better. Knowing the religion of the other and its values will make our proper faith to grow. For us, the faith is always becoming, nourished and made greater. To know our faith, live by it is the departing point, which is indispensable for the dialogue to really succeed. The knowledge with other religions can help us strongly.

In the last years, several meetings have taken place between the Theologians in the Muslim and Christian universities. In 1974, some countries met at Broumane (Libya) and the participants concluded their work in saying: “We have agreed together that the dialogue will not be a tentative to minimise or misjudge the differences but an effort to explore in the Spirit of frankness.”³ But Still, Father Caspar warns us strongly that despite all these efforts, “We are not to have illusion on the point of progress of the Muslim-Christian relations. If our minds are made clear, then immense mass of the believers of the two religions can remain totally indifferent if not saying mistrust in the trials of dialogue and lack of co-operation. The work that remains undone is immense.”⁴

² Vatican II-Council: *Declaration on the Relations of the Church to non-Christian Religions*, No. 3, in A Flannery (ed), *The Conciliar and Post-Conciliar Documents* Bandre: St Paul Press, 1997

³ Madeleine. Demorlaine, *Un Seul Dieu*, p 58

⁴ Ibid.

2.2 Some foundations in Dialogue

There is a very good foundation for Christian-Muslim dialogue, apart from some influence that each of these religions have had on each other.

Both of them share a lot of basic religious beliefs. Islam and Christianity have a common monotheistic vision. The concept of One God who is the creator of all things visible and invisible is a cardinal teaching shared by Islam and Christianity. Islam belief that there is only One God "Allah." He is the First and the last, the outward and inward, (Qu'ran 57,3). Allah is referred to us as the Alpha and Omega of Islamic Spirituality and both its inner and outer reality.⁵ This One God is seen as transcendent and omnipresent. He is the all powerful God, Omniscience and Almighty. The Qur'anic doctrine of God reveals Him as being at Once Absolute, Infinite and perfect, as source of all reality and all positive qualities manifested in the cosmic order. The Islamic Spirituality is non other than knowing, loving and obeying God through all means revealed through the prophet and therefore total submission. The very first Islamic testimony '*Shahadah*' contains all metaphysics and also posses the power to operate the transformation of the human soul in the direction of its pri-modial perfection- '*La ilah illa llah*' (tells us that there is no divinity but Allah.⁶ Hence, Oneness belongs to God alone and it is attributed to him alone. To be a Muslim is to accept this divine Oneness not only as a theological truth but also as a metaphysical truth and to like it in order to be transformed to perfection.

⁵ Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Islamic Spirituality I; Foundations*, New York: SCM Press, Ltd, 1985, p 311

⁶ Ibid. p 312

The Islamic monotheism is addressed like this in Sourate 112:

“In the name of God, the most merciful, the most compassionate... ‘Say: He, God is One God. God, the self-sufficient absolute of all, He begetteth not, nor is He begotten, and non is like one to Him.”⁷

The name Allah is affirmed by Christians as one of the names of God whom Abraham called El-Elohim. El-Elohim is Hebrew meaning God while Allah in Arabic. Our father in faith Abraham knew God as Elohim. The Qu'ran affirms that those closest to the Muslims are the Christians and hence we have the same ancestors.⁸

2.2.1 Christians and Muslims have a common monotheistic vision.

The God of Abraham is the same God of Muslims. He is the creator of heaven and earth (Gen 1:1) and everything in it. This same God hears the cry of his people in slavery in Egypt and calls Moses to lead them to the land full of honey and milk. The same God gives to his people Israel the 10 commandments and the first being, “I am the Lord your God, you shall have no other gods to rival me (Ex 20:2 & Dt. 6:4). This one God re-affirmed his Oneness through all the prophets. The Christians in general and Catholics in particular in their profession of their faith say, “We believe in One God, the Father Almighty the Creator of heaven and earth, of all that is seen and unseen.”⁹ This was re-affirmed by Jesus Christ, who is the second person of the Trinity when he was asked a question, which is the greatest commandment of all? He answered, ‘listen Israel, the Lord our God is One, only God and you must love your God with all your heart with all your

⁷ The early Makkan Sura sums up in few tense words the unity of the Godhead often professed. It was to be put in this way because of many gods who were believed in Arabia Region with connection with superstitions.

⁸ Badru Kateregga, David W. Shenk., *Islam and Christianity: A Muslim and Christian in Dialogue*, Nairobi: Uzima Press, 1980, p 88

⁹ The Roman Missal: *The Sacramentary*, Minnesota: The Liturgical press, 1985, p 413.

soul, with all your mind and with all your strength.” (Mk 12:29-30). This is to show that the whole Bible speaks of this One God in whom we are supposed to adore and none other than him alone. Hence, looking from the history, we see that we believe in one same God although we may witness and express this reality differently. All the names of God are attributes in both Christianity and Islam such as Allah, Yahweh, Elohim etc try to show that there is Only One God, “the creator, the loving, the just, the Holy, the Merciful, the living and eternal, the wise and knowing.”¹⁰ Nevertheless, the scholars of both sides tell us that the Christians witness emphasises the self-disclosure of God hence the Trinity while in Islam, it is the will and guidance of God, which is revealed.¹¹

2.2.2 Christians and Muslims have high regard for the Word of God

Christians and Muslims have a high regard of the Word of God. The Christians possess their Holy Book ‘The Bible’ while Muslims ‘The Qur’an’. To both, this Word of God is not to be changed, added or deduced. It is said that about forty percent of what is in the Bible is also found in the Qu’ran. “The Qu’ran is the Verbatim revelation of the Word of God, revealed in Arabic through the arch-angel Gabriel to the prophet during the twenty-three-year period of his prophetic mission.”¹² To the Muslims, the Qu’ran is the “actual Word of God revealed to his messenger and is like Christ for Christians, who is himself the Word of God brought into the world through the Virgin Mary.”¹³ Therefore, the Word of God must be protected because He who protects the Name of God in his heart, God protects him in the World.¹⁴ According to the Christian traditions, God inspired

¹⁰ Badru Kateregga, David W. Shenk, *Islam and Christianity: A Muslim and Christian in Dialogue*, Nairobi: Uzima Press, 1980, p 88

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Sayyed Hossein Nasr, *Islamic Spirituality I*, p 3

¹³ Ibid. 4

¹⁴ Ibid. 5

his great people in writing the Bible text and thus not even one word should be added or subtracted as they were written through the influence of God through the Son in the Holy Spirit.

2.2.3 The Christians and Muslims believe in Prophets.

The Muslims and Christians believe in the writings and teachings of some prophets. At least 25 of them are mentioned in both the Bible and the Qu'ran. Included are Elijah, Amos, Moses, Abraham, Lot, David, Solomon, Noah, John the Baptist, and Enoch, Zechariah etc. These prophets gave the same message but understood and interpreted differently because of the situation of the people at that particular time and place. This shows how we are one and therefore how we can have a good foundation in Dialogue.

2.3 Church Documents

2.3.1 The Vatican II Council

As we have seen in the beginning, there were a lot of conflicts, disagreement and suspicion between the Christians and the Muslims. This made the church not to come out clearly about the relationship between them. But that could not go for eternity. A time came when the Church had to say and initiate this very dialogue. The very important positive document was in the Vatican II meeting whereby the Council says:

The Church has also a high regard for the Muslims. They worship God who is One, living and subsistent, merciful and almighty, the creator of heaven and earth, who has spoken to men. They try to submit themselves without reserve, to the hidden decrees of God, just as Abraham submitted himself to God's plan, to whose faith Muslims eagerly link their own. Although not acknowledging him as God, they worship Jesus as a prophet, his virgin Mother they also honour, and even at times devoutly invoke. Further, they await the Day of Judgment and the reward of God following the resurrection

of the dead. For this reason, they highly esteem an upright life and worship God, especially by way of prayer, alms-deeds and fasting.¹⁵

Before, there was a lot of quarrels and dissensions between the Muslims and Christians and therefore the sacred council pleaded with all to forget the past and urged that a sincere effort be made to achieve mutual understand and therefore promoting peace, the liberty, social justice and moral values.¹⁶

2.3.2 African Synod

Still in the very recent document of the church, the synodal fathers re-affirm the commitment to dialogue between the two great religions in saying:

Commitment to dialogue must also embrace all Muslims of good will. Christians cannot forget that many Muslims try to imitate the faith of Abraham and to live the demands of the Decalogue. In their regard, the message of the Synod emphasises that the living God, Creator of Heaven and Earth and the Lord of history, is the Father of the one great human family to which we all belong. As such, He wants us to bear witness to him through our respect for the value and religious traditions of each person, working together for human progress and development at all levels. For from wishing to be the one in whose name a person would kill other people, he requires believers to join together in the service of life in justice and peace. Particular care will therefore be taken that Islamic-Christianity dialogue respects on both sides the principle of religious freedom with all that this involves, also including external and public manifestations of faith. Christians and Muslims are called to promote a dialogue freedom free from the risk of false irenicism or militant fundamentalism and raising their voices against the lack of reciprocity in matters of religious freedom.¹⁷

This is a clear indication of the church in recognising the importance of having more dialogue with other non-Christian religions for it can also benefit from other non-

¹⁵ Vatican II: *Declaration on the Relations of the Church with Non-Christian Religions*, No 3.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ *The Church in Africa: Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation of the Holy Father. John Paul II*, Nairobi: Pauline Publications Africa, 1995, No 66

Christian Religions. The church continues to acknowledge that even Muslims can be saved. The church admitted that those who have not received the gospel are related to the people of God in various ways¹⁸ There is first the people to which the covenants and promises were made and from which Christ was born according to the flesh (Rom 9:4-5) and thus the people, the most dear to God. But, the plan of salvation also includes those who acknowledge the Creator, in the first place among whom are the Muslims: These people profess to hold the faith of Abraham, and together with us they adore the One, Merciful God, mankind's judge on the last day.¹⁹

2.4 Some Letters to Muslims

In the *Christifideles Laici*, the Holy father mentioned that the lay faithful can favour the relations, which ought to be established between them and the Muslims as they live and work with them and therefore being in a better position to live in peace.²⁰

Pope Paul VI tells the Muslims: "Christianity is a mission of friendship in the midst of humanity, a mission of understanding, of encouragement, of promotion, of elevation."²¹ And therefore as Christians, we are to live together in harmony with our dear Muslims who are monotheists as we are, professing one true God, most high and living, God of Abraham. This harmony is clearly seen in peaceful co-existence between the Catholics and Muslims in Senegal.

