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# THE PERSPECTIVE OF PEACE OR FEAR FOR THE FUTURE? AN ATTEMPT TO EVALUATE CHRISTIAN- -MUSLIM DIALOGUE

Fear belongs to a purely subjective category. It may be justified, but it may also be a disproportionate reaction to the given situation. Therefore, one may ask, should we relate man's inner reactions to the reality around him to theological discussion?

Theological models may be more for explaining the reality of God than for trying to tame human fear. However, man needs theology in order to find his place in the world and in God's plan. He wants to live in the conviction that God is with him at every moment of his life and guides him with a steady hand, despite the various situations that can give rise to fear. This is an existential and practical dimension of theology.

One of the phenomena of present times (but not only today) is the issue of violence by the Muslim world. Unexpected terrorist attacks, drastic scenes of murders published on the Internet, and declared aggression by some followers of Allah, undoubtedly build a "bloody reputation" for these environments. Regardless

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of whether these groups are only a certain margin of the Islamic world, they are associated with the Muslim religion and culture. This can give rise to fear and questions about the possibility of coexistence. These events are part of the circumstances of our time, which theology must explain – or try to.

The research problem studied in this article is the main directions of the Catholic Church's dialogue with Islam in relation to the idea of peace and the perspective of a future of mutual coexistence of both religions in the Mariological context. In connection with this, we will recall the teaching of the Second Vatican Council on Muslim-Christian dialogue, and that of Popes John Paul II and Benedict XVI. The article will then identify the main sources of concern about the future of dialogue between these religions and assess the Church's efforts so far in interreligious dialogue. Finally, it will propose a new concept of Muslim-Christian dialogue based on the Mariological perspective.

## 1. A NEW PERSPECTIVE ON THE SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL

The history of mutual relations between Christianity and Islam is quite turbulent. There have been gestures of kindness, but more often we find testimonies of struggle and resentment. Of course, this was born in a specific cultural context, so the assessment of these events cannot be ahistorical. An important breakthrough and change in attitude towards Islam came with the Second Vatican Council. The Council Fathers decided to show the relationship between the two religions from a new perspective – looking for what unites them rather than what distinguishes and divides them.

This intuition taken up at the Council could be found already in the first encyclical of St. Paul VI, *Ecclesiam suam*. We can read in this document important indications for guiding interreligious dialogue. As the Pope wrote: "However, we wish to draw respectful attention to the spiritual and moral values found in the various non-Christian religions" (St. Paul VI, 1964, n. 108). St. Paul VI also gave the foundations for dialogue. Let us recall these principles: 1) If God was the first to enter into dialogue with man, the Church should also be the first to open herself to other people. 2) If God has spoken to man out of love and goodness, the Church must also be accompanied by these virtues in its confrontations with others. 3) Since God entered into a dialogue with man without any merit on the part of the latter, the attitude of the Church should not be limited either by the attitude of the interlocutor or the result of the meeting (*Ibid*, n. 72–74). Let us admit that the imperative to engage in dialogue is of the highest importance. Christians are called to dialogue because God dialogues with man. From this perspective, dialogue cannot

be hindered by the other's lack of merits, reluctance or even specific faults. After all, God turns to man, although none of us can deserve this alone. This may be a response to those who oppose interreligious dialogue, justifying their attitude by the lack of gestures of kindness on the part of Islam. We are talking, of course, about the spiritual motivations of dialogue.

Until the Second Vatican Council, the question of the relationship of Christianity to other religions was defined essentially according to the exclusivist paradigm *Extra Ecclesiam Salus Nulla* ("Outside the Church there is no salvation"). According to this teaching, salvation is available only in the Catholic Church; other religions are simply idolatry. At the Council, another trend in theology came to the fore, namely the inclusivist paradigm. According to this, although salvation is accomplished through the person of Jesus Christ, God can also lead to salvation in His own way the followers of other religions.<sup>2</sup> A third approach, called pluralistic theology, was also proposed. According to this, the salvific value belongs equally to different religions.

