



WORLD INTERFAITH HARMONY WEEK



The Official UN Observance in the 1<sup>st</sup> Week of February

## **7º Encuentro Scriptural Reasoning “Non-Violent Responses to Haters” | 12.02.2021, 19:00hrs**

In the context of the Youth Creative CommUnity campaign, which is part of the European project CommUnity, ARCO FORUM will organize a series of 24 interfaith Scriptural Reasoning activities (including the sacred writings from up to three Abrahamic religions) where young people talk about different topics based on texts parts of their sacred writings. During the month of february, in the framework of the World Interfaith Harmony Week our institution in collaboration with other organizations organized some sessions of Scriptural Reasoning both online and offline (Madrid and Barcelona).

### **About the CommUnity project**

The CommUnity project, co-funded by the European Commission, involves 11 public and private institutions from 7 EU countries. The CommUnity project aims to address drivers of radicalisation, such as marginalisation, inequality, discrimination and denial of rights. It seeks to create new opportunities to promote peace and shared values through artistic and cultural expression. By giving a voice to young people who feel marginalised or unfairly treated, we can build powerful communities with a greater sense of belonging, well-being and self-esteem.

### **About the Youth Creative CommUnity Campaign**

The Youth Creative CommUnity is a Campaign within the CommUnity project which seeks to engage young people through artistic and creative lenses. To this end, through different Youth Creative Clubs, small artistic groups will be established, and artistic and cultural activities will be developed. The Youth Creative Clubs will be guided by artists and youth workers. Young people, who seek to empower their identity, will be encouraged to find various creative ways to express themselves. Through cultural and artistic expressions, such as music, painting, visual arts workshops, young people can develop a stronger sense of belonging. In addition, young people will be challenged to create something related to the theme "Peacefully Together", which they will present at the "Youth Creative Festival" on the first weekend of June in Brussels, Belgium. In the case of ARCO FORUM in total 24 Scriptural Reasoning sessions will be conducted and then presented at the Youth Creative Festival.

### **About Scriptural Reasoning (SR)**

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In Scriptural Reasoning (SR), participants meet to read passages from their respective sacred texts. They discuss the content and the ways in which those texts shape their understanding of contemporary issues. The goal is not agreement but rather growth in understanding one another's traditions. The practice started off between Jews, Christians, and Muslims, but many other combinations of faiths have been tried. Reading, listening to and reflecting on scripture is something many do naturally within their own worshipping communities. Participants in SR are not asked to leave that behind; rather, people of different faiths come together to read and reflect on their scriptures side-by-side.

The outcome of these activities can be summarized on three main points:

1. Learning and understanding- Participants learn more about other faith communities.  
2. Exploring differences- Not only to appreciate the many things which we share and have in common, but it also to appreciate differences and teaches participants to appreciate them.

3. Friendships- As traditional stereotypes of the 'other' are broken down, barriers are dismantled and at best, participants develop lasting friendships.

### **About this 7th Scriptural Reasoning Session**

This seventh session took place on the 12th of February 2021 at 19:00 hrs around the topic "Non-Violent Responses to Haters". This topic was discussed based on the sacred writings from two Abrahamic religions (the New Testament and the Quran) with in total 20 participants from Madrid, Spain.

The event focused on the main topic of introducing different religions, their bases, beliefs, stories by peaceful dialogue among the participants with the aim to get to know each other's religion better, eliminating prejudices and learning how to have peace- and respectful discussions.

The speciality about this event in comparison to the events that have been done before was that it was conducted within the frame of the World Interfaith Harmony Week. Additionally, ARCO FORUM collaborated with the parish "Parroquia Santa Maravillas de Jesús" in Madrid, Spain in this activity.

