

In response to the appeal of Pope Francis

Interfaith Day of Prayer and Fasting Observed in Pakistan

In response to the appeal of His Holiness, Pope Francis, calling believers of religions to unite spiritually on 14th of May for a day of prayer and fasting for the end of COVID-19, several programs were organized in Lahore, Pakistan. One interfaith faith prayers and fasting program, was organized at Sacred Heart Cathedral, Lahore, two other interfaith programs were also organized with the collaboration of Peace Center, Minhaj University, URI Pakistan and Peace and Harmony Network Pakistan.



The Catholic Bishops' National Commission for Inter-religious Dialogues and Ecumenism (NCIDE) organized interfaith prayers at Sacred Heart Cathedral, Lahore. Archbishop of Lahore His Grace, Sebastian Shaw presided the collective prayer program. Fr. Francis Nadeem OFM Cap Executive Secretary NCIDE, was the organizer and host of the program. Fr. James Channan OP, Director Peace Center and Regional Coordinator URI Pakistan, Allama Mufti Ashiq Hussain, Principal, Madrassa Bait-ul-Quran, Sardar Bishan Sing from Nankana Sahib, Fr. Qaisar Feroze OFM Cap, Maulana Sahibzada Asim Makhdoom, Chairman Board of Ullema Mushaikh, and Qari Khalid Maqbool at Punjab Assembly participated in this interreligious prayers.

Fr. Francis Nadeem OFM Cap formally welcomed all the religious leaders and scholars for joining the call of prayer and fasting worldwide. Qari Khalid Maqbool recited verses from the Holy Quran, Rev. Fr. Mushtaq Piara read a passage from the Holy Bible and offered prayer and Sardar Bishan Sing recited from Guru Granth Sahib. All also offered prayers for the end of COVID-19, and for the safety of the whole world.

His Grace Archbishop Sebastian Francis Shaw said; “I pay tribute for this call initiated by His



Holiness Pope Francis to pray, fast and do the charitable work on this day ‘May 14, 2020’, may our Lord answer our prayers for mercy. We see Pope Francis praying alone in the Vatican for healing of the world from the Coronavirus. We should join his spirituality, prayers, fasting and concern for the entire humanity. Now it’s a time to save humanity and faith, by following the instructions of World Health Organization (WHO), dealing this pandemic on international level. The Government of Pakistan is trying hard to come out from this dangerous situation, but the conditions are very complicated, people are also dying due to starvation and COVID-19 is also a life threatening virus. This unseen virus is not finding people of specific religion or creed, it hits everybody and everyone is in danger. He also

urged leaders and scholars of all religions to continuously pray for the complete eradication of this pandemic.

Fr. James Channan OP said, I am very grateful to His Holiness Pope Francis for inviting the



whole world to pray, fast and perform the charitable works at this very difficult time so that Covid-19 may end. Prayer and fasting is a very powerful way of pleasing God for our needs and especially when we are in deep crises such as COVID-19. He further said that I congratulate Archbishop Sebastian Francis Shaw and Fr Francis Nadeem for inviting religious leaders from Islam, Christianity and Sikhism to offer their prayers here in the Cathedral – the house of God. He said that we are well aware that whole world is disturbed, every one of us is worried, and all are wishing to restore their lives and routine He said that I believe our Almighty God will surely hear our prayers for he is the God of mercy, love, kindness and he forgives our sins.

Maulana Mufti Ashiq Hussain said, “I appreciate and welcome the global appeal of Pope Francis to pray & fast together. I must say, he showed a great gesture to be the Pope for whole humanity in the world as he invited all from various faiths and religions. Being responsible citizens of the

country, we have to follow the instructions to save us, our families and the whole world at large. We pray to Almighty Allah for mercy and heal the world from COVID-19.” Amen!



Maulana Asim Mukhdoom shared, “Prophet Younis went to preach the God’s message and the people of the city prayed, fasted and repented before God. They were saved, it’s time for us to unite in prayers and fasting as Pope Francis called believers of all religions, We are very thankful to Pope Francis for this call and Archbishop Sebastian Francis Shaw for inviting us today. We need to pray for mercy and healing of the world.”

Maulana Abdul Khabir Azad, Grand Imam of the Badshahi Mosque Lahore, offered prayer for the Covid-19 free world. He highly appreciated and thanks the call of prayer and fasting by His Holiness Pope Francis. He said we raise our hearts and minds before God in prayer. He also recorded a video message and put it on electronic and print media and has received great coverage and appreciation for this gesture of praying and fasting in response to the call of Pope Francis.



Mr. Sohail Ahmed (Muslim), Fr James Channan OP (Christian), Sarwa Bhoma Krishan Lal (Hindu) and Sardar Ranjeet Singh (Sikh) also had virtual interfaith prayers. All expressed sincere gratitude to Pope Francis for declaring this day of Prayers and Fasting. Mr. Sohail said, prayed that we are grateful to Pope Francis has invited us to offer prayers according to our own religions.

Yet in another virtual interfaith prayer, Fr James Channan OP, Allama Zubair Ahmed Farooq, Sohail Ahmed Raza and Rev. Dr. Majid Able joined and offered prayers for the end of COVID-19 and expressed sincere gratitude to His Holiness for announcing this Day of prayer and fasting.

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4 June, 2020