

## How do Muslims view Catholics?

### My Personal Experiences



Aan Rukmana sharing a meal with Fr. John Mallare

It was a very inspiring moment when I had the opportunity to talk with Pope Francis during my short visit to Rome in 2011. We were sharing the same vision about the future of relation between Islam and Catholics. We also talked about the inner part or religion. I still remember when he was saying “we are family under One God”. For me, that short talk was a very special moment, especially for my spiritual journey as a Muslim in understanding the Catholic’s faith.

In the middle of 2010, I got invitation from Sr. Gerardette Phillips to apply the *Nostra Aetate Fellowship* program. I was so glad when my application was accepted by the committee. This program was my first experience to visit Catholic Community and to live among them. During the program I studied comparisons between Islam and Christianity at Georgiana University and at PISAI. After the six months program, I understood Catholics not only from the eyes of Islamic teaching or Islamic Community, but phenomenologically speaking, I know them now better as they are, hearing from themselves.

Here are my first impressions during my encounter with the Catholic Community in Rome:

**Firstly**, when I was in Rome, I lived among Jesuit Community at Lay Center for Foyer Unitas under Dr. Donna Orsuto’s supervision. Almost every day I talked and shared the ideas and the feeling with the Catholic students. The most valued moment that I had was dinner’s time. At that moment we talked deeply from heart to heart about our daily activities. I felt so honored and respectful when all of my Catholic friends offered me the non-alcohol drinking like juice, mineral water etc. The way how they treat me was very touching and it was opening my eyes, my mind and also my heart.

**Secondly**, my first encounter with my respectful friend, Fr. Markus Solo Kewuta. I can see and feel the beauty of Catholic teaching from him. Fr. Markus showed me the true friendship and the true love among believers. His love to God represents his love to all human beings. We have been doing together the translation to the Indonesian language of the letters from the Pope to Islamic community at the occasion of the Ramadan since 1967 to 2002. I still remember when we had lunch together. At that time, I felt little bit sick, and I could see how worried he was. This is actually the true friendship that we have. Even though we came from very different background, in term of different faith and belief, but we can still work together and enjoy the differences as the blessing from God.

**Thirdly** is my meeting with Fr. John Mallare. When I studied at PISAI I met many friends from Catholics who were studying Islamic theology. One of my best friends is Fr. John Mallare. We discussed many things about the relation between Islam and Catholics and also the future of their relation in Indonesia and Philippines. The problem we had been facing in Indonesia and Philippines is mostly similar; it was regarding the issue of integration between Islamic Community and Catholic Community. After I finished the program at PISAI, our communication continued until now. My involvement at SEDOS Spring Session 2021 as speaker is

one of the results of our true friendship.

From Dr. Donna Orsuto, Fr. Markus and Fr. John Mallare I can see the beautiful face of Christianity. I see Christianity and Islam have similarity in term of the heart of religion. If we can go deeper into the heart of religion we can see Catholicism and Islam are religions with the same mission to tell the world about the Sacred in this life. The Sacred exist in love, friendship, tolerance and fraternity. “If we hate someone, we will not have time to love him or her” as Mother Teresa said. Thank you!  
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***The following prayer authored by Christian, Jewish and Muslim clergy was used in many places in inter-religious worships around the time of the Gulf War in 1991:***

***Eternal God, Creator of the universe, there is no God but You.***

***Great and wonderful are Your works, wondrous are your ways.***

***Thank You for the many splendored variety of Your creation.***

***Thank You for the many ways we affirm Your presence and purpose,  
and the freedom to do so.***

***Forgive our violation of Your creation.***

***Forgive our violence toward each other.***

***We stand in awe and gratitude for Your persistent love  
for each and all of Your children:***

***Christian, Jew, Muslim,***

***as well as those with other faiths.***

***Grant to all and our leaders attributes of the strong;***

***mutual respect in words and deed,***

***restraint in the exercise of power, and***

***the will for peace with justice, for all.***

***Eternal God, Creator of the universe, there is no God but You.***

***Amen.***