At the beginning of the event the participants were welcomed and a short explanation about the CommUnity project, the Campaign itself, the Concept of Scriptural Reasoning and the World Interfaith Harmony Week was given. After that the participants presented themselves to get to know each other better and to create a safe

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space where everyone could speak freely. Before the texts of the sacred writings were read out loud the essential guidelines for a respectful and good discussion were presented. Then the participants were introduced to the text from the New Testament by reading it out loud from a participant from another religious tradition than the text was. Afterwards a discussion about this sacred text started among the participants. After that the same was done with the text from the Quran and a discussion about it and the link of the three texts to the topic “Non-violent responses to Haters” followed.

Questions discussed with the participants and some of their comments during the session:

1. Impressions on the text of the New Testament:

- Participants said that first of all people have to recognize that they're about to respond violently themselves to someone else and then they act/change their action.
- Even if we leave the “Anger” to God and believe that he will arrange everything and bring justice on a social basis it is necessary to have control from the government, have rules and regulations to not have chaos taking over the society.
- The New Testament describes clearly that you should not just ignore negativity and hate but to respond with something good and thus with the good overcome the bad. The intention is to change the heart of the enemy with my good intentions.
- But we have to recognize that the desire for revenge is a really big desire of every human being and it is difficult to overcome it. It can just be achieved by having more faith and confidence in God than a desire for revenge.
- It is important to see the context of the time because in this time people were really used to the “eye for an eye” concept which led to a lot of cruelty, crime and sometimes even wars.

2. Impressions on the text of the Quran:

- It calls for the people to act when they feel injustice towards them.
- The difference to the text of the New Testament is that there the text is about turning an enemy into a friend but in the Quran it does not go that further, it focuses more on responding positively to hate but not ignoring hate towards you.
- Quran talks more “realistic” to the reader, it says that you should respond in the best way that you can and if there is no good way then do it the least bad way. But it recognizes how hard it is and how much effort sometimes it takes to respond positively



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to negativity and hate.

- If you do something wrong you can ask for God's forgiveness for the action you did but if you did something wrong towards someone else you have to ask for forgiveness right towards the person you did wrong to.

### **About obstacles due to the Covid-19 pandemic**

The Covid19 pandemic had and still has a big effect on Spain. Therefore, it is difficult and rare to carry out offline activities with a large number of people. Because of this, ARCO FORUM got in contact with the parish "Parroquia Santa Maravillas de Jesús" in the south of Madrid where activities with a high hygiene measure status can still be conducted. (In Spain holy places can carry out events with a reduced number of participants when they follow high hygiene standards). That's why in this 7th session it was compulsory to wear a face mask at all times. The safety distance of (1.5 metres) has to be ensured during the whole activity and the participants had to wash their hands with soap and water or use hydroalcoholic gel when entering the parish.

### **About ARCO FORUM's Scriptural Reasoning activities in the media**

ARCO FORUM is announcing each of its activities on the social media platforms of Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and some also on LinkedIn, the same is done with the outcome of each activity so that followers and the audience is always updated on the activities occurring. These posts are always linked with the corresponding Hashtags of the CommUnity project ( #CommunityProyectEurope and #YouthCreativeCommunityEurope) and the World Interfaith Harmony Week (#WIHW and #WIHW2021) as well as the corresponding pages tagged.

Apart from that, the Scriptural Reasoning sessions organized by ARCO FORUM have been covered by the Spanish media. The weekly newspaper "ALFA Y OMEGA" conducted an interview with Yusuf Isikoglu, youth worker and active member at ARCO FORUM and Alba Pamies, a repeated participant at the sessions in Barcelona and also online. As this article was published in the weekly "ALFA Y OMEGA" newspaper which is distributed in printed form with the "ABC Newspaper" this article reached 83 000 people in printed form and another 15-18 thousand people (for 3 days it was in the cover page of the weekly magazine which has 5-6 thousand unique visitors each day) via digital ways. The whole article can be read here: <https://alfayomega.es/que-dice-el-coran-sobre-la-paz-y-la-biblia/?fbclid=IwAR2buGhZl2edHe7CtJoylNK7b9tknlqIGliBBPT6zJucUyFKpiB7HFTC5ws>

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