

San Mateo County Times

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Interfaith Peace Vigil

Iftekhhar Hai

THE Bay Area is buzzing with interfaith activities. Recently, the mosques in Santa Clara, San Jose, Belmont and San Francisco have been inviting Christian and Jewish religious leaders to dialogue.

Thankfully, we are finally following the advice of famous Catholic German theologian, Hans Kung, "There will be no peace among nations, if there is no peace among religions and there will be no peace among religions if there is no dialogue among religions."

This past Sunday, I was invited to be a guest speaker at both the Coastside Lutheran Church in Pescadero and St. Robert's Catholic Church in San Bruno, off Crystal Springs.

**I spoke on diversity and pluralism in Islam that is explained in details in Chapter 5: verse