The conciliar documents were written in an inclusive way, as we will find in their attempt to define Christianity in relation to other religions, including Islam. An important point of reference here will be the declaration *Nostra aetate*, in which issues concerning the Muslim religion were added as a result of protests from Islamic circles. Originally, the declaration was supposed to speak only about the followers of Judaism (Krasicki, 1971). The document states: "The Church regards with esteem also the Moslems. They adore the one God, living and subsisting in Himself; merciful and all-powerful, the Creator of heaven and earth, who has spoken to men; they take pains to submit wholeheartedly to even His inscrutable decrees, just as Abraham, with whom the faith of Islam takes pleasure in linking itself, submitted to God. Though they do not acknowledge Jesus as God, they revere Him as a prophet. They also honor Mary, His virgin Mother; at times they even call on her with devotion. In addition, they await the day of judgment when God will render their deserts to all those who have been raised up from the dead. Finally, they value the moral life and worship God especially through prayer, almsgiving and fasting" (*Nostra*

2 Let us recall the statement of one of the most influential Council Fathers, Y. Congar: "It cannot be denied that for those people who have not been offered Christ and his Church, or who have been 'inadequately' proposed, the religions into which they were born, which practice and which, moreover, are deeply connected to all the concrete circumstances of their social life and their culture, are obviously mediators of salvation. It is in fact that they are all too often united in faith and love with God through that" (1986, p. 168).

*aetate*, n. 3).<sup>3</sup> This short text contains keywords with which successive popes would try to open the door to dialogue with Islam (Kaczmarek, 2012b). Whenever we talk about Muslims, there will be one of these keywords, in which Islam is in some way close to Christianity.

## 2. THE EFFORTS OF SUCCESSIVE POPES

Successive popes have tried to emphasize the importance of the Council, basing their preaching on inclusivist principles. They have repeatedly expressed this in their teachings, as well as making significant gestures of kindness towards the followers of Islam, emphasizing that this religion has many positive qualities and values. Let us briefly recall a few such actions. St. John Paul II was a continuator of the conciliar laws, but at the same time a pioneer of certain activities related to interreligious dialogue (Kaczmarek, 2012 a). The Church followed the dialogical steps of the Polish pope with great trust, knowing that as a Council Father he perfectly felt the spirit of *aggiornamento*.

St. John Paul II took advantage of many opportunities to speak to the followers of Islam who came to meet him during apostolic pilgrimages. The Holy Father also met with bishops from Muslim countries as part of *ad limina* meetings and talked with ambassadors of Islamic countries accredited to the Holy See. The speeches of the Polish pope to Muslims were full of keywords to indicate the common points of both religions. They often contained an appeal to faith in one God who is merciful, seeing in Abraham a common ancestor, respect for Jesus and His Mother, as well as practicing prayer, fasting and almsgiving. St. John Paul II also emphasized how Islam values human life, peace and education. A significant gesture during his pontificate was the proclamation of a day of fasting on December 14, 2001, at the end of Ramadan. A little earlier, on May 6, 2001, during a pilgrimage to Syria, in Damascus, for the first time, the head of the Roman Church entered a mosque. During several meetings organized in Assisi, St. John Paul II promoted a spirit of reconciliation and mutual respect between the followers of different religions, including Islam.

It should be added that St. John Paul II also noted clear differences between Islam and Christianity. He pointed out that in the Qur'an there has been a reduction of Divine Revelation, and that Islam is not a religion of redemption. The Muslim

3 Similar words are given in the Constitution *Lumen Gentium*: "the plan of salvation also includes those who acknowledge the Creator. In the first place amongst these there are the Muslims, who, professing to hold the faith of Abraham, along with us adore the one and merciful God, who on the last day will judge mankind" (*Lumen gentium*, n. 16).

religion is based on a different anthropology. Muslim fundamentalism is also a big threat to dialogue (Jan Paweł II, 1994).

