

Interfaith

A Muslim woman recently posted on her Facebook page “Merry Christmas everyone!” Another Muslim replied, “Merry Christmas to you, too!” Excuse me, but aren’t we celebrating the birth of Jesus Christ? Paradoxically, the same thing happens during Muslim feasts when Christians, too, send out greetings to everyone. Well, that’s how it is in Palestine. When I posted “I’m pretty sure that Palestine ranks first in the Arab world (if not in the world at large) in the number of interfaith good wishes during religious feasts,” the response was overwhelming in agreement.

Since each action has an equal and opposite reaction, there is another side to this story that is not very rosy. Fortunately, the “equal” bit in Newton’s Third Law of Physics does not apply in this case! We still hear some voices insinuating that it is sacrilegious for Muslims to offer good wishes to Christians. A good friend of mine who offered greetings to his Christian friends on Facebook was rebuked severely by a couple of his “friends” before they unfriended him. On the other hand, my friend also got plenty of support. One example of such support that stood out was a rather dramatic post from a Samaritan priest: “Those feasts are part of our social fabric, and engaging with them reflects a sincere belonging and sets a good example. Go ahead and be honest with yourself and let the hateful bleed on the altars of racism.” Another reaction to the reaction came from Alaa Abu Diab, a popular social activist who posted a bold video that was aimed head on at the fundamentalists living among us who attack Muslims who express their good wishes to Christians on Christian holidays. Abu Diab essentially accused these people of being totally out of sync and engaging in actions that are futile.

Palestinian society is far from perfect, but I dare say that when it comes to tolerance and accepting the other, Palestinians are doing much better than others in the region, including, or may I say, in particular, Israel. Palestinians actually deserve an extra point for maintaining their humanity in being very accepting of the other while they remain under an inhumane occupation. One should acknowledge, however, that racism does exist in Palestine, and it comes in many shapes and forms. The mistrust between some Muslims and Christians is one form of such racism. But people are becoming more and more courageous in countering such social woes, whether on social media or on the ground, through the intervention of the elders of society or religious figures, or through NGOs and legislation, as in the case of discrimination against women.

In response to my post about Palestine’s high rank in the number of interfaith good-wish exchanges, one Christian wrote: “If only good wishes could change reality.” My reply: “Is there a Utopian society? He that is without sin among you, let him be the first to cast a stone ...” A Muslim then added another beautiful comment: “It is real as long as stupid politics is not involved.” So, you Dajanis, Nusseibehs, Husseinis, and Nashashibis, by all means, keep those Christmas and Easter good wishes coming, and I’m certain that the Khourys, the Bullatas, the Safiehs, and the Stavridises will reciprocate on Eid al-Adha and Eid al-Fitr! Long live Palestine!

Warm Regards,

Sani Meo
Publisher