¹⁸ Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, *Lumen Gentium*, in Francisco Gioia (ed), *Interreligious Dialogue: The Official teaching of the Catholic Church*, Boston: Pauline Books and Media, 1997, P 42

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid. 99

²¹ Ibid. 118

From the letter written to the Ambassador of Senegal in Rome in January 1967, the church said that on her part, she desires nothing greater than the mutual understanding reigning among the sons and daughters of the same country. The letter added:

“It is in this sentiments that we receive the credential letters you are today consigning to our hands, and that we invoke upon the excellency president Senghor, upon the government and upon the entire Senegalese people and abundance of divine blessings.”²²

The church has even gone deep to the dialogue itself that she writes to the representatives of Muslims in Turkey on 25th July 1967, when she said:

“We wish to manifest our high regard for the Muslims who worship God: One, living and subsistent, merciful and almighty, the creator of heavens and earth, who has spoken to men as well expressed by the recent Council which exhorted us to promote together, along this line, social justice, moral values, peace and freedom.”²³

And therefore, the two religions are called to establish an order of justice and of peace on earth and therefore reciprocal respect and harmonious action, for the acceptance and the defence of the fundamental rights of man. This is a good foundation of dialogue.

The very enlightening meeting was when Pope Paul VI met the Muslims in Uganda.

On this occasion, he said:

How can we express our deep satisfaction in meeting you and our gratitude to you, for granting our lively desire to greet, in your person the great Muslim communities spread throughout Africa. You thus enable us to manifest here our high respect for the faith you profess Christians and Muslims even more

²² [ibid. 148-149

²³ Vatican II, *Declaration on the Relations of the Church with non-Christian Religions*, no 3.

closely in true brotherhood. In our prayer, we always remember the people of Africa. The common belief in the almighty professed by millions calls down upon the continent the graces of his providence and love, most of all, peace and unity among all its sons and daughters. We feel sure that as representatives of Islam, you join our prayer to the almighty, that he may grant all African believers the desire for pardon and reconciliation so often commended in the Gospel and in the Qur'an.²⁴

Still Pope John Paul II on his visit to Kenya extended his gratitude to Muslim leaders of Kenya for expressing their fraternal courtesy and respect. The Pope recognised with great satisfaction the common element found in Islam and Christianity, the honour attitude to Jesus Christ and his virgin mother and many other elements and hence inviting them (Muslims) to know the Christian heritage as they are attached to African and as they profess Monotheism. The Pope said:

On my part, I wish therefore do everything possible to help develop the spiritual bonds between Christians and Muslims. Prayer, almsgiving and fasting are highly valued in both of our respective traditions and are beyond doubt a splendid witness to a world that runs the risk of being absorbed by materialism. Our relationship of reciprocal esteem and the mutual desire for authentic service to humanity urge us to join commitments in promoting peace, social justice, moral values and all the true freedom of man.²⁵

Thus, it is clear from Magisterium that we are one people and that we can meet in issues pertaining to our different faiths, that is we can meet and dialogue in matters concerning prayer, fasting, almsgiving and more others so that we may live in peace and tranquillity. These and others can be our foundations in our mutual dialogue, as we have

²⁴ Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, *Lumen Gentium*, in Francisco Gioia (ed), *Interreligious Dialogue: The Official teaching of the Catholic Church*, Boston: Pauline Books and Media, 1997, p. 210

²⁵ *Ibid.* 227

been shown by our leaders that dialogue is possible and can be concrete especially in Africa.

2.5 Muslim Writers on Dialogue

I can say that this was the prophetic call for dialogue between the two religions but it seems that it was taken for granted by both sides. If we can base dialogue on this article, then, we cannot be suspicious of our brothers and sisters. Dr Mustafa Osman Ismail states it clearly that: "those who are against or opposed to inter-religious dialogue whether they are Christians or Muslims do not know their religions very well, because inter-religious dialogue is not about conversion but about creating mutual understanding."²⁶ Thus, we are called to be open-minded, intellectuals and professionals aware of the usefulness of dialogue and see it as being in the interest of both religions.

Dr Haj Hammed says:

"Those who support the idea of dialogue between Christians and Muslims are open-minded intellectuals and professionals aware of usefulness of dialogue and who see it as being in the interest of both religions. It is something to be encouraged and supported because it may clear the way to finding solutions to some other problems in Africa."²⁷

Dialogue between the two religions requires commitment for,

it fosters mutual respect and creates an atmosphere for understanding each other's religious beliefs and doctrinal convictions. Then, dialogue draws the parties closer to each other to replace hostility and misunderstanding. Dialogue may not help the parties find a common solution to all the problems

²⁶ M. Demorlaine, *Un Seul Dieu, tous frères*, p 57.

²⁷ Amadou Ndiaye, *Nous Sommes des frères*, Dakar : Dakarois Press, 2001, p 6

of the world or for the parties to come to an agreement. Yet, dialogue clarifies the existing differences and opens up the debate.²⁸

It is thus our responsibility as Christians to seek to live alongside the Muslims. To be able to live together, we need to be able to understand each other and to grow in mutual respect. Without that desire to work and understanding each other, then, we will increase distrust the Muslims and even other faiths. As Christians who are ready for dialogue, it is our responsibility to engender the desire in the church to see ways to develop a climate to allow dialogue to happen in all levels of our lives and in all places.

“To accomplish dialogue, “Christians need to have a thorough knowledge of the values, traditions and art-facts that are different from their own. They also need to have a firm understanding of who Jesus is and of their Christian faith so that the encounter of Christianity to that of Islam will be a profound and informed one”²⁹

2.6 Conclusion

We have seen the confrontation between the two Religions in the early years in history. What is very encouraging in this chapter is to see that there are some foundations of dialogue pinpointed between the two Religions. The two have a lot in common and this can be a basis in which to launch a comprehensive dialogue. It is why the church has taken these seeds of dialogue as basis in which our Christians can start. The response of Muslims in many countries has been very encouraging and this gives the church a new impetus to dialogue. This chapter is followed by the third chapter in which the objectives

²⁸ Dhamaraj G.E and J.S. *Christianity and Islam : A Missiological Encounter*, Delhi : ISCK, 1998, p 295, quoted in PROCMURA meeting Kampala in July 2001.

²⁹ Ibid. p 296.

will be to enter into three important things in Islam and that is Prayer Fasting and Almsgiving and seeing whether they have any implication in the society.

CHAPTER THREE

3.0 PRAYER, FASTING, ALMSGIVING

3.1 Prayer (Al-Salat)

Prayer is the second pillar of Islam whose importance ranks next in order of faith in the unity of God and the prophets. Thus, it is the fundamental and most important obligation of Ibadah (worship). Prayer is hence considered the foundation of religion and the center of all other rituals in Islam. Prayer must be preserved and said, (Sourate 2,238) “for whosoever abandons prayer, demolishes the very pillar of religion.”³⁰ “Whoever prays accordingly is a true Muslim and he thus totally and practically submits to Allah.” (Sourate 9,5) If there is negligence to prayer, then, it becomes only an external show of which prophet Mohamed said “prayer without the presence of the Lord in the heart is not prayer at all.”³¹

3.1.1 Prayer as a Religious Duty

Prayer is the fulfillment of an obligatory duty, an act of homage towards God, a duty commanded to all the faithful. Praying whole-heartedly is very much encouraged because, “what separates a believer from apostasy is simply prayer.”³² This makes prayer to be obligatory upon every Muslim, male and female, slave and free, rich and poor, healthy or sick, being at home or journeying and even at battle field (Sourate 2:238-239 and 4,102). There should be a regular prayer because this is a manifestation of the internal

³⁰ B. D. Kateregga, p 62-63

³¹ S. Hossein Nasr, *Islamic Spirituality I*, p 114

³² Stephen Nyaga, *Class Notes on Pillars of Religion*, p 4.

prayer. The internal prayer is a continuous and a constant one. The believer shall hence think and feel of God who is the center and the provider of everything.

3.1.2 Prayer is the essence and Heart of Religion

Prayer will be accounted for first on the Day of Judgment, before any other duties. This is because prayer is very important, it is the first duty imposed by God upon mankind, after behaving in his Oneness. It is prescribed for a Muslim to pray five times a day:

- The early Morning Prayer is offered any time after the dawn and before the sunrise. It takes a total period of about two hours.
- The noon prayer calls the Muslims to submit to God and refresh his covenant with God.
- The mid-afternoon prayer begins right after the expiation of the noon prayer time and extends to sunset. A Muslim is called to refocus his intention on the stipulation of his faith.
- The sunset prayer begins immediately after sunset with a total period of one and half hour. He is called submit himself to God in prayer so that he may not forget his duties and obligations in the midst of the approaching shadows of the night.
- The evening prayer continues up to before dawn. It is the last prayer a Muslim is called to pray before he or she goes to sleep. The frequency and timing of prayers never let the object and mission of life be lost sight of it in the mixture of worldly activities.³³

³³ Abu A'la Maududi, *Towards Understanding Islam*, p 101

It is very interesting to see that the times of Islamic prayer conforms with times of relaxation, recreation and meal times. (It also confirms times of prayers in the catholic monasteries).

- -Morning prayer around breakfast time,
- -Noon prayer- lunchtime,
- -Mid-afternoon prayer-coffee/ teatime,
- -Sunset prayer- suppertime,
- -Evening prayer- late snack time.³⁴
- The whole day is placed in the presence of God. Prayer determines what is going to happen that day. Wherever you are as a Muslim, you are on the presence of God.
- The various poses and postures the worshippers make in prayer are a true embodiment of the spirit of total submission to Allah.³⁵ The various recitals strengthen the foundation of one's faith and prepares for:
 - A life of virtue
 - Submission to Allah
 - Inner peace and stability.