Benedict XVI, who inherited these achievements, followed, in principle, the same path. He therefore emphasized the “points of contact” between Christianity and Islam. However, if we follow this path honestly, sooner or later we will encounter questions and truths of faith that can neither be abandoned nor repealed. Religions differ, after all, and these are very important matters. The dialogical path has to stop at the truth about the divinity of Jesus Christ. Islam very strongly rejects the Christian creed professing faith in the Holy Trinity. The Qur’an states this clearly:

Messiah, Jesus son of Mary,  
he is only a messenger of God;  
and his word which he offered to Mary;  
and the Spirit proceeding from Him.  
So believe in God and His messengers  
and don't say, “Three!” (Qur’an 4:171)

That is why Benedict XVI concluded that theological dialogue is possible only to a certain extent. Therefore, the dialogue of beliefs (or of life) has a much better chance of success in building peace in the world. In this dialogue, we do not refer to dogmatic truths, but emphasize the common values that both Christians and Muslims profess and practice. One could say that such dialogue is about finding a way of living together so as not to escalate conflicts and acts of violence. It must be shown that peaceful coexistence between the followers of both religions is possible. The dominant idea in this sense is the preservation of peace and harmony.

Benedict XVI pointed to the limits of dialogue, emphasizing the central role of Jesus Christ for Christianity. He also condemned terrorism and violence in the name of God (Benedict XVI, 2005). He said that it was necessary to learn to live side by side and to cooperate in building a world full of peace. While visiting the United Kingdom, he said: “‘dialogue in life’ simply means living side by side and learning to grow in mutual knowledge and respect. ‘Dialogue in action’ brings us closer through concrete forms of cooperation, when, in accordance with our religious convictions, we come to know integral human development, work for peace, justice and the protection of creation” (Benedict XVI, 2010, 19). Benedict XVI exchanged common values with followers of different religions during World Youth Day in Sydney in 2008. He pointed to the need for building the common good, sacrificing for the other, self-discipline, seeing the spiritual element in the world, the value of education, care for the protection of life, and awareness of death (Benedict XVI, 2008).

An important contribution of Benedict XVI was to encourage Muslims to follow the path of *ratio* (Benedict XVI, 2009).<sup>4</sup> The Pope was deeply convinced that violence in the name of religion is irrational; he trusted that a man who sees the element of reason in the world will also see in it the plan of God himself, who imposed on man the duty to use reason. Human action must not be blinded by any ideology, but must be based on a reading of God's order inscribed in the world and human nature. The Pope concluded: "It is clear that Islam must clarify two issues in public dialogue, namely the question of its relationship to violence and to reason. An important contribution was that these two issues were considered necessary in both sides and thus began an internal reflection aimed at dialogue between scholars of Islam" (Benedict XVI, Seewald, 2011, s. 109).

The pontificate of Francis is still going on, so it is difficult to undertake an assessment of the achievements of this pope, but it seems that, like his predecessors, he is looking for common points between Christianity and Islam. Pope Francis also emphasizes the value of other religions and calls for common building of peace and universal fraternity.<sup>5</sup>

### 3. SOURCES OF FEAR

It might seem that the theology and practice of dialogue outlined above, consistently implemented since the Second Vatican Council by successive popes, would unite the whole world around the idea of peace and mutual reconciliation, that wars and acts of violence would end, and that, colloquially speaking, the world would be a better place. Recent history, however, says something completely different. There are still reports of persecution of Christians by Muslims in the Middle East and North Africa. The criminal actions of the so-called Islamic State are still fresh in the memory, and some countries impose the death penalty for converting from Islam to Christiani-

4 The Pope says: "Thus true religion broadens the horizons of human understanding and forms the basis of a truly human culture. It rejects all forms of violence and totalitarianism – not only because of the principles of faith, but also because of right reason. Religion and reason, therefore, mutually reinforce each other, because reason purifies and orders religion, and revelation and faith release all the potential of reason."

