

by the Episcopal Commission for Interfaith Dialogue
Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops

As the Episcopal Commission for Interfaith Dialogue of the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops, we acknowledge with great interest and hope the Open Letter entitled "A Common Word Between Us and You", issued in late 2007 by 138 prominent Muslim leaders and scholars from around the world and which was addressed to Pope Benedict XVI and other heads of Christian Churches as well as to all Christian communities.

Here in Canada, we are grateful that Muslims and Catholics, together with other Christians and members of all faiths, can live in peace and harmony. We also deeply appreciate the many ways Catholics and Muslims have in our country to collaborate on national and local issues.

Dialogue and collaboration among faith communities are essential in the human search for peace and justice. The letter from Muslim leaders and scholars, with its emphasis on love of God and love of neighbor, is an important reminder of the responsibility shared in common by all who believe in one God.

We humbly acknowledge the serious stumbling blocks of the past. Today, our Commission is committed to turning such stumbling blocks into new stepping stones, so as to forge a path that eliminates adversity and promotes understanding.

We endorse and promote the dialogue required to maintain and strengthen Christian and Muslim collaboration, at the same time fostering a genuine spirit of mutual understanding.

We join the Holy Father, Pope Benedict XVI, in encouraging our Catholic brothers and sisters to build bridges between faith and our culture. In turn, we hope our Muslim brothers and sisters will join Canadian Catholics and other Christians in reflecting on the vital interplay of faith and culture.

We also note in the Open Letter the repeated emphasis on the preferential option for the poor. This too for Catholics is a strong bond of solidarity with Muslims, for whom also almsgiving, forgiveness, repentance and mercy are imperative.

As the Episcopal Commission for Interfaith Dialogue of the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops, we encourage all Canadian Christians and Muslims to reflect on and study "A Common Word Between Us and You". We pray it be God's will that the Open Letter help us all in building relations of respect and cooperation among faith communities.

May God's peace bless all people of good will.

28 August 2008