They help to guide the believer to the most upright way of life, " a life of sincerity, patience, courage. confidence and hope."³⁶ Before a Muslim presents himself before the Lord to offer prayers, he must be spotless, clean and pure. The Qu'ran says: "Truly Allah loves those who turn to him and those who care for cleanliness." (Sourate 2:222). Hence

³⁴ *Divine Office*, Introduction to the Divine Office, Ndanda :Benedictine Publications, 1982, pp 1-5.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Jean Mohammed Abd-El-Jalil, *Islam et Nous*, Paris : Les editions du Cerf, 1981, P.83

takes interest in purification of the body from all dirty and impurities as well as purification of the mind from false wrong and corrupt beliefs and attitudes. This purification of the mind, body and clothes is called 'taharak' (purification). It is only when a Muslim is in condition of taharak that he can perform the salat. Purification is also possible through partial wash of those parts of body, which are generally exposed to dirt or dust. This is called "Wudu." Wudu turns into a form of prayer of forgiveness and mercy, which the person performing the ablution starts praying to God.

He prays to God to cleanse him of the sins he has committed with his two hands knowingly or unknowingly; to cleanse him also of the sins committed by his mouth; to fill his nostrils with the sweet scent of paradise; to remove the darkness that has stained his face to illuminate it with the light of His wisdom...while washing his right foot he prays to be led upon the straight path, and while washing the left foot, he entreats to be protected from the promptings of the forces of evil.³⁷

So we can say that an inner purification and an intensive prayer for forgiveness, mercy and guidance accompany the outward purification as a condition of prayer. Those who seek the closeness of God always try to remain pure both outwardly and inwardly.

As intenal purification accompanies the outer ablution, the prophet Mohammed said: "He who makes oblation afresh revives and refreshes his faith. Ablution upon ablution is illumination upon illumination."³⁸ Thus, where a person performs ablution, thinking of all the sins committed by him through his different organs, and goes on praying to God as a penitent asking for his forgiveness and mercy, his sins are forgiven and hands and face are illuminated.

³⁷ David Thuku, Presentation on Islamic Prayer: *Christian-Muslim Dialogue*, 2001, p 4.

³⁸ Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Islamic Spirituality* I, p 114.

3.1.3 Place of Prayer

It is recommended that prayer be performed in a Mosque and in a congregation if there is one available. This is especially important for the Friday prayer.³⁹ Muslims will prefer to pray in a Mosque, but they may pray wherever they happen to be. This prayer makes unity of the Muslims to be complete in reality and hence a true community “Umma.” To refuse to adhere to this practice breaks the unity, the fraternity or the brotherhood.

The common feature, which Muslims all over the world must observe, is standing barefooted, all facing towards Mecca and conducting the service of the salat in the language of the Qu`ran. This universal practice of salat among the Muslims around the world distinguishes them from non-Muslims. The unity of the worldwide community of Islam is evidenced in the common ritual of salat.

Penetrated in this grandeur of ritual prayer of the Muslim, shows a true “adoration, the respect and create the giving of oneself to God in the confidence and in peace.”⁴⁰ The Muslims prostrate, the fore head on the ground in an attitude of humility and submission.

- He raises the hands upward, the face and the principal parts of the body before praying.
- He removes the shoes when entering the Mosque,
- He prays on a mat reserved for prayer or even on the ground if he has no mat.

When called to prayer, he starts by expressing interiorly the intention of his prayer, that is to say, the will of accomplishing according to the command of God and for him

³⁹ Abu A`la Maududi, *Towards Understanding Islam*, p 101

⁴⁰ M. Demorlaine, *Un Seul Dieu, tous frères*, p 40

alone. Raising his hands, he says God is great “Allahou Akbar.”⁴¹ This cuts himself from the ordinary occupation. In this, he only thinks of God, leaves himself to God in confidence and say the following formula:

I witness that there is no other divinity than Allah. He is unique. I witness that Mohammed is his servant and his messenger. Glory to you oh my Allah and to you the praise...our acts are bad, I do a lot of faults in my soul. I ask you to pardon me Oh my God and I return to you. Pardon me and turn yourself towards me. Because you are the one who loves me pardoning. You are merciful. Oh my Allah, put me in the number of those who purify themselves. Put me in the number of your faithful servants. Make me a patient servant and a knowable servant. Give me that I may remember about you and to praise you from the rising of the sun to its setting.⁴²

3.1.4 The effects of prayer to a Muslim

When a believer prays in the right way and in the right intention, then, the prayer is valid and the effect of his prayer is seen. The believers do not pray without a purpose otherwise they may not pray. There are several effects that the prayer brings:

- It strengthens one's belief in Allah and to develop a sense of submission to him.
- Prayer fosters the good and pious elements in the mind of a person and brings about an upright way of life. One cultivates a sound personality and actualizes the aspirations in a mature course of development.
- Prayer acts as a means of cleanliness, purity, and punctuality.
- Prayer brings about qualities of patience, hope, confidence, gratitude and refinement.
- Prayer proves and shows equality, solid unity and universal brotherhood of Umma.⁴³

⁴¹ Abd-El- Massih, *au Seuil de l'Islam*, Yaounde : Editions cle, P. 13

⁴² M. Demorlaine P. 40

⁴³ Stephen Nyaga, Class notes: *Pillars of Religion*, p 1.

3.1.5 Why to pray?

The very poses that he assumes during his prayer are the very embodiment of the spirit of submission, the various recitals remind him of his commitments to his God. These commitments are:

- “To seek the guidance and ask him again and again to enable him avoid his wrath and follow his chosen path,
- To read out from the book of the Lord and express witness to the truth of the prophet and also to refresh his belief in the day of judgment and have love in his memory the fact that he has to appear before God and give account of his life.”⁴⁴

It is but easy to understand how the daily prayers strengthen the foundations of one’s faith, prepare him for the observance of a life of virtue and obedience to God and refresh that belief from which springs courage, sincerity, purposefulness, purity of heart, advancement of the soul and enrichment of morals.

3.1.6 The purpose of Prayer

To refuse to prayer as a Muslim without any reasonable excuse is committing a grave offense. This is a sin against God and also against the very nature of man.

The Islamic prayer is the best way to cultivate in a person a sound personality and actualize his aspirations in a mature course of development. To neglect prayer is to oppress the good qualities in human nature. Denial of what is good is destructive offense. Here lies the significance and vitality of prayer in the life of people. It is true that God does not need our prayers. When he emphasizes the necessity of prayer, he means to help

⁴⁴ Abdul A’la Maududi, *Towards Understanding Islam*, Nairobi: *The Islamic Foundation*, 1973, P.101

us because whatever good we do is for our own benefit. The benefit the Muslims get from the prayer is immeasurable and the blessing of prayer is beyond imagination.

The Islamic prayer is a “matchless and unprecedented formula of intellectual meditation and spiritual devotion, of moral elevation and physical exercise, all combined.” Thus, every muscle of the body joins the soul and the mind in the worship and glory of God⁴⁵ Hence, the whole meaning of Islamic Prayer is

- a lesson in discipline and will power,
- a practice in devotion to God and all worthy objectives,
- a vigilant reminder of God and constant revelation of his goodness,
- a seed of spiritual cultivation and moral soundness,
- a guide to the most upright way of life,
- a safeguard against indecency and evil, against wrong deviation and stray,
- a demonstration of true equality, solid unity and brotherhood,
- an expression of thankfulness to God and an appreciation of him,
- a cause of inner peace and stability,
- an abundant source of patience and courage.⁴⁶

3.1.7 The kinds of prayer

The Islamic prayers composes of:

3.1.7.1 *Obligatory prayer* (fard), which includes the five daily prayers, Friday noon-congregation prayer and the funeral prayer.⁴⁷

3.1.7.2 *Supererogatory prayer* (wajib and sunnah), which includes the prayers accompanying the obligatory services and the congregations of the great festivals. Failure to observe these is a harmful negligence and a reproachable conduct.⁴⁸

⁴⁵ Joseph Narsallah, *Dialogue Islam-Chrétien à propos de publications Recentes*, Paris, Librarie Orientaliste, Paul Gauthner, 1978, P. 148.

⁴⁶ John Mbinda, Presentation on Islamic Prayer: *Christian-Muslim Dialogue*, Nairobi, 2001, p 3

⁴⁷ Stephen Nyaga, Class Notes: Pillars of Religion, p 4.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

3.1.7.3 *Optional prayer*, which includes all voluntary prayers at any time of the day and the night. Two periods have a special preference, the later part of the night until just before the breaking of the dawn and the mid-morning periods.⁴⁹

3.1.8 *The Friday (Juma) Prayer.*

The weekly convention of Friday congregation is the most important service and is compulsory upon every Muslim who is required to observe the prayers and has no reasonable excuse to abstain. It is important because:

- it is the occasion marked by Allah for the Muslim to express their collective devotion.
- It is an appointment to renew the spiritual accounts of the week gone by and get ready for the following week,
- It is a convention for the Muslims to reassure themselves and confirm their religious bonds and social solidarity on moral and spiritual foundation.
- It shows how the Muslims give preference to the call of God over and above any other concern.⁵⁰

Thus, Friday prayer is marked by the following features:

- Its time falls in the same time as that of the noon-prayer and it replaces the very same prayer.
- It must be said in a congregation led by an Imam. If the Imam is not there any other person can lead the prayer.
- If any person misses it, he has to offer the noon-prayer.

⁴⁹ Stephen Nyaga, *Class Notes: Pillars of Religion*, p 4.

⁵⁰ Joseph Kinyua, *Presentation on Islamic Prayer: Christian-Muslim Dialogue*, Nairobi, 2001, p 5.

- All kinds of normal work are allowed on Friday as on any other weekdays. For Muslims, there is no Sabbath. They can carry on with their usual duties and activities provided they come to the congregational service in time.
- Thus, Friday prayer must be performed in a Mosque. Otherwise, it may be said at any gathering place.
- When time of prayer comes the opening prayer is said. Then four units in the noon prayer. When this part is completed, the Imam stands facing the audience and delivers his sermon, which is an essential part of service. When imam is talking, all should be seated, quiet to the end.

The sermon consists of two parts each beginning with the words of praise to Allah and prayers of blessing for the Prophet Mohammed. In the first part, some Quranic passages are recited and explained for the purpose of exhortation and admonition. In a second part, general affairs of the Muslims may be discussed. Prayer for the general welfare of all Muslims are offered in this second part as well.

Then, the two obligatory units are offered under the leadership of the Imam who recites the *Fatahah* and the other Quranic passages in an audible voice. After that two Sunnah units are offered individually in a low voice. The congregation should be neat and holy. A bath before this prayer is strongly recommended as it makes one fresher and more pleasant.⁵¹

⁵¹ Ibid.