5 One can point to the declaration of Abu Zabi (02/04/2019) and the main assumptions of the encyclical *Fratelli tutti*. We read in the papal encyclical: "At times fundamentalist violence is unleashed in some groups, of whatever religion, by the rashness of their leaders. Yet, the commandment of peace is inscribed in the depths of the religious traditions that we represent ... As religious leaders, we are called to be true 'people of dialogue,' to cooperate in building peace not as intermediaries but as authentic mediators. Intermediaries seek to give everyone a discount, ultimately in order to gain something for themselves. The mediator, on the other hand, is one who retains nothing for himself, but rather spends himself generously until he is consumed, knowing that the only gain is peace. Each one of us is called to be an artisan of peace, by uniting and not dividing, by extinguishing hatred and not holding on to it, by opening paths of dialogue and not by constructing new walls" (Franciszek, 2020, n. 284).

ty. There is also no shortage of acts of terrorism committed in the name of Allah. Even if only a small group of followers of Islam commit acts of aggression, these do not meet with the loud and unequivocal condemnation of the Islamic world.

Why these difficulties? First, the struggle for Islam, the so-called *jihad*, is inscribed in the doctrine of the Muslim religion. There are many passages in the Qur'an calling for fighting against the followers of other religions and justifying violence.<sup>6</sup> Islam was born in the context of war. At the head of the Muslim army stood Muhammad himself, who gave his people a message noted in the Qur'an. As K. Kościelniak states: "At-Tabari lists twenty-seven major invasions on Muhammad's orders and thirty-four small military expeditions on the initiative of the first Muslims" (2002a, s. 211). The New Testament calls for love, even of enemies; the Qur'an accepts violence. Another difficulty is that the Muslim world, *dar al-Islam*, does not have a single leader, as the Catholic Church does. Therefore, even if the pope signs a declaration with a Muslim leader, such a document does not oblige all Muslims to abide by the commitments made in it. It is also worth noting the cultural differences between Europe and Islamic countries. European Muslims are more willing to talk about dialogue, but for the inhabitants of, for example, the Middle East, this postulate is virtually unknown. Another obstacle is that in Islam, the religious and political dimensions are inseparably intertwined. In the Muslim religion, there is no "separation of Church and state." One of the goals of Muslims may be to introduce a single *Shari'ah Law*, which does not allow inculturation and adaptation to the Christian standards of European countries. In this light, the Church's proposals may be read as a sign of weakness and a desire for submission. Then there is the question of testimony (or counter-testimony): are today's inhabitants of Europe really witnesses of Christ, or does the West appear as a corrupt secularized world that must be fought in order to defend one's faith? This perspective takes the whole conflict to another level. It is no longer about the fight of Islam against Christianity, but of Islam against secularization and godlessness, which is not lacking in today's Europe.

#### 4. IS THE DIALOGUE HEADING IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION?

Of course, it is difficult to decide unequivocally, because we have one story, and the simulation of its alternatives remains only a guess. The Lord Jesus has left us a clear principle of discernment: "You will know them by their fruits" (Mt 7:16).

6 For example: "And when the holy months are up, then kill the idolaters where you find them; seize them, besiege them, and prepare all kinds of ambushes for them" (Qur'an 9:5). Other examples: 2:190-191; 2:216; 4:74; 8:12; 8:17; 9:73; 22:39; 25:52; 33:60-61; 47:4; 48:16; 61:4; 66:9. More on *jihad*: (Kościelniak, 2002b).



What are the fruits of dialogue? Have our religions come closer to each other, or do they respect each other more? And do we proclaim Christ to Muslims, as we, being His followers, are particularly obliged to do?

