

Book Review

Journeying with Muslims: The Ignatian Way

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Article Info	Abstract
Received: 30-05-2023 Revised: 09-06-2023 Accepted: 29-06-2023	<i>In an era marked by a growing trend towards secularism, increasing geopolitical conflicts, ecological grievances, and high socio-economic inequality, renewing commitments to promote peace among religious communities is increasingly important. The book under discussion features a joint initiative of the Jesuit Among Muslims in Asia Network (JAMLA) members to promote peace and brotherhood between Muslims and Christians, two of the largest religious communities in the world. The book highlights the importance of promoting mutual understanding and respect between the two faith traditions, following the signing of the Human Fraternity document between Pope Francis and the Grand Imam of al-Azhar Ahmad Al-Tayyeb in 2019. The book provides a valuable source of inspiration and guidance for Muslims and Christians seeking to build bridges between different religious traditions and developed humanitarian da'wah in a contemporary context (;).</i>
Keywords: Human Fraternity; Nostra Aetate; Inter-religious dialogue; God-centeredness; Christology; Climate grievances.	

Info Artikel	Abstrak
Kata Kunci: Persaudaraan Manusia; Nostra Aetate; Dialog antar agama; berpusat pada Tuhan; Kristologi; Duka iklim..	Dalam konteks kuatnya arus sekularisme, meningkatnya konflik geopolitik dan degradasi alam, serta tingginya ketimpangan sosial ekonomi, kebutuhan untuk memperbaharui komitmen terhadap kemanusiaan dan perdamaian antar sesama umat beragama dirasakan semakin penting. Buku ini menampilkan inisiatif bersama aktifis antar iman dan pekerja sosial yang bernaung dibawah Jaringan Jesuit Bersama Umat Islam di Asia (Jesuits Among Muslims in Asia Network) untuk mengejawantahkan pesan-pesan kemanusiaan dan perdamaian antara umat Islam dan umat Kristiani yang merupakan dua umat beragama terbesar di dunia. Inisiatif ini juga merupakan komitmen berkelanjutan umat Katolik, terutama di Asia Pasifik, untuk mengembangkan tali persaudaraan dan pemahaman antar umat beragama, setelah inisiatif awal dicetuskan dalam Nostra Aetate dan penandatanganan dokumen Persaudaraan

Antar Umat Manusia (Human Fraternity) antara Paus Fransiskus dan Imam Besar al-Azhar Ahmad Al-Tayyeb pada tahun 2019 lalu. Buku ini adalah sumber referensi berharga bagi umat Islam yang ingin bercermin bagaimana umat Katholik dalam bendera Jesuit mengembangkan dakwah kemanusiaan dalam konteks kekinian (:).



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Journeying with Muslims: The Ignatian Way, a collective project of the Jesuits Among Muslims in Asia (JAMIA) network, in partnership with the Jesuit Conference of Asia Pacific (JCAP), should be welcomed as an important step to extend the call of fostering dialogue and fraternity in the present milieu, particularly in the Asian context, where Christians coexist with over half of the global Muslim populace. Since the historic visit of Pope Francis to Cairo, Egypt, on April 28-29, 2017 and the signing of the Human Fraternity document by the pontiff and the Grand Imam of al-Azhar, Ahmad Al-Tayyeb in Abu Dhabi in the United Arab Emirates on February 4, 2019, the message to renew commitment towards fostering mutual understanding between Christians and Muslims has continued to grow among faith leaders and dialogue-minded individuals. Although similar initiatives have been cemented for centuries, both the Christian and Muslim leaders recognized the need to reinvigorate their commitment to promoting mutual understanding in the present context. When the two faith communities converge in a particular moment, they do not simply meet carrying immutable Christianity and Islam. Rather, they come with a unique perspective of their faiths, embodied in a particular form, shaped by current historical and socio-political circumstances.

Readers will find this book effectively captures the dynamics of Christian-Muslim engagement during the six decades after the promulgation of *Nostra Aetate*, the Vatican II declaration on the relation of the Church to non-Christian religions. Additionally, it testifies to the authors' continued commitment to living out St. Ignatius of Loyola's spiritual exercises. The latter is crucial in an era characterized by rampant secularism, geopolitical conflicts, environmental degradation resulting from a fracture between science and God, and social inequality and injustice stemming from an increasing disparity between the wealthy and the poor. Divided into four chapters, covering *Dialogue of Life*, *Dialogue of Action*, *Dialogue of Theological Exchange*, and *Dialogue of Prayer and Spirituality*, the book provides the authors with ample room to immerse into the issues and challenges facing theologians, interfaith activists, and social workers in the region.