3.2 The Fasting (saum)

Muslims follows the lunar year calendar and the month of Ramadhan is the ninth month of this lunar year. This month is the month of fasting literally defined “fasting means to abstain completely from food, drinks, intimate intercourse, smoking and even swallowing of saliva before the break of the dawn till sunset, during the entire month of Ramadhan. the ninth month of the Islamic year”⁵² The Qu’ran is very clear about fasting:

Oh ye who believe: Fasting is prescribed to you as it was prescribed to those before you. That ye may learn self-restraint. Fasting for a fixed number of days: But if any of you is ill or on a journey, the prescribed number (should be made up) from days later. For those who can do it with hardship is a ransom: the feeding of a poor man. He that does well of his own account shall be well rewarded but to fast is better for you if you but knew it. In the month of Ramadhan, the Qu’ran was revealed a book of guidance with proofs of guidance distinguishing right from wrong. Therefore, whoever of you is present in that month, let him fast. But he who is ill or on a journey shall fast for a similar number of days later on. Allah desires your well being not your discomfort. He desires you to fast the whole month so that you may magnify him and render thanks to him for giving you his guidance (Sourate 2:183-185).

Fasting is both external and internal. The external fasting leads to the internal fasting. Thus fasting starts before the break of the dawn and is broken immediately after sun set.

3.2.1 External fasting

External compulsory fasting is prescribed for all Muslims individuals. All such individuals must not eat, drink, smoke or have sexual relations during daytime, that is from dawn to sunset. Normal life is permitted from sunset to dawn. As we have seen, external leads to internal fasting, as the Prophet says: “Cultivate within yourself the

⁵² Hammudah Abdalati, *Islam in Focus*, Nairobi: The Islamic Foundation, 1998.

attributes of God because not eating, drinking or engaging in sex is to transcend the physical limitations of an individual and imitate the habits of God”⁵³

3.2.2 Internal fasting

This is a discipline imposed upon one’s soul so that the self is restrained from indulging in passions and desires and prevented from engaging itself in evils, such as telling lies, backbiting, envy, individual abstain from even the permitted things for fear of going beyond limits. The highest stage of this kind of fasting is seen in those devoted adorers of God who see God and nothing else and fast from the presence of everything other than God.⁵⁴

3.2.3 From whom fasting is expected.

Fasting is expected to a special group of people or individuals. It is exempted to the following people:

- The sick people whose healthy is likely to be severely affected by the observance of fast. They may post-pond the fast as long as they are sick to a later date and make up for it as many days of fasting as they have missed.
- The children under the age of puberty. All in all, “it is recommended to train the children who are of ten years of age and above.”⁵⁵ They don’t compensate.
- The insane people who are not accountable for their deeds. These types of people are exempted from fast and no compensation or any other substitute is enjoyed on them.

⁵³ Jacques Jomier, *How to understand Islam*, London: SCM press Ltd, 1993, p 63

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Abd El Massih, *au Seuil de l’Islam*, P 31, my own translation.

- Old men and women who are too old or weak to fast are exempted. They are excepted from this duty but must offer, at least one needy poor Muslim an average full meal or its value per person per day. This compensation shows that whenever they can fast even for only a day, they should do so and compensate for the rest. Otherwise they are accountable for their negligence.⁵⁶
- People who are travelling of distances about fifty miles or more may break the fast temporarily during travel and make up for it in later days. The days lost during fasting are the same days he is supposed to fast.⁵⁷
- Expectant women and those breast feeding are not supposed to fast if fasting is likely to endanger their own health and that of their babies. They must make up for the fast later.
- Women in the period of menstruation (of a maximum of ten days or of confinement of a maximum of forty days) are not allowed to fast even if they may want to. They are to postpone to the later days.⁵⁸
- Those who do very hard work in a certain cases are exempted from fasting so long as they will make up. This case is rare to find.

3.2.4 Who is to fast

Fasting during the month of Ramadhan is compulsory upon every Muslim adult, female and male who has the following qualifications:

- **Are mentally and physically fit, which means to be sane and able.**⁵⁹ Hence they must be fit health wise and spiritual wise.

⁵⁶ Ibid, p 42.

⁵⁷ Ibid, 32.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Hammudah Abdalati, *Islam in focus*, Nairobi: The Islamic Foundation, 1998, p. 92

- Are of full age, the age of puberty and discretion, which is to start this good practice on every level, so when they reach the age of puberty, they will be mentally and physically prepared to observe the fasting.
- Are present at are home settlement or their hometown. The implication of this is that they avoid travelling on a journey of more than fifty miles.
- They need to be certain that the fasting is unlikely to cause them any harm either physically or mentally other than normal reactions to hunger, thirst etc⁶⁰

3.2.5 The benefits of fasting.

- Fasting improves the moral and spiritual character of a person through renouncing the lawful satisfaction of his desire on obeying the divine command.
- Fasting produces in a person the ability and discipline to control his physical desires thereby promoting piety and righteousness.
- Fasting trains a person to avoid evil and sinful deeds. The person does not only avoid food, drink and sex from sunrise to sunset but also the temptations to quarrel, tell a lie or engage in slander and backbiting. A prophetic Hadith says:

“When any one of you keeps a fast he should not speak on indecent or filthy word or engage in a noisy scene and were everyone to quarrel with him and call him bad names, he should simply say ‘I am keeping fast and therefore I cannot pay you back in the same coin’.”⁶¹

3.2.6 Fasting is a control of self in stages.

Firstly, a Muslim has to use an extra energy to control himself from all temptations. “He must keep constant watch over these passions, so that not only are they properly controlled, but also they never gain the chance to control the individual.”⁶² Anger

⁶⁰ Abd El Massih, , *au Seuil de l’Islam*, p 32

⁶¹ Stephen Nyaga, *Class Notes: Pillars of Religion*, 2002, p 9.

⁶² Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Islamic Spirituality I*, p 119.

seems to be leading passion in this fasting time. This passion reaches almost beyond control because man becomes irritable by simple things.

Secondly, the next stage of fasting is “to abstain even from legally permitted things. Even when anger or revenge is justified, the individual restrains his anger and offers kindness instead, and instead of claiming justice, he invokes and showers mercy.”⁶³ Physically, “he limits his food and drinks and sometimes abstain from these kinds of food that tempt him just to help his spirit have control over his temptations and passions. This kind of fasting gives man self confidence, a peace that descends on the heart from above, giving the feeling that God has accepted this kind of fasting.”⁶⁴

Thirdly, “in order to arrive to that stage of complete peaceful confidence in which the self has surrendered wholly to God, the last time of fasting is needed. In this fasting, an individual abstain physically, mentally and spiritually from anything that draws a veil between him and the Lord.”⁶⁵ Allah becomes his only beloved, his only goal, his only aim. If this fails, then he has to start the whole process again.

3.2.7 The spirituality of fasting

The month of Ramadhan is meant to celebrate the memory of the revelation of the Qu’ran. Ramadhan is also month in which hunger reminds the rich of the existence of the poor, the month in which almsgiving is recommended.⁶⁶

This month is a month of “self-mastery and exercise of will in order to control one’s passions, resist hunger, thirst, the desire to smoke and others.”⁶⁷ This is also a time of prayer and religious instruction through Radio, television, teachings in mosques and

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ S. Hossein Nasr, *Islamic Spirituality*, p 119

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Stephen Nyaga, *Class Notes: The Revelation of Qur’an*, 2001, p 3.

⁶⁷ Jacques Jomier, *How to understand Islam*, p 64

recitation of Quranic verses. This reminds him of the Word of God in its entirety. It is in this month that they are reminded that good works purify those who perform fasting whole-heartedly. In the whole of this month, "the accent is put on the exercise of the will of God, Muslim brotherhood, awareness of the poor and spiritual purification."⁶⁸

Fasting has an immense impact on the society for all Muslims irrespective of their status for they must observe fasting during the same month. This creates in them the sentiment of unity and love for a man who loves Allah truly, is a man who really knows what love is. Thus, it is in this month that evil conceals itself while good comes to the fore and the whole atmosphere is filled with piety and purity.⁶⁹

The one fasting gains creativity of hope and a very optimistic outlook of life because when he is fasting, he is hoping to please God and seeking his grace. He pleases God with, "a genuine virtue of effective Devotion, honest dedication and closeness to God; because when he fasts he does so for God and for his sake alone."⁷⁰

Fasting provides a man with a transparent soul to transcend, a clear mind to think and a light body to move and act thus liberate the soul and his dignity and integrity and attain freedom from captivity of evil.⁷¹

3.3 Almsgiving (Al-Zakat)

The term 'Zakat' is derived from 'Zakat' which means, "it grew" to increase or become pure. It is the poor due which a Muslim gives in form of alms in order to purify his property and that property to be increased by obtaining God's blessings on it."⁷²

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Ibid., p 65

⁷⁰ H. Abdalati, *Islam in focus*, p 87

⁷¹ Amadou Ndiaye, *Islam, la Religion de Paix*, Dakar : Dakarois Publications, 2001, p 40.

⁷² Stephen Nyaga, Class Notes : *Pillars on Religion*, p 4.

Zakat is the third pillar of Islam. It is an Obligatory form of worship and religious financial commitment to the poor and needy in obedience to God's commandments. The Qu'ran says, "An in their wealth is the right of the needy and of those who are deprived of the means of subsistence." (Sourate 51,19) Hence this verse shows that the recipient of charity received is as a matter of right and not mercy. It is one of the ways that the wealthy would ask for forgiveness and therefore the beggars and the outcasts would have a share in their wealth.

Zakat is paid on the surplus of wealth, which is left over after the passage of a year. It is thus a payment on accumulated wealth. It is paid annually at the uniform rate of two and half percent of a person's saving or net wealth after deducting personal expenses.⁷³ Hence, every Muslim whose financial conditions are above a certain specified minimum must pay this annual percentage of his cash balance to deserving fellow-beings like:

1. The collector of Zakat: Whatever the goal of collection, the collector is authorized to keep a certain amount of collection for himself.
2. The poor and the needy (the doctors of the law are always considered among the poor and the needy and beneficiaries of this collection). This is in order to supply them with means of earning their livelihood.
3. Converts to Islam: The new converted people who have the difficulties in adapting and integrating in the new community are helped to settle down and meet their needs.
4. The ransom for slaves and captives to liberate them: They are helped to find a fund or business, which they are to engage in, in order to be self relied.