Given the difficulties mentioned above, we can clearly see that there is some duality.<sup>7</sup> On the one hand, the Church constantly repeats that Islam is a religion of peace and that there must be dialogue; on the other, anxiety arises in the face of persecutions of Christians and the aggressive attitudes of the growing Muslim diaspora in Europe. The Church may also find itself encumbered by “shackles of political correctness.” According to this false position, it is not appropriate to point to various events that would undermine the reasons for dialogue, even if they openly contradict them. Islam demands radical attitudes; a clear definition of its attitude towards God and the world. Any ambiguous or vague response may be perceived as a manifestation of insincerity or weakness among Christ’s followers.

In 2017, a translation of Jean Mathiot’s book *Converts from Islam* was published in Poland (Mathiot, 2017). There we will find descriptions of twenty-nine testimonies by Muslims who accepted Christianity (the conversions took place mainly at the end of the twentieth century and the beginning of the twenty-first; i.e., about half a century after the Second Vatican Council). The vast majority of these testimonies concern miraculous interventions by Jesus Christ himself, who appeared to them and revealed the truth about God in various ways. Miraculous interventions by the Mother of God are also recorded. Deeply moved by their experiences, these Muslims converted to Christianity at the risk of their lives. The collection contains no examples of men who changed their faith because they were captivated by words about dialogue or the peaceful declarations of hierarchs. Some were led to Christianity by a deep comparative analysis of the Qur’an and the Bible; in time, they saw that their holy book was full of contradictions and they discovered the Scriptures. In the case of these people, we see that God has His own ways to reach the human heart. In this context, it must be clearly stated that the Church must constantly resist the temptation to try to solve the affairs of this world in a too humanly way. Perhaps it is much more necessary to ask God for help and to pray for the conversion of the followers of other religions, including Islam.

7 V. Messori mentions this phenomenon: “But today, first of all, there is a very dramatic motif, which is rarely spoken of, and which can be seen in many appeals, especially those formulated by the Catholic hierarchy. We know, for example, many bishops, including experts in Islam, also in pontifical universities, whose behavior can be described as dual. In public they speak of dialogue and peace in a theologically appropriate way, but in private we can hear other statements that are not so sweet anymore. On the contrary, we can describe it as completely bitter, born of a deep understanding of the inadequacy of the strategy of dialogue in relation to the Muslim world, which considers it a sign of weakness” (2001, s. 61–62).

It is impossible to build peace without the truth. Without truth, dialogue will be doomed to remain stuck in generalities and meaningless declarations. On the most general level, all people have something in common. More important is what divides them. One may be glad that Islam worships Jesus as a great prophet, but what does this actually mean? Islam rejects the Cross and the truth about salvation. It considers belief in the Holy Trinity as tritheism and therefore idolatry (*shirk*) – the greatest of human crimes. Also, the figure of Abraham is seen in different ways – the Abraham of the Bible is not the same as the Abraham of whom the Qur’an speaks (Kaczmarek, 2017). How to avoid such aporias? To be content that with a little goodwill you can somehow live peacefully side by side? This does not seem to be a sustainable assurance of peace in the world. It is so easy to set alight the tinder of Muslim radicalism. Can the Church find any other solution?

## 5. DIALOGUE WITH ISLAM *PER MARIAM*

The Muslim tradition and the Qur’an emphasize the greatness of Mary’s spiritual attitude, although it must be added that the message about Mary in the Qur’an is full of distortions and inaccuracies in relation to the biblical narrative. Therefore, one must be attentive and not be satisfied with “Muslim Mariology” too quickly. Islam emphasizes Mary’s obedience to God. And in fact, Our Lady is infinitely obedient, faithfully following God’s will. But God also leaves room for her decision. Our Lady’s choices are not based on predestination, but are her sovereign decision. Obedience according to Islam is blind submission. This is mentioned by R. Skrzypczak: “We confuse obedience with submission ... It is the same in Islam. Its very name means ‘submission.’ Man is to submit blindly to the law that was handed down by Muhammad. There is no submission in Christianity. There is obedience which is always linked to love: for Christ, for the Church” (Skrzypczak, Jakimowicz, 2018, 20.22–23). For Christ’s followers, Mary is an example of faith that accepts God’s judgments, but also ponders them in one’s heart and confronts this will intelligently.