In *Dialogue of Life*, a model of encounter in which Christians and Muslims aim to understand each other and live in harmony, Joseph Victor Edwin SJ encourages us to revisit centuries of polemical constructs that have portrayed Islam as an erroneous form of Christianity. Stereotypes about Islam and Muslims abound throughout history, and they have played an instrumental role in the development of Western Christian identities (Pirenne, 1992; Joseph A. Massad, 2015; Taylor, 1994). Moreover, in a contemporary secular context, Islam and Muslim religiosity are frequently characterized as monolithic entities incompatible with modern values such as freedom, democracy, and human rights. These stereotypes are hardly unexpected, given that the mainstream media typically adopts this very perspective when dissecting events like the 1979 Iranian Revolution, the resurgence of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt consequent to the Arab Spring in 2011, and the emergence of Islamic State (ISIS/ISIL) in 2014, all of whom espoused a strong connection to Islam. To help us overcome these narratives, the author invites us to cultivate a culture of dialogue and foster mutual understanding between the two faiths. The initiative is based on the shared belief between Christians and Muslims that they worship the One God. While both communities may worship in different ways, they hold the same adoration for God.

Another author in the same chapter, Renato Taib Oliveros, fully embodies this message in his contribution, where he shares the story of his Muslim mother, Rahma. Despite marrying a Catholic man, her mother maintained an uncompromised witness to her Islamic faith. She understood the Qur'anic moral ethic of freedom and tolerance as she never imposed her belief on her children - including him. Instead, she strove to accommodate differences, even going as far as serving cuisines deemed prohibited in Islam out of love for her family. Oliveros sees his mother's life as an example of how a love for God and a love for family can overcome divisive beliefs that place Christians and Muslims at a distance. His acceptance of her wish to be buried as a Muslim -- he even recited *al-Fatiha* for her -- not only demonstrates his deep understanding and appreciation of the Islamic faith as practiced by a Muslim but also reinforces his spiritual devotion to living a Christ-centric life.

Other contributors in the *Dialogue of Action* chapter equally share the common goal of establishing a spiritual bond between Muslims and Christians, and channel their efforts towards addressing immediate issues affecting both groups. These issues span a range of

global challenges, including ecological crises, asymmetrical conflicts between states and non-state actors (as can be seen in Mindanao), and the significant gap between the Global North and South. The latter is reminiscent of Pope Francis' "Message for the World Day of Peace" addressed in 2014, in which he highlighted that while globalization has brought us closer to one another, it has not provided us with a sense of connection that made us feel like brothers and sisters. In line with this viewpoint, the contributors of this chapter agree that to mitigate conflict, inequality, and injustice, they must first create a greater space for mutual respect, acceptance, and trust.

Christians may face theological barriers when creating space for acceptance and trust with Muslims who do not accept the Incarnation. How can these barriers be overcome? What is the common ground for the two faith communities to foster mutual understanding and work together for mutual benefit? These are some of the main questions elaborated in detail in *Dialogue of Theological Exchange* and *Dialogue of Prayer and Spirituality*. For Sigit Setyo Wibowo SJ, the common ground is God-centeredness. Both Christians and Muslims share the fundamental belief that God is the primary focus of human life, and the ultimate purpose for existence. Catholics indeed place a special emphasis on the Trinity, in which Jesus' life and mission are greatly emphasized. However, the Eternal God (Father) is still the main objective of Catholic spiritual exercises. Within this context, God the Father is the center of Jesus' mission. This God-centered perspective creates a strong foundation for both Christians and Muslims to work toward achieving mutual trust and even pray together to attain spiritual perfection. In other words, Christology and the ways in which Catholics and Muslims understood the Trinity should not serve as barriers that impede the collaboration and spiritual enrichment of the two faith communities.

The breadth of dialogue themes and theological reflections above epitomize the extent to which members of the Jesuit network internalized the message of *Nostra Aetate* and Pope Francis' call for fraternity. They also highlight the former's unwavering commitment to their missionary activity, as well as their institutional completeness, a resource not equally available to their Muslim counterparts. As such, this work may serve as a valuable resource for Muslims seeking to gain insight into the Jesuits' approach to missionary work for the betterment of humanity. However, the absence of voices from Muslim partners as authors debilitate the book from its promise to foster dialogue and fraternity. For a future project, readers may greatly benefit from an expansion of the

journeying with Muslims to *journeying together with Muslims*, wherein issues such as the ethical and moral implications of bioethical technology, artificial intelligence, fluidity of gender identity, climate grievances, and equitable life in a fractured and conflictual world, among others, can be jointly explored and discussed.

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