



8th Scriptural Reasoning Meeting about “Leadership” in Barcelona

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 frame 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)

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 teach 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 8th Scriptural Reasoning Session

This eighth session took place on the 21th of February 2021 at 11:00 hrs around the topic "Leadership". This topic was discussed based on the sacred writings from two Abrahamic religions (the New Testament and the Quran) with a total of 9 participants from different countries.

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.

This event was particularly special compared to the other sessions from the campaign conducted within the frame of the World Interfaith Harmony Week. Additionally ARCO FORUM collaborated with the association Casa Turca de Barcelona in Barcelona, Spain, for this activity, like it does for many others.

At the beginning of the event the participants were invited to a Turkish breakfast offered by the host association (Casa Turca de Barcelona). This is always a very precious moment for knowing each other better before the session. Most of the participants have already met as they have attended previous sessions, giving them the chance to strengthen the bonds between them.



After breakfast, the participants enjoyed a violin recital offered by two of the attendees and afterwards they 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 the whole group in order to create a safe 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 Quran by reading it out loud from a participant from another religious tradition.

Afterwards, a discussion about this sacred text followed.

Finally, the same concept was applied for the text selected from the New Testament.

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

1. Impressions on the text of the Quran:

- Participants highlighted the importance of the indulgent leader, tolerant with those who do not agree, with the entire community, and a leader who also prays for his/her forgiveness.
- They also expressed the importance of listening shown in the text. Leaders must not make decisions alone. When making decisions, they must listen (to other people and to God's willings). By listening, leaders will look after the common good and will try to reach a consensus from different points of view, thus, making a decision that will probably be the best for everyone.
- After discussing the previous point, the participants talked about the definition of giving oneself to God, underlining that, before commending themselves to God, leaders must actively strive, work and meet certain requirements instead of waiting for things to come to them.
- Final impressions on this text were about the fact that the messages of the Quran regarding the need for listening do not fit the type of leader in today's selfish world. The prototype of a leader nowadays seems to be more of a totalitarian, oppressive, vindictive figure who is corrupted by the power in



contrast with the consensus seeking leader from the sacred texts, whose ego is minimised by the pursuit of the common good, as mentioned before.

2. Impressions on the text of the New Testament:

- In this historical context, children were a discriminated group, they could not make decisions. The purpose of using this figure is to teach the value of humility a leader must have. The child described in the text seems to be worthless, he is not taken into account, according to the view of those times. The vision of Jesus, on the other hand, shows that the child is of the utmost importance.
- Children traditionally in History cannot lead a group of people, they are not wise or strong. That is why this example causes such impact and that is why it also causes a massive impact the fact that Jesus, being a strong and wise leader, dies in the most cruel way. He is expected to be someone triumphant. However, he dies in the most humiliating way possible in those days.
- The idea is not so much to go unnoticed as a humble servant but to offer something to others, to act with modesty and servitude, to serve in order to make other people lives' better, not to be better oneself. Some leaders use power for themselves, to be better themselves, not as a service to the community.
- Nowadays it seems that there is no "being a leader without expecting anything in return". As leader values, participants expressed the following virtues: altruism, servitude, humility, trust, and having an active role from this position.

3. Impressions on the whole topic:

- According to the participants both sacred texts present the leadership topic in a way that is far from being severe or imposing.
- They also agreed that the characters shown are aware that their perception of power is not coming from themselves but rather from God, and this is the reason why they are not looking for success or recognition. Nowadays being a



leader is related to being corrupt, keeping power for oneself. The sacred texts show, to the participants, a more devoted kind of power.

- The figure of the child was relevant for the participants. Children represent the value of innocence. A true leader must be an example of modesty, innocence, openness, tolerance and lack of prejudices.

About obstacles due to the Covid-19 pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic is having many effects in different aspects of life. This brings the difficulty of meeting and carrying out these activities offline, because of the restrictions and also the concerns that people may feel about this type of gatherings. However, following high hygiene standards as well as all the safety measures (use of face mask, keeping the safety distance of 1.5 metres, use of hydroalcoholic gel and washing hands frequently with soap and water, and keeping the spaces well ventilated at all times), we have succeeded in creating a safe environment for everyone involved and building a stable study group of young people who come to the different sessions celebrated.

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 newsletter. The same is done for the outcome of each activity so that the followers and the audience are permanently informed about the ongoing and future activities. These posts are always linked with the corresponding hashtags of the CommUnity project (#CommunityProyectEurope and #CineCommunityEurope) 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".

The full article can be read here:

<https://alfayomega.es/que-dice-el-coran-sobre-la-paz-y-la-biblia/?fbclid=IwAR2buGhZl2edHe7CtJoylNK7b9tknlqIGliBBPT6zJucUyFKpiB7HFTC5ws>