Pope Benedict XVI highlighted the values that should be realized in life in order to build interreligious dialogue: submission to God’s will; practicing prayer, fasting and almsgiving (pillars of Islam); doing mercy (invoking God as Merciful); protection of life; building the common good; self-discipline; the discovery of a spiritual element in the world; subjective treatment of man; education; awareness of death; and bringing peace to the world. Perhaps these are the dimensions in which Mariology can present Mary as an example for Muslims. At the same time, we must remember that this is a manifestation of existential dialogue, not dogmatic

dialogue. It is realized through the testimony of Christ's followers. It therefore follows that the development of correct Marianity among Christians is an indispensable component of interreligious dialogue.

Another theme that finds its foundation and point of reference in Mary is that of peace. Of course, this peace must be understood very deeply: it is not only the absence of war or armed conflict, but reconciliation with God and the renunciation of sin. At this point we can recall the message of Fatima given by three shepherd children – Lucia, Jacinta and Francisco. In the Valley of Peace (*Cova da Iria*) in 1917, children heard the call for peace. Our Lady said on July 13: "I want you to come here on the thirteenth of next month, to continue to pray the Rosary every day in honor of Our Lady of the Rosary, to implore peace in the world and pray for the end of the war, because only She can obtain these graces" (Łucja, 2002, s. 149). On May 13, 1981, Mehmet Ali Agca shot St. John Paul II in St. Peter's Square; after recovering, the pope associated the assassination with the announcement of Fatima. This interpretation made him known as the "Pope of Fatima" (Thomas, 2018). When St. John Paul II met with Mehmet Ali Agca, the assassin could not understand how it was possible that the pope was still alive. As S. Dziwisz commented: "He understood that apart from Fatima, the daughter of Mohammed, there was also another Fatima – the one he called 'the Goddess of Fatima'" (2007, s. 124).

The name of the place where the Mother of God appeared over a hundred years ago is actually associated with Muslim culture. A few centuries ago, the Lusitans defeated the Moors, who were trying to conquer the Iberian Peninsula. Don Gonçalo, one of the commanders, as a reward for his heroism, was allowed to choose a wife from among the Muslim prisoners. He picked one called Fatima. He loved her, and she loved him, but she soon died. Don Gonçalo joined the Cistercians, but ordered the mortal remains of his wife to be brought and buried in the vicinity of the monastery. The village took its name from her; from there we have the Portuguese Fatima (Siccardi, 2014).

Fatima (c. 605–633) was one of Muhammad's daughters. She died young, and the tradition of the Islamic religion surrounds her with deep respect, calling her *Az-Zahra* (Venus), *As-Siddika* (Truthful), and *Al-Batul* (Virgin). This last term is interesting, because Fatima had two sons. The daughter of the Prophet was also called the "Mother of imams" and is counted among the so-called "Pure Fourteen" of perfect people. In the context of the Fatima apparitions, F. Sheen says: "Why did the Blessed Mother appear in the twentieth century in the insignificant, small settlement of Fatima, thanks to which all future generations will know her as Our Lady of Fatima? ... I think that the Blessed Virgin wanted to be known as Our Lady of Fatima as a promise and a sign of hope for Muslims and to ensure that those who show

her so much respect will one day also accept her divine Son” (Sheen, 2018, s. 281).

Indeed, in the Islamic world we can see signs of respect for Mary. Many Muslims come to well-known Marian shrines around the world to ask for Mary’s intercession. Milad Sidky Zakhry cites several examples of Marian devotion among the followers of Islam (Zakhry, 2018, George-Tvrtković, 2018). Of the many pilgrims who come to the Marian shrine in Harissa, Lebanon, half are Muslims; other shrines are also visited by followers of Islam (Lourdes, Algiers, Ephesus, Fatima). In an atmosphere of universal acceptance, the Solemnity of the Annunciation was approved in Lebanon as a public holiday (02/18/2010). In Jordan, a mosque called “Mosque of Christ Jesus the Son of Mary” was opened in the town of Madba (2010/2011). In 2017, Sheikh Mohammad Ben Zayed Al Nahyan renamed a mosque in the Abu Dhabi area, previously named after himself, as the “Mosque of Mary Mother of Jesus.”

