



Old St. Joseph's Church

PHILADELPHIA'S JESUIT PARISH | FOUNDED 1733

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December 12, 2015

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

Asalam'alaykum. On behalf of the parishioners of Old St Joseph's Roman Catholic Church, Philadelphia's Jesuit Parish and National Shrine of Religious Liberty, we wish to express our sadness at the recent violation of your Mosque.

Our early history includes being viewed as unwanted outsiders with attempts to prevent our worship. The Quakers extended their hand in friendship to us which was essential in our ability to establish a spiritual home. We now extend our hand to you.

The Vatican II document, *Nostra Aetate* clearly states how we, as Christians and Catholics are called in relationship with our Muslim neighbors:

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 (Cf. St. Gregory VII, Letter III, 21 to Anazir [Al-Nasir], King of Mauretania PL, 148.451A.), who has spoken to men. They strive 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 venerate Jesus as a prophet, his Virgin Mother they also honor, 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. "Over the centuries many quarrels and dissensions have arisen between Christians and Muslims. The sacred Council now pleads with all to forget the past, and urges that a sincere effort be made to achieve mutual understanding; for the benefit of all men, let them together preserve and promote peace, liberty, social justice and moral values.

It is in this spirit we stand in solidarity with you to overcome fear and resist bigotry.

Peace Be With You,

Fr. Philip A. Florio, S.J.
Pastor

William Culleton
Parish Council

Rita O'Brien
Adult Ed Committee

Jeanmarie Zippo
Social Justice Committee