⁷³ Abu A'la Maududi, *Towards Understanding Islam*, p 104-105.

5. The indebted to free them from their liabilities incurred under pressing necessities. They are helped officially through Zakat.
6. Cause of Allah i.e. those who research in religious sciences and in propagating Islam, the voluntaries of Allah, the combatants of faith (for certain wars done for honor of Allah).
7. The travelers in foreign lands and in need of help⁷⁴.

The more one pays this Zakat, the greater the reward and forgiveness that Allah shall bestow on him. Also, by giving Zakat is seen as protecting one's wealth. As the prophetic Hadith says: "Safeguard your wealth by giving Zakat and remedy the ailing by charity and as for alleviating the trials and calamities supplicate with humility."⁷⁵

The prophet warned those who avoid Zakat by telling them that whoever stops another from giving away his welfare due, he does not have the benefit of deen, fasting, Hajj and struggling in the cause of Allah. In this, he declares Zakat as an obligatory act of charity.

The money that is paid as Zakat is not something God needs or receives, no because he is above any want and desire. God promises the Muslim rewards manifold if they help their brethren. The reward is not without a condition, that "when we pay in the name of Allah, we shall neither expect nor demand any worldly gains from the beneficiaries nor aim at making our names as philanthropists"⁷⁶

⁷⁴ Abd-el-Massih, *au Seuil de Islam* ; Questions et réponses, p 30- Paraphrased.

⁷⁵ Muslim (nd) *Sahih Muslim* Vol 1-4, Dar al Arabia, Beirut.

⁷⁶ Abdul A'la Maududi, *Towards understanding Islam*, P. 105

3.3.1 *What do they become when they give Zakat?*

The alms-giving is basic to Islam as in other form of Ibadat: “that is the Salat (prayers) and Saum (fasting). Zakat makes the Muslims foster qualities of sacrifice and rids them of selfishness and plutolaty.”⁷⁷ Hence, they are to sacrifice in the way of Allah when the need comes.

Consequently, the Muslim society has immensely to gain from institution of Zakat. This is because it is a bounded duty of every well-to-do Muslim to help his lowly-placed, poor brethren.⁷⁸

He is not to spend his wealth for his own comfort and luxury; “ for there are rightful claimants on his wealth and they are the nation’s widows and orphans, the poor and the invalid; those who have ability but lack the means by which they could seek useful employment, those who have the faculties and brilliance but not the money with which they could acquire knowledge and become useful members of the community.”⁷⁹ Any other person who does not recognize the rights on his wealthy of these people is taken as cruel, the one who does not want to follow the dictates of Allah for “there could be no greater cruelty than to fill one’s own coffers while thousands die of hunger or suffer the agonies of unemployment.”⁸⁰ The selfishness, greed and acquisitiveness are great enemies of Islam. The “dis-believers, devoid of sentiments of universal love, know only to preserve wealth and to add to it by lending it out on interest”⁸¹ (capitalists) but Islam teaching refuses this and gives an option of “one shares one’s wealth with others and help them

⁷⁷ Abu A’la Maududi, *Towards Understanding Islam*, p 105

⁷⁸ *ibid.*

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

⁸⁰ Amadou Ndiaye, *Nous sommes des frères*, p 40.

⁸¹ Abu A’la Maududi, *Towards Understanding Islam*, p 105.

stand on their own legs and become productive members in the society”⁸² as the saying goes teach the man how to fish but not give him fish.

3.3.2 Property of which Zakat is Obligatory

The rates of Zakat and also the time of its payment and the goods on which it is to be paid is determined and thus in the Muslim calendar. The worldly possessions, which are assessable, are divided into four categories.

3.3.2.1 Agricultural produce including fruit crops.

These are the produce like “wheat, barley, rice, maize, raisins, honey, peas, millet and vegetables. For the produce of land that has been watered by nature tithe is due to ten percent while for those watered by machine is due for five percent tithe.”⁸³

3.3.2.2 Animals.

Some animals that are subject to Zakat i.e. they can be given are camels, Oxen, sheep, horses. These are the ones not kept for trade and thus, they are possessed by owner for a whole year. Mules and donkeys are not subject to Zakat because they are used for transportation.⁸⁴

3.3.2.3 Saving-gold and silver

Zakat is also “paid on objects made of gold, silver such as cups, rings, bracelets, necklaces and cash.”⁸⁵ As you might be aware, these objects are some of the very important ornaments for a Muslim. Minerals too are included.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Stephen Nyaga, *Class Notes: Pillars of Religion*, p 5.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Ibid. p 6.

3.3.2.4 *Machineries*

“Merchandise and other goods of trade and industry. These are articles of trade and business, which include the produce of machines, factory or workshop.”⁸⁶

3.3.3 *Who are eligible to give Zakat?*

We have several types of people who are to pay Zakat comes whatever may. Such people are:

- “Those who are free and the adults,
- Those who possess some wealth, which has attained a limit fixed by the prophet,
- Those who have been in possession of their wealth or property for a full lunar year.”⁸⁷

3.3.4 *The Theological understanding of Zakat.*

This alms-giving “Zakat purifies the heart of the giver from selfishness, concert and greed of wealth. In return, it purifies the heart of the recipient from jealous and envy, hatred and uneasiness and fosters in his heart warm wishes for the contributor. As a result, the society will purify and free itself from class warfare and suspicion, from all feelings and distrust from corruption and disintegration and from all such evils.”⁸⁸ The significance of Zakat is laid down in the Qu`ran: “of the goods, take alms so those mightiest. Purify and sanctify them, pray on their behalf.... (Sourate 9:103).

Zakat reduces to a minimum the sufferings of the needy and poor members of the society. It establishes a self supporting society through fulfillment of the basic needs of the

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

poor and affording of opportunity measure to do something for himself and for others. To the contributors, it is an invitation to earn more to benefit more.⁸⁹

Zakat purifies the property of the people with means and it clears it from the shares, which do not belong to it any more, the shares in which must be distributed among the due beneficiaries.⁹⁰

Zakat cultivate social responsibility on the part of the contributors and feelings of security and belonging on the recipient.⁹¹

For the contributors and those who pay Zakat, there are virtuous divine rewards and recompense (Sourate 2:261-262 and 57:18). Any holder of wealth who violates the rights of God and invade upon the rights of the poor and accumulates gold and silver for the love of it, and do not spend it in the way of God is severely warned.

The payment of Zakat leads to the promotion of faith. Men of charity and monetary good-doing who are imbued with the spirit of modesty and sincerity and pay Zakat with the same intent are spoken of in laudatory terms. And those who give that which they give with hearts afraid because they are about to return into their lord, these race for good things and they shall win them in the race (Sourate 23:60-61). The goods spent in the way of God given to the poor and the needy should be pure and of good quality. The Qu`ran says, "O ye who believe! Give of the good things which ye have (honorably) earned, And of the fruits of the earth which we have produced for you, and do not aim at anything which is bad, out of it ye may give away something when ye yourselves would not receive it except with closed eyes.. (Sourate 2:267).

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

There is also the Zakat that is voluntary. This is called 'Sadakat' meaning the truth. It is consequently a voluntary act of charity. Charity includes all acts big and small, which are carried out to help the needy as per the teaching of the Qu'ran and Hadith:

- "Feeding and clothing the poor,
- Taking care of the orphans
- A kind of word spoken to an old person,
- Any voluntary assistance is Sadakat."⁹²

As Allah "will deprive Usury of all blessing, But will give increase for deeds of charity; for the loveth not any ungrateful sinner. Those who believe and do deeds of righteousness, and establishes regular prayers and give Zakat will have then reward with their God..." (Sourate 2:276-277). "The spending of wealth for the sake of God purifies the heart of a man of the love of material wealth. The man who spends it offers that as a humble gift before the Lord and therefore affirms the truth that nothing is dearer to him in life than the love of Allah and that he is fully prepared to sacrifice everything for His sake."⁹³

3.4 Conclusion

Prayer, fasting and almsgiving are ways of worship and they go together. They cannot be separated from each other if somebody is to be close to God. From prayer, fasting and almsgiving is expected and this has a lot of implications in the society. To understand a Muslim, you must understand him in this perspective and whatever he or she does in the society is the fruits of the above worship. This takes us to chapter four in

⁹² Stephen Nyaga, Class notes, *Pillars of Religion*, p 5

⁹³ Ibid.

which we are going to see what Christians believe and do on prayer, fasting and almsgiving.

CHAPTER FOUR

4.0 PRAYER, FASTING AND ALMSGIVING IN CHRISTIAN LIFE.

4.1 Prayer

One of the great mysteries of faith in a Christian life is prayer. The Christian prayer is firstly an interior one. Prayer can be defined as “the raising of one’s mind and heart to God.”⁹⁴ Many times, we approach God with pride and therefore prayer does not come out of the depths of our hearts. But we are reminded that he who humbles himself will be exalted. This is clearly seen in the gospel of Luke 18:9-14, saying:

Jesus then addressed this parable to those who were convinced of their own righteousness and despised everyone else? Two people went up to the temple area to pray; one was a Pharisee and the other was a tax collector. The Pharisee took up his position and spoke this prayer to himself, ‘O God I thank you that I am not like the rest of humanity – greedy, dishonest, adulterous – or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week, and I pay tithes on my whole income’, but the tax collector stood off at a distance and would not even raise his eyes to heaven but beat his breast and prayed, ‘O God be merciful to me a sinner’. I tell you, the later went home justified, not the former: for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and the one who humbles himself will be exalted.

Hence, our prayer should be one of the simplest when expressed to God but also one of the most profound in that it comes from us as creatures that need to be in communion with God.

⁹⁴ The Catechism of the Catholic Church , Nairobi :Paulines publications Africa , 1995, No. 2559.

