

Cardinal Cupich Ramadan Message

2020

Ramadan Mubarak!

Warm greetings to you from all of us at the Archdiocese of Chicago as you observe Ramadan, Islam's holiest month, in a special way this year.

For several years now, the annual Iftar gathering has been a wonderful time when Catholics, as a people of faith and as a sign of our solidarity, have joined with you in friendship as you break your fast with the festive evening meal. This year, building upon our deepening relationship, the Archdiocese of Chicago and the Council of Islamic Organizations of Greater Chicago, are reaching out to connect virtually at this time of social distancing due to the COVID-19 global pandemic. While I am sorry we all cannot be together in person, be assured of my prayers for you, especially during your holy month of prayer, fasting, and charitable deeds.

This is indeed an unprecedented time, although not the first in our histories, when our churches and mosques have been forced to close. The spiritual nourishment experienced when fasting from sunrise to sunset during Ramadan may inspire new insights in how to care for each other's needs. As Christians discovered during our recent Holy Week and Easter, there are creative ways to adapt cherished rituals when large gatherings at home, church, and mosque are not possible. This year, pre-packaged meals and drive through pick-ups become the site of service. The festive communal table includes those present through virtual online platforms.

To be sure, our anxiety and fear are real. Our path forward is not clear. We are made humble and our everyday lives are disrupted. What we knew as 'normal' is gone. Yet, our shared vulnerability should not bring us to panic, but to a fuller appreciation of our common bonds as members of one human family. That insight should inspire us to take up the task of building a better world with fresh energy, a world that reflects God's will for us to live in peace, with respect, love, and compassion for every human being. A world that cares for those who suffer.

Let us use this time of spiritual reflection to discern God's will for the new normal. Let it be normal to welcome each other as friends. Let it be normal to greet one another with kindness, valuing each person with true generosity and compassion. Let us give witness to the possibility of loving our neighbor and helping those in need as the new normal.

Let us have the courage to enter into a new normal together in friendship. For the world longs to be healed. As scientists work for a coronavirus vaccine, we acknowledge there is no vaccine against the hatred and violence in our world except lifting up the sacredness of humanity, creating pathways to peace, understanding and respect.

While we must be physically apart, let us be united in that common cause. As God draws us close with tenderness, may we in turn draw close to one another. As Christians and as Muslims, let our hearts reach out together in friendship to those in need and reassure those who are isolated that they are not truly alone. No one is ever alone who lives with a radical dependence on God. And God, the Merciful, the Compassionate, embraces us all.

Thank you again to the Council of Islamic Organizations of Greater Chicago for always extending your hand in friendship. And to my Muslim brothers and sisters, and especially to your dear children, I pledge my prayer that God may bless you and continue to strengthen and guide you in this holy month of Ramadan.

Cardinal Blase J. Cupich

Archbishop of Chicago