We see clearly that Mary becomes the bridge that unites Muslims to Christ and His followers in the dialogue of life. Through Mary, God touches the hearts of the followers of Islam; sometimes through miracles, and sometimes through the impulse of the heart that impels people of different cultures and religions to come to Her shrines scattered in such great numbers throughout the world (Kaczmarek, 2021).

## RECAPITULATION

The issue of Christian-Muslim dialogue gained extraordinary momentum after the Second Vatican Council. The Council pointed to the need to open ourselves to other religions and to show what unites us rather than what divides us. Keywords were distinguished, which for almost sixty years we have heard in the speeches of successive popes and read in the documents of the Church. However, the openness and trust declared by the Church have not always met with reciprocity. This gives rise to understandable fear and anxiety. Questions arise: will Christians be able to communicate with the followers of Islam, or will the common path of both religions still be marked by blood? It seems that dialogue at the level of generalities cannot stand in the long run. We are entering a level that unifies everything and blurs the differences. This threatens to reinforce the message that religions are not fundamentally different from each other and are essentially equal. It is a dead end of dialogue, blurring the identity of one’s own religion. However, it is necessary to somehow live side by side, without fueling mutual resentment. This is achieved by the so-called “dialogue of life,” which unites people around common values, allowing respect and building concrete good. Here, however, lies the trap. Some words can be defined differently; for example, “peace,” “freedom” and “love.”

Maybe we want to act too much in a humanly way; that is why we are looking for a strategy lined with diplomacy and politics. Perhaps we do not rely enough on God and His Mother. No declarations, projects or promises will be lasting if they are based only on the human factor. God came to mankind most fully through His Son Jesus Christ; but the Son of God came into the world per Mariam. Perhaps interreligious dialogue should be seen more often from a Mariological perspective. The Marian argument must be strengthened. Nor can we stop praying for the acceptance of Christ's revelation by Muslims. God can do the most in interreligious dialogue. He has His own ways.

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# THE PERSPECTIVE OF PEACE OR FEAR FOR THE FUTURE? AN ATTEMPT TO EVALUATE CHRISTIAN- MUSLIM DIALOGUE

## SUMMARY

The paper indicates the diagnosis the Christian-Muslim dialogue conducted by the Catholic Church, especially taking into account the indications of the Second Vatican Council. The question arises whether the mutual discourse of the representatives of the two religions is currently giving rise to a perspective of peace, or rather fear for the future? There is no denying that militant Islam accentuates the escalation of violence. These behaviors can give rise to fear and questions about the possibility of coexistence in this world. These events build up the circumstances of our time, which theology must to explain. To examine the wider context, the teaching of Vatican II on dialogue with Islam was recalled, and the teaching and actions of the post-Conciliar popes were recalled. This effort clearly indicated the possibility of cooperation, but also delineated the limits, which the Church must not cross. Therefore, although there is a real opportunity to develop joint projects, there are also significant limitations. Moreover, as practice shows, the Church's benevolent gestures often fall on deaf ears, and it seems that this effort is inadequate to the expected fruits of dialogue. Therefore, the possibility of dialogue can be discovered in Catholic Mariology. The person of Mary can become the reason for Muslims to turn to Christianity, which is shown by certain indications of the piety of the followers of Islam towards Mary. It is also an important premise for the Church to rely less on human action and strategy lined with diplomacy and politics. It is necessary to pray much more for the conversion of Muslims, so that God Himself may do the work of changing the hearts of the followers of Islam.

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