

ISLAMOPHOBIA AND MOTHER TERESA

The proposed construction of an Islamic center and mosque at Ground Zero has resulted in the outrage of many Americans and the recent public discussion about "Islamophobia" in America. These events provoke us to affirm the following:

1. We notice a growing tendency to manipulate circumstances to serve as a pretext to create a public furor that demands people make a choice between one of two pre-packaged, ideological positions. We refuse to engage in a debate about whether or not to build a mosque at Ground Zero. The reality of Islam in America brings up questions that go much deeper than that of the construction of one mosque. Indeed, one critical and open question is how contemporary American culture comes to grips with the human person's religious sense.
2. Many of those among the cultural elite, as well as many who hold the levers of power in our nation, have abandoned the religious tradition that informed the lives of the vast majority of their ancestors: Christianity. They have reduced it to a moral code or a vague myth, linked to a man dead for more than 2,000 years. Instead, they have embraced a "scientific" outlook on human life. But science provides no answer to those questions that continuously gnaw at the human heart, such as the problem of justice, the meaning of human life, or the problems of suffering and evil. In fact, science tends to stifle them. Hence, contemporary American culture finds itself weak and tremendously uncertain about any response to universal human inquiries and longings.
3. Just over two weeks ago, we marked the 100th anniversary of Mother Teresa of Calcutta's birth. One who looks at her sees a resplendent human person, overflowing with love for everyone, especially strangers of different religions. Her humanity touched all: religious and atheist; Muslim and Hindu; rich and poor. Mother Teresa's life invites anyone who seeks truth to open his or her heart and mind and take a fresh look at Christianity.
4. For serious Christians, the challenge of Islam, the large-scale abandonment of Christianity, the emptiness of the dominant culture, and the witness of Mother Teresa signal the urgent need for conversion. Pope Benedict XVI recently said that "conversion...is not a mere moral decision that rectifies our conduct in life, but rather a choice of faith that wholly involves us in close communion with Jesus as a real and living Person."¹ The Pope brings us face to face with the defining difference between Christianity and Islam: one religion bases its response to the human person's religious sense upon a message delivered 1,400 years ago, while the other offers the experience of a Man who died but is alive and present with us today. As Fr. Juliàn Carrón, President of the Fraternity of Communion and Liberation, recently affirmed: Jesus' message and even all the miracles He performed were not enough to overcome the sadness of His disciples on the road to Emmaus — only His risen presence could ignite their hearts once again.²
5. We are not Islamophobic, nor do we fear our post-modern world. On the contrary, we invite all to look at Mother Teresa and at the Man to whom she gave her life. In His Person, present with us today, all can find the Truth that alone will deliver the freedom America promises.

Communion and Liberation

¹ Benedict XVI, General Audience, Paul VI Audience Hall, Wednesday, February 17, 2010 (http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/audiences/2010/documents/hf_ben-xvi_aud_20100217_en.html)

² cfr. Luke 24: 13-35