



The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land (ELCJHL)

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The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

Your Royal Highness Prince Ghazi
Your Royal Highness Princess Areej
Your Beatitude
Members of the Committee
Prize Winners
Ladies and Gentlemen

The Speech of Bishop Dr. Munib Younan
The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land
at the Baptismal Site on the Occasion
of the World Interfaith Harmony Week Award Ceremony
April 25, 2013

It is an honor for me to be here at the baptismal site in celebration of the Award Ceremony of World Interfaith Harmony Week, which would not be possible without the initiative of His Majesty, King Abdullah of Jordan. This week is the culmination of such truths as are found in the Amman Message which reminds us to practice tolerance and acceptance, and The Common Word Between Us and You, which was signed by 138 Imams and Muslim scholars in 2007 to proclaim an interfaith message of love for God, and love for the neighbor.

I bring you greetings from the city of Jerusalem. Jerusalem is the mother of us all. Jerusalem is not a city of exclusiveness, but inclusiveness—we live, work, and celebrate life side by side. Jerusalem will not achieve its full dignity until it becomes the *real* mother of peaceful coexistence. Jerusalem is longing to see this celebration take place in the vicinity of the Holy Sites. This is the reason that we welcome the renewed agreement between his Majesty King Abdullah and President Mahmoud Abbas that Jordan will continue its custodianship of the Holy Sites. We heartily welcome this coordination for the sake of Jerusalem.

Jordan has become the hub of Christian-Muslim dialogue both regionally and globally. This dialogue is not merely an academic exercise, but an exercise being lived out from day to day where God's faithful people live under one constitution, experiencing religious freedom with equal citizenship that calls for equal rights and responsibility to every Jordanian.

God calls each and every one of us to live in harmony with our neighbor. As it is written in the Ephesians 4:3, "Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit of God through the bond of peace." Also, it is written in Qur'an 3:103, "And hold fast, all of you together, to the Rope of Allâh and be not divided among yourselves, and remember Allâh's Favor on you, for you were enemies one to another but He joined your hearts together, so that, by His Grace, you became brothers and sisters..." Certainly we in the Middle East need to hear these words and write them on our hearts now more than ever. The teaching of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the Sharia's aim are but to love God and love neighbor. Today, it may be easy to love the God whom we cannot see, but it is sometimes challenging to love the neighbor with whom we have everyday dealings. This Holy Place, the Baptismal site where we are celebrating is but a place that reminds us to live in harmony with respect for all religions, and be the messengers of love wherever we are called.

I am thankful to be one of the judges in this illustrious competition, working under her Royal Highness, Princess Areej Ghazi. As I read the 64 applications for candidacy, I was pleased and thankful to God that there are still people in the world, even though they are not in the headlines of the media, yet they are building bridges for peace and living in harmony. They are the ones who will reform and transform their countries to societies of harmony. As Christ tells us, they are the "yeast in the dough." We appreciated how Nigeria, Malaysia, and The Philippines in their unique way, challenge their respective societies to combat extremism and proclaim a message of peaceful coexistence. They swim against the seeming tide of indifference and outright hostility to publicly state their love of God and neighbor. They are heroes in our eyes. If people from every society will join their voices together, then they will become a symphony of harmony that drowns out those who would divide, oppress, persecute, and condemn the other.

Muslims and Christians make up approximately fifty-five percent of the world's population. If we who are faithful can love God and love our neighbor, then we too

can combat extremism, overcome fundamentalism, enjoy freedom of religion, and live in peace. This is the reality in Jordan today. May it become the reality for all nations as we learn to love and coexist. I always say that it is an art to live with others in peace and harmony, to equally share the country. All of you who achieve this are artists. You are the artists of harmony.

Thank you. May God bless you.