4.1.1 Prayer in the Old Testament

In the O.T. all the great men and women were persons of prayer. They committed themselves to be in communion with God through prayer and to be part of the salvation history. The revelation of prayer comes between the fall and the restoration of man, that is between God's sorrowful call to his first children "where are you... what is this that you have done" (Gen 3:9ff) and the response of God's only son on coming into the world – "Lo, I have come to do your will O God. (Heb 10:5ff) and thus "prayer is bound up with human history, for it is the relationship with God in historical events"⁹⁵ Prayer is seen when Abraham intercedes for the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. Abraham appeals to the justice of God as a judge of all the earth not to destroy the innocent with the wicked. What made it possible for Abraham to approach God in prayer was that God had first approached him through the call of the promise, "Abraham, relying on this, acknowledged the justice and power of God in dealing with human sinfulness and pleaded for mercy"⁹⁶ His prayer was heard when Lot and his family were saved because of their righteousness. Abraham accepts to sacrifice his only son, as he believes in his creator. He also considered that God was able to raise men even from the dead (Gen 22:8) and it is why "the father of believers is confirmed to the likeness of the father who will not spare his own son but will deliver him up for us all"⁹⁷ Prayer thus restores man to God's likeness and enable him to share in the power of God's love that saves the multitude (Rom 8:32). With Jacob, God wrestles all night with him and God bless him before leaving him at dawn. So, from this account the symbol of prayer is a battle of faith and as a triumph of perseverance. Moses is

⁹⁵ Ibid., No 2568.

⁹⁶ John H Wright, *A Theology of Christian Prayer*, N Y : Pueblo publishing company, 1979, p.4.

⁹⁷ Catechism of the Catholic Church, No 2572.

a man of prayer. Intimacy between Moses and God is seen as Moses could ask God what to do when caught up. He relied in God's power. When Moses goes to get the commandments, Israel goes against His commands and God want to destroy them. Moses prayer is heard that God should not destroy them and thus Moses turns away God's anger (Ex32: 1ff). This shows the power of prayer and God's response. Moses' prayer is characteristic of contemplative prayer by which God's servant remains faithful to his mission. David is able to bring the Ark of the Covenant to Jerusalem and this showed the presence of God among them. David prayed for his people and prayed in their name "His submission to the will of God, his praise and his repentance, will be a model for the prayer of the people"⁹⁸ Hence, the prayer of Christ, who is the true messiah and son of David, will reveal and fulfill the meaning of this prayer. Solomon builds the temple, which is a place of prayer. The king also lift his hands towards heaven and beg the lord, on his own behalf, on behalf of the entire people and of the generations yet to come, for the forgiveness of their sins and for their daily needs, so that the nations may know that He is the only God that the heart of his people may belong wholly and entirely to Him."⁹⁹ The prophets are also very strong in prayer as they unveil the God's plan. They keep praying for these chosen people because of their unfaithfulness to God. There are many other quotations about prayer. In conclusion to Prayer in the O.T. what is very important is that:

- The relation of the individual and community to God is established by God Himself.

⁹⁸ Ibid., No 2579.

⁹⁹ Ibid., No 2580.

- God is also addressed personally, even anthropomorphically. Israel sees God as the one who hears them when they cry to Him, respond to their cries, their needs and their way of acting and He remains mysterious, invisible to humanity.
- Israelites in prayer expressed their dependence on God for all good things; nature, family, peace, prosperity, forgiveness, life itself, all comes to them from God.
- Prayer was accompanied by an extraordinary confidence of being heard. The petitions always ended in thanksgiving and all expected a favorable response to the prayer. The relationship was that of father and son (Ex4: 22) or between mother and her infant child (Is 49:15) or of husband and his bride (Hos 2:14ff).

4.1.2 Prayer in the New Testament

Prayer is fully revealed to us in the Word who became flesh and who dwells among us. This is made possible through the Virgin Mary. Mary's response to angel Gabriel (Lk 1:28), was a prayer expressing her radical relations to God as servant and her total submission to his will as made known by the angel's message "Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word (Lk 1:38) and it is why her reply manifests the reign of God in her life. The magnificat is the fullness of Mary's prayer. Her prayer falls into three parts; firstly, she thanks God for what has happened to her personally. There is awe, joy, gratitude and trust, humility and praise (Lk 1:46ff). Secondly, she says how God works in history, how he shows mercy to those who fear him and need him and how he rejects the proud and the self-sufficient. Also, Mary's prayer recalls God's faithfulness to the promises he made to the patriarchs Abraham and Israel, the promise that have found realization in her. Mary's prayer at the feast at Cana of Galilee shows us how prayer is open to God's will. This prayer has a meaning only in

relation to Jesus and his prayer. Hence, Jesus alone is the mediator between God and man in the fullest and strictest sense (Rom 8:34).

4.1. 3 The Prayer of Jesus

Jesus is seen as a man of prayer. He prays before the decisive moments of his mission: before his father's witness to him during his baptism and transfiguration, and before his own fulfillment of the father's plan of love by his passion (Lk 3:21; 9:28; 22:32). He also prays before the decisive moments involving the mission of his apostles: at his election and call of the twelve, before Peter's confession of him as the Christ of God. (Lk 6:12; 9:18; 22:41)

In Jesus prayer, we see an intimacy between him and his father, which is very close. The depths and uniqueness of this relationship is perceived in Jesus' words when he says, "All things have been delivered to me by my Father: and no one knows the son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the son and any one to whom the son chooses to reveal him (Mt 11:27). Hence, "a unique relationship of mutual knowledge is here affirmed, a relationship in which Jesus is simply designated as the son in relation to God, who is called 'the Father' in relation to Jesus, and therefore the central statement of Jesus mission"¹⁰⁰

In the multiplication of bread Jesus gave thanks and blessed the food in keeping with Jewish prayers before eating (Mk 6:41ff ;8:6) and later went to the mountains to continue with prayer. In the transfiguration, Jesus takes three disciples and go to pray (Lk 9:28ff). The Attractiveness of Jesus' prayer caused his disciples to ask him to teach them how to pray (Lk 11:1) and thus he taught them the Lord's Prayer, which is a prayer of

¹⁰⁰ Joachim Jeremias, *Prayers of Jesus* : Studies in Biblical Theology, second series, no 6, Naperville, 1967, p. 53.

adoration, contrition, thanksgiving and supplication. The Lord's Prayer is an expression of disciples' love and invitation to transform themselves always. The disciples are to pray to their father in boldness and confidence. Whatever they will ask the father, they will be given because of the power of prayer prayed in faith that does not doubt. We have to pray in faith because prayer in faith consists not only in saying Lord, Lord but in disposing the heart to do the will of the father (Mt 7:21). Jesus calls us to be converted in faith and also to be watchful because our prayer is a battle. We need to keep watch in prayer in order to avoid temptations (Lk 22:40ff).

4.1.4 The principalities in prayer

In Christian prayer we have three principal parables.

- In Luke 11: 5-13 invites us to *Urgent prayer*. This prayer needs God to respond immediately as this friend who, although he is disturbed but will wake up and give what the other needs. God is ready to give us what we need at that time.
- The *qualities* of prayer are also important. We need to pray constantly and with patience of faith (Lk 18:1-8).
- The *humility* of the heart that prays is important. Always, we need to know that we are sinners and hence ask for forgiveness always.

St. Augustine says that when we pray, Jesus hears our prayers and also, "prays for us as our priest, prays in us as our Head, and is prayed to by us as our God. Therefore let us acknowledge our voice in him and his is us"¹⁰¹ Jesus prayer is the most perfect model of prayer and actually the fulfillment of all prayers. He does his prayer in solitude and in secret and he does it with a lot of love adhering to the will of the father even to the cross.

¹⁰¹ St. Augustine, en in Ps. 85:1; 108:1, Quoted in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no 2616.

In the same way, he teaches us to pray with purified heart, with lively and persevering faith and with filial boldness. He calls us to vigilance and invites us to present our petitions to God in His name.

4.1.5 Forms of Christian Prayer

4.15.1 Blessing and Adoration

The basic movement of Christian prayer is blessing. “It is an encounter between God and man”¹⁰² It is in this point that we see a dialogue between God and man and hence blessing becoming God’s gifts and man’s acceptance. The prayer of blessing is man’s response to God’s gift; because, the human heart can in return bless the one who is the source of every blessing. In dialogue, “our prayer ascends in the Holy Spirit through the Son to God the father.”¹⁰³ Hence we bless God for having blessed us. Adoration is the first attitude of man acknowledging that he is a creature before the Creator. Adoration is homage of the spirit to the king of glory (Ps 24:9ff), respectful silence in the presence of the Ever-Greater God.

4.1.5.2 Prayer of petition

Supplication means, “Ask, pray beseechingly, plead, invoke, cry out or even struggle in prayer.”¹⁰⁴ Supplication is petition in which we express awareness of our relationship with God. It is in petition that we come to notice that we are not our beginning, nor masters nor our last end. We are sinners who as Christians know that we have turned away from our father. This is a prerequisite for righteous and pure prayer.

¹⁰² Catechism of the Catholic Church, no 2626.

¹⁰³ Fr. Nicholas Fogliacco, *The Self-Revelation of the Triune God*, Class notes, 1998, p. 50.

¹⁰⁴ Noah Webster, *Webster's Third New International Dictionary*, Massachusetts : G.C. Merriam company, 1758, p 2297.

4.1.5.3 Prayer of Intercession

This prayer leads us to pray as Jesus did. He is the one intercessor with the Father on behalf of all people, especially sinners (Rom 8:34). He is able to save those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them, (Heb 7:25). The Holy Spirit himself intercedes for us and intercedes for the saints according to the will of God. (Rom 8:26)

4.1.5.4 Prayer of Thanksgiving

This characterizes the prayer of the church, which in celebrating the Eucharist, reveals and becomes more fully what she is. Also every event and need can become an offering of thanksgiving. Thanksgiving is also an acknowledgment of God's action in the world together with an openness to receive that action into oneself. It sees God at work in the world, in the history, in life of the community, in one's own experiences; it joyfully acknowledges this fact and accepts it into one's life.

4.1.5.5 Prayer of praise

The prayer of praise recognizes most immediately that God is God. It gives him glory because of what he is. It is in praise that the spirit is joined to our Spirits to bear witness that we are children of God (Rom 8:16). Praise embraces the other forms of prayer and carries them towards him who is its source and goal: "the one God, the father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist"¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁵ Catechism of the Catholic Church, no 2639.

4.1.6 Who are the Servants of Prayer?

- The Christian family is the first place of education in prayer. The family is the domestic church whereby the church is born. This is the first witness of the church, which is the living memory.
- Ordained ministers are the ones responsible for the formation in prayer of brothers and sisters. They are ordained to lead the people of God to the living waters of prayer (the word of God, the liturgy, and the theological life [the life of faith, hope and charity] and the today of God in concrete situations.
- Religious brothers and sisters have consecrated themselves to prayer. Hermits, monks, have devoted themselves to praising God and interceding for his people.
- Catechists are also very Important as servants of prayer. They teach those who do not know Christ how to meditate on his word.

