

Peace and Trust- Basic ingredients for Democracy
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I want to thank His Excellency Makhdoom Syed Ahmed Mahmood, Governor of Punjab and the Right Rev. Samuel Azariah, The Moderator Bishop of Church of Pakistan for their invitation to participate in this very meaningful and important seminar PEACE AND TRUST: BASIC INGREDIENTS FOR DEMOCRACY. The Prime Minister of Pakistan yesterday said, "History is made- One giant leap for democracy." Democracy is an evolutionary process and one never graduates. You must keep improving, aiming towards the best government of the people and for the people. I sincerely pray Peace and Trust will be the blocks on which a strong, prosperous democracy will flourish in the land where I was born and my ancestors bones have been buried for centuries.

The goal for democracy and trust building is a noble goal. It reminds me of a story I'd like to share with you. On February 27, 1976, President Richard Nixon met with Mao Tse-tung in the Forbidden city. Chairman Mao's health had deteriorated since their first meeting in 1972. He was a shell of the man he had been, but was still sharp mentally. A massive stroke had robbed him of his ability to put his thoughts into words. The charismatic communist leader who had moved a nation and changed the world with his revolutionary exhortations could no longer even ask for a glass of water. He was still a revered leader of nearly a billion people. As they spoke in Beijing he was six months from death. During their conversation, President Nixon said, that they must continue to cooperate in seeking peace, not only between our two countries but also among all the nations of the world. It was painful to watch Chairman Mao try to respond. His face flushed as he grunted out half words! His translator, an attractive woman, tried to put his grunts into English.

Chairman Mao knew enough English to realize she had not understood him. He shook his head angrily, grabbed her notebook, and wrote out the words in Chinese. She read them aloud in English: " IS PEACE YOUR ONLY GOAL?"

President Nixon had not expected that question and paused briefly. He answered, "WE SHOULD SEEK PEACE WITH JUSTICE."

I am a Christian clergyman and my inspiration comes from the Christian Holy Scriptures to work as a peacemaker to seek justice among our human family.

An Old Testament prophet, Micah, who lived in Palestine between 750 and 686 B.C., said, "He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does The Lord require of you, but to do justice, to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God."

I come to you with all humility and seeking and offering sincere prayers to join peacemakers, Muslims and Christians to work together for the peace. Peace can only happen if we and people of the land trust those who are laying a foundation to build a nation as a testament of peace- Salaam- Shalom by working together to give a chance through non violent ways as peace can be achieved with peaceful means. Violence begets violence. Archbishop George Carey has said, "

Bombings, shootings, killings and all such violence serve only to extend and deepen conflict. Striving together to do justice-the justice that brings peace and reconciliation - is a harder way, but the better way. At such times we must look for models, and it seems to me that we all have one in the towering figure of Nelson Mandela. He could so easily have returned from Robben Island, after twenty seven years in captivity with grudges and scores to settle, and terrible violence would have been the probable result. Instead, he forsook vengeance, and reconciled his country from the injustice of its past. The result is a land where different communities are traveling together on the same road, certainly not without difficulty, equally not without hope."

While according to the Prime Minister, "Pakistan takes a giant leap for democracy" works of peace and trust building among faith communities are key building blocks to build a prosperous and strong democratic nation.

In the last three years I have visited the land of my birth. In 2009 while I was here 200 homes of Christians in Gojra were set on fire and seven members of the same family were burnt by the militants in the name of religion.

Now I arrived on March 1 and Shai community in Abbas town in Karachi lost homes and lives of innocent families. The recent attack on Joseph Colony in Badami Bagh area in Lahore is another example where 160 houses, 80 shops and several Vehicles of Christians were set on fire by hundreds of angry protestors after allegations of blasphemy were leveled against a Christian man.

I understand that the Government is not systematically wiping out Christians and non-Muslims but has shown to extend to help the victims of hate and discrimination.

All these forces of hatred and violence are a hindrance to take further giant steps for building strong and prosperous democratic Pakistan. I pray and beg people of all faiths and good will not to stay silent and spectators as the hate and militancy acts as a ticking bomb to weaken this great nation.

'Islam' from a root meaning is the same as the Old Testament word "Shalom" it means peace or reconciliation: reconciliation with God, of, course, and then reflected in God's community. Allah-the Almighty God says in the Holy Qur'an: "If God had not raised a group to ward off the others from aggression, churches, synagogues, oratories, and mosques where God is worshipped most, would have been destroyed." (Holy Qur'an 22:1 verse 40) The State, from the standpoint of Islam, therefore, must offer equal protection and security to all religions in this country because God of Islam enjoins not only tolerance of all the religions other than Islam but the Muslims are obliged even to defend the places of worship of the non-Muslims under their protection.

I pray you that we who are part of the living faiths communities to work together to build bridges between the alienated, discriminated, oppressed, persecuted and traumatized people of this land particularly those named minorities to give them hope that we all can live in peace in this land. I pray regularly for justice and peace for the people of Pakistan and for all those who suffer for

the sake of their faith. The Creator's intention in creating people of all races and faiths is and has been always that we should live in harmony and friendship. I make no judgment but to plead for peace, justice, dignity for those who suffer and are dreadfully frightened for their daily survival. I also feel that hearts of people are broken and minds confused and souls tired after years of turmoil among our faith communities. Let us journey together on the road to build peace and trust. Give peace a chance!

Deep in my heart I do believe Peace shall overcome hatred and violence and together there can be a prosperous, just and strong democratic Pakistan a land of the pure and peaceful:

O Lord, make us instrument of Thy peace
Where there is hatred, let us sow love
Where is injury, pardon
Where there is despair, hope
Where there is darkness, light
Where there is sadness, joy. Amen

Bp. Azariah said god is not the property of any religion