4.1.7 Places for prayer

The proper place for liturgical prayer of the parish community is the Church. Other places favorable are the oratories, monasteries, and places of pilgrimage. All in all, a Christian can pray at any time and at any place and in any position – standing, sited, sleeping as the situation allows. This gives Christians opportunities to walk in the presence of God, who lives in one praying. at all times in all places.

4.1.8 Expression of Prayer

Vocal prayer: Jesus teaches his disciples how to prayer loudly. The Lord's Prayer is one of the vocal prayers. Jesus raised his voice to express his personal prayer. A good example is at the garden of Gethsemane (Mt 11:25). In vocal prayer there is a need to involve our senses. We are body and spirit and we experience the need to translate our

feelings externally. The body corresponds to interior prayer. A rupture is necessary in putting oneself in the presence of God, in order to live in the peace of God in order to be able to listen to God's works and speak to him. To put oneself in God's presence presupposes that you know your smallness in front of his grandeur. It is the prayer of the publican and not that of the Pharisee, which is accepted by God. It is in vocal prayer that prayer is internalized to the extent that we become aware of him to whom we speak.¹⁰⁶ Vocal prayer is prayed personally or in a group.

Meditation: this is a quest for the God through certain attentiveness. The mind seeks to understand the why and the how of a Christian life. The sacred scripture is the main source of meditation. The scriptures need to open us to book of life whereby we pass from thoughts to reality. The aim of meditation is to advance, with the Holy Spirit along the one way of prayer, which is Christ Jesus. Meditation involves thoughts, imagination, emotions and desires.

Contemplative prayer: This is a time that a person takes time to be alone with him whom he knows that he loves him. A person passes from meditation to contemplation of the Lord Himself. This prayer is very interior, and no images are involved. This is a true encounter with the Lord. Contemplative prayer is surrender to the loving will of God the father in every deeper union with his beloved Son. It is a communion in which the Holy Trinity confirms man, the image of God to his likeness. In this likeness, man looks at God and God looks at man. Hence, "it is a gaze of faith fixed on Jesus, an attentiveness to the Word of God, a silent love"¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁶ St. Teresa of Jesus, *The Way of perfection*, 26,9 in the collected works of St. Teresa of Avila quoted in the Catechism of the Catholic Church. No 2724.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, No 2724.

4.2 Fasting

The word lent literally means 'forty'. The lent is the time, which starts from ash Wednesday to Easter. It last for forty days and hence six Sundays.

In the years past, lent was the time during which the public sinners were preparing themselves to reconciliation on Holy Thursday, and also in which the catechumens were preparing themselves to receive baptism, which was done in Easter.

To the whole church, lent remains a time of prayer and penance for preparation towards Easter whereby all the Christians are invited to renew their profession of faith in baptism.

Before Jesus started his ministry, he had a time of solitude in the desert immediately after John baptized him. Jesus, led by the spirit remains in the desert for forty days without eating or drinking and living among the wild beasts and the angels were ministering to him (Mk 1:12-13). At the end of these days, Satan appeared to tempt him. He tries to tempt him with three noble things, that is, food (to give in to his passions) or that he be given the whole world if he adore Satan (to give in to the power of the world) and to make himself fall for God will send the Angles to rescue him (to try his God) (Lk 4:1-13)

Christ in refusing to be tempted reveals his true sonship. Thus "this is why Christ vanquished the Tempter for us for we have not a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tested as we are, yet without sinning."¹⁰⁸ For this reason, by the solemn forty days of lent the church unites herself each year to the mystery of Jesus in the desert.

¹⁰⁸ The Book of Hebrews quoted in The Catechism of the Catholic Church, no 540.

4.2.1 A Time of prayer

Lent is a time of prayer in which one turns to God and makes new resolutions to follow God's commands in every day's life. The Christians are called to come closer to God in repenting, in praising and in giving thanks for the graces that God has bestowed on them.

This is also a time of reflection on what he or she has been doing in the past and hence walk together with Jesus in the desert, praying and asking for God's intervention so that he may overcome the temptation as Jesus did.

4.2.2 A Time of penance

This is a time when one is invited to come out of sins and repair himself spiritually. It is a time of interior changing and a true conversion. Outside signs are asked for, which sometimes train the Christians to the penance. These signs are like abstinence from the Fridays of lent or fast from Ash Wednesday to holy Friday. The faithful are invited to do other gestures which are more personal such as helping the poor materially and spiritually; "almsgiving, penitential liturgies, pilgrimages as signs of penance, voluntary self-denial such as fasting and fraternal sharing hence charitable and missionary work"¹⁰⁹ Other gestures are of "reconciliation, the exercise and defense of justice and right (Amos 5:24; Is 1:17) by the admission of faults to one's brethren, fraternal correction, revision of life, examination of conscience, spiritual direction, acceptance of suffering, endurance of persecution for the sake of righteousness."¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁹ Ibid no 1438.

¹¹⁰ Ibid no 1434.

4.2.3 A Time of sharing

The almsgiving takes a very special place of the Christians because it opens to the love of others in fraternal sharing. “You welcome our penitence as an offering of your glory because our privation, all, lower our pride, inviting us to imitate your mercy and sharing with those who are hungry”¹¹¹ The church hence worrying of educating and enlarging the perspective of the Christians, proposes, in this time of fasting some objectives of solidarity touching the world problems. The sharing goes beyond personal dimensions and enters a collective dimension. The Christians open themselves in a universal sense to sharing with the disadvantaged. This season of lent is not to make us sad because it is a time of dying to one-self in order for us to resurrect with Christ who defeated death. The Christians are given this time to prepare themselves to this paschal feast in joy and in purified hearts. We are all sinners and we need this time of conversion in order that we may open ourselves to the grace of a new Easter because “You offer to our children this time of grace so that they may find the purity of heart; you want them to liberate themselves of their egoism so that in working in this world which is passing, they attach themselves especially in things that are not perishable.”¹¹²

The model of sharing is Christ himself. “All Christ’s riches are for every individual and everybody’s property”¹¹³ This is because Christ did not live for himself but for us all. Hence we too are to live for others and this means that every faithful has the duty to provide for the material needs to the needy and also to the church. This is what is called ‘Zaka’. Each is to give according to his abilities, for the customs of collection ever

¹¹¹ *Missel de la Semaine*, présenté par Pierre Jounel, Texte liturgique officiel, préface du Temps de Carême, Paris : Desclée, 1975, p. 144. (My own translation.

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ John Paul II, Encyclical: *Redemptor Hominis*, no 11. London: Catholic Truth Society.

appropriate is inspired by the example of Christ who became poor to make us rich (1 Cor 16:1) for “Those who are well off, and who are also willing, give as each chooses. What is gathered is given to him who presides to assist orphans and widows, those whom illness or any other cause has deprived of resources, prisoners, immigrants and in a word, all who are in need”¹¹⁴ The church continues to tell us that “ those Christians who have leisure should be mindful of their brethren who have the same needs and the same rights, yet cannot rest from work because of poverty and misery. Out of lent, a Christian is asked to keep Sunday as a day of piety and good works and doing service to the sick, the infirm and the elderly and without forgetting to take care of their families and relatives”¹¹⁵

We need to remember that all of the sharing should flow from the Eucharist, which is the perfect symbol of sharing left to us by Christ Jesus. This is because to receive in truth the body and blood of Christ given up for us, we must recognize Christ in the marginalized, “those who have not yet heard the gospel message or who have scarcely heard it those oppressed and most disadvantaged, as a group or as individuals”¹¹⁶ When you do not commit yourself to the above then you “have tested the blood of the Lord, yet you do not recognize your brethren...you dishonor this table when you do not judge worthy of sharing your food someone judged worthy to take part in this meal... God freed you from all your sins and invited you here, but you have not become more merciful”¹¹⁷

¹¹⁴ Catechism of the Catholic Church no 1351.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., no 2186.

¹¹⁶ *Spiritual Rule of Life*. The Constitution of the Congregation of the Holy Spirit under the Protection of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, no. 12, Rome, 1997.

¹¹⁷ Catechism of the Catholic Church, no 1397.

4.3 Almsgiving

4.3.1 A Religious Act

Almsgiving in Christianity is directly connected to fasting and prayer. The consequences of fasting and prayer bring almsgiving and hence a total religious act. When this act of almsgiving is not connected to prayer, then, it is useless. All Christians are called to this noble task as they continue to live their religious life among the people who need their help. Each and every faithful is called to holiness and this holiness is through conversion. Conversion is accomplished in daily life. So, the church asks the faithful to express this interior penance in three importance forms i.e. fasting, prayer, and almsgiving as “prayer with fasting is good, but better than both is almsgiving with righteousness. A little with righteousness is better than wealth with wrongdoing. It is better to give alms than to lay up gold. For almsgiving saves from death and purges away every sin. Those who give alms will enjoy a full life”, (Tobit 12:8-10) and so whenever you give alms, do not sound a trumpet before you. Do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your alms may be done in secret, and your father who sees in secret will reward you. (Mt 6:1-4) Hence almsgiving improves the relation to oneself, to God and to others. “Alongside the radical purification brought about by baptism or martyrdom cited as means of obtaining forgiveness of sins; efforts at reconciliation with one’s neighbor, tears of repentance, concern for the salvation of one’s neighbor, the intercession of the saints and the practice of charity which covers a multitude of sins”¹¹⁸ and the almsgiving can be a form of penance to a Christian.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., no 1434.

Also, almsgiving is counted as part in helping the church. Each and every Christian has to give the 'Zaka', which is a prescribed amount of money or material things. The Christians sit down and after seeing the different needs the church has, they decide on a certain amount to be given every month. This money used by faithful to run the church.

Other collections are for the poor, for vocation promotion, for the sick and others as the particular church decides. This collection can be given by a group or individual Christians.

There is the 'Sadaka', which is also very important. 'Sadaka' is a collection given during the Eucharistic celebration. This collection can be in form of money or material things. It is to help the pastor of the church who in turns can also help the needy depending on the amount. This collection also helps the diocese in general depending on the capability of particular churches.

4.3.2 Almsgiving as a form of piety

Almsgiving is one of the forms of piety but not without prayer. It is one of the personal promises to God. Fidelity to promise made to God is a sign of the respect owed to the divine majesty and of love for a faithful God. We need to remember that what we are giving is not very important but the spirit of giving. This spirit opens us to God's communion. God has given us everything and hence when we give out to the needy or for the mission, then we need to know that we are just giving out what God has already given us. In this, we share the love of God as seen in the trinity. All Christians are called to this piety because it reminds them of the dependence to their Creator.

4.4 Conclusion

We have also seen that in Christian life prayer is the first obligation to a Christian if he is to be closer to God. Prayer should be affect the society and thus the fruits of prayer is fasting and almsgiving. A Christian sees says that faith without action is dead and hence fasting and helping the needy becomes a priority as it was a priority to Jesus' ministry. This chapter takes us to the last chapter in which we are going to see whether we can come together an see ourselves as one people and therefore act together in solving the challenges that are facing our society and especially luck of social justice which affects all of the spheres of life in humanity. This chapter will be a practical solution to dialogue and having a better society.

CHAPTER FIVE

5.0 A COMMON GROUND FOR MUSLIMS AND CHRISTIANS TO DIALOGUE AND ACT TOGETHER

5.1 Introduction

We have seen the three main parts in which we act in different ways but meaning the same thing. This is in prayer, fasting and almsgiving. It is in what brings us together that should be encouraged and not what divides us. This is because the two religions find themselves living nearly everywhere together and therefore they cannot not unite if they are to forge ahead for the development of society, economy, politics and their own Religions.

Dialogue means life and there is no life without having the second person. We have minimised dialogue to mean the encounter of the two community leaders who meet and talk of several issues. Not much has been implemented but the reality is that Muslims and Christians have tried their way of dialogue as a way of life. This is what is called 'dialogue of life' whereby people strive to live in an open and neighbourly spirit, sharing their joys and sorrows, their human problems and preoccupations. They live and work together, love each other and also suffer together.

5.2 The Family

Dialogue, first takes place in the *family*¹ relationship whereby both are

¹ Pontifical Council for Dialogue, Dialogue between Christians and Muslims, in Maurice Borrmans (ed), *Interreligious Dialogue I*, N.Y: Pauline press, 1990, p 29.

ted by blood or by interfaith marriages. Hence, the aspect of inter-marriages should be encouraged in all aspects and this can happen easily with the help of chiefs and councils of elders in order to promote these marriages. In marriages, the families begin to trust each other and hence forging ahead to greater things. It is in marriages that the essence of dialogue will be seen, as the family is the nuclear of any society. We cannot talk of a good society if the families are not authentic. A family, which knows its faith and knows the faith of the other, will be able to live together in peace, love and unity. It is in these families that a just society will be born, a society of tolerance in each other, a society that fights the injustices together in aim of promoting the Truth, which is spoken in both Religions. The common ideals in Christianity and Islam for instance are truth, justice, love, diligent, tolerance, modesty, harmony; kindness, humility, integrity and selfishness towards all human beings. If the inter-marriages will succeed then the social justice will be seen clearly because there will be a lot of harmony in the society.

5.3 Work Place

The second important ground for dialogue is at *work place*.² We need to be encouraged to meet side by side at our daily toil and share the same skills or even the same modern technology. Some works should not belong to the Christians and the other to the Muslims. It is in work that we can learn from each other and help each other. We need not to forget that work will be done in the right way if the two parties see themselves as one entity working for the good of all. Hence the Muslims should be ready to work with Christians, employ the Christians in all domains and cooperate without any ill intension. This should also happen in all of the Christian domains.

² Patrick Njau Kagua, *Rapport de fin de stage*, Nouadhibou : 2001, p 10.

5.4 Underdevelopment

Also, for us to fight the *underdevelopment*³ in our respective countries, there must be a cooperation of the highest order. The self-help projects should not be limited to one group but it should be a cooperate of both groups. The self-help projects should be in the level of the society. The underdevelopment is brought by lack of education and hence lack of knowledge. The beginning of self-help project should be firstly educating its members and secondly taking the project initiatives. If ignorance is fought, then, the projects will be well manned and the economy of each individual will be of standard. The economic justice will be seen because the common good will be the goal of this cooperate community. Also, the community will have a chance of meeting and sharing their faith and hence a chance of understanding what is common in their Religions and what makes them different.

5.5 The Political Sector

Dialogue should also be extended to the *political sectors*.⁴ Many of the wars in west Africa for example in Ivory Coast, Nigeria and Senegal, to mention some is because of political differences which is rooted in the Religious differences. When the two political leaders fight, the two communities tend to take sides and this change to be a religious war. The whole society is affected and hence the act of social injustices. If any leader is able to see that he is there not because of his religion but because of all of his citizens, then, wars will not be there. Also this leader is to make the citizens understand that he is there for all regardless of gender, race, society or Religion. He is to make them feel as people

³ Pontifical Council for Dialogue, *Dialogue between Christians and Muslims*, in Maurice Borrmans (ed), *Interreligious Dialogue I*. N.Y: Pauline press, 1990, p 29.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p 30.

belonging to one country: following the same constitution and thus being treated equally and fairly.

5.6 Study

Also, Muslims and Christians should *study*⁵ together. In this, they will be able to make friend and talk about their faiths. They will be able also to talk about their cultures, which have been influenced by their religion and hence know each other. If I can give a practical example of Tangaza collect, it has accepted some of the Muslims to study there. This has made many Christian to have access to these Muslims. The Muslims have been able to share their faith and the prejudice, which was with many, has disappeared. One of these Muslims who has been of help to Tangaza student is Mr. Boru E. Bareda Ibrahim of Isiolo studying in Social Ministry. Tangaza College should continue to encourage the Muslims to join as students and more also as lecturers and professors. In this, there will be a total sharing of faiths and hence a common ground which will make the world to change.

5.7 The Great Turning Point

Dialogue can take place during *great turning point*⁶s of life such as birth, marriage, suffering, death and the festivals and holidays. Each needs to take an initiative of sending greetings to the other while wishing him or her the best in the event that is taking place, make visits to these people and giving gifts. This is another way of dialogue in which the one responsible sees a new light. This way can be effective means for bringing people together and even making them to dialogue.

⁵ Patrick Njau Kagua, *Rapport de fin de stage*, pp 12-15

⁶ *Ibid.*, p 17

5.8 The Mass Media

In the today's world, *Mass Media*⁷ has taken the greatest percentage. It has become the strongest means of dialogue in the world. This can be the best means in which the newspapers, the Television, the Radios can talk positively about other and even give them chance also to use these medias. The most effective medias are the ones owned by the Religions themselves. We can imagine the Christians television bringing the whole coverage of Muslim feasts and the vice versa. Also, the two being able to air out their program and to teach the others on their faith. Although this method can be suspicious, it is one of the best way of building trust in each other.

5.9 Interreligious Prayer Meetings

Dialogue can take place in *inter-religious prayer meetings*.⁸ These meetings that have already started should be encouraged. There are prayer meetings that teach us a lot about the others. This becomes a time when one comes to see that the other believes in One, Same God and this brings peace in peoples hearts and the consequences of this is lack of Religious wars. The photo below reminds us of the Interreligious prayer meeting in Assisi whereby the pope John Paul II had invited other Religious leaders for prayer meetings. In that meeting the Holy Father said: "My dear brothers and sisters, Violence never again! War never again! Terrorism never again! In the name of God, may every religion bring upon the earth justice and peace, forgiveness and life, love!"⁹ He thanked the religious who accepted to come and pray for Peace in the world.

⁷ Victor Martens, *Islam in Africa : and its pastoral implication*. Konigstein : Germany, 1980, p 16.

⁸ L'osservatore Romano, Weekly Edition, *Assisi, A milestone towards civilization of Love*, January 2002.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p 1.

DAY OF PRAYER FOR PEACE IN ASSISI



Photo II. The Christians from Syria assist in a mass and at the right at the Mosque of Omeyyades: The first visit of a Pope in a Muslim Holy Place of Muslim Cult in Syria



Des chrétiens syriens assistent à la messe. A droite, à la Mosquée des Omeyyades : première visite d'un pape dans un lieu de culte musulman.

The Pope has been on the Front line in Inter religious prayer meetings that have been taking place. The Pope has visited many Muslim countries and their visits to him in

Vatican. This has made the Muslims world to change the attitude towards Christians and Christians to change their attitude towards Muslims. We are called to strengthen this prayer meetings and visits to each other as we can see above

5.10 Social Immoralities

The two Religions can dialogue on how to *fight Social immoralities*.¹⁰ Our society has been tainted by these evils and we see the Muslims fighting it physically but if it can be a project of the two, then, it can be fought very diplomatically. Through dialogue social immoralities can be exterminated because the two Holy Books; the Qur'an and the Bible talk strongly about these social immoralities and how to exterminate them especially through prayer, fasting and almsgiving among others.

5.11 Conclusion

Social ideals like good government, healthy family life, sound education, full employment, and adequate health care can only be achieved when all sector of society make their contribution, and Christians and Muslims strongly believe that they have important values and convictions to share as well as constructive solutions to propose.

Social ills like injustice and oppression, marginalization and despair, criminal activity and self-inflicted injuries of drugs and alcohol must also be faced together, as they affect every person and each family in any given society. Human rights, those of individuals as well as those of societies, especially the right to religious liberty, must be submitted to joint scrutiny, as must claims to wrongdoing and oppression and proposals to defend civil rights and human dignity.

¹⁰ Stephen Nyaga, *Muslim and Christian Dialogue : Realities in contemporary Africa : A Seminar paper* presented to Marianist Scholastics, 2002, p

6.0 GENERAL CONCLUSION

When people dialogue, then, a lot of differences are ironed out. People have come to know that through our religions, which call for dialogue and tolerance, we can do a lot to make sure that social justice is our goal. The commitment, which is with Christians and Muslims for dialogue to continue, is a positive sign that peace in the world will be maintained. To both Muslims and Christians, there is one common thing and that is, all that is done in faith is for the good of an individual in particular and the society in general. Prayer, fasting and almsgiving, reaches its apogee when the social justice is observed. The fruits of prayer, fasting and almsgiving is Social Justice and Social Justice is only found in the atmosphere of dialogue between an individual and God and between an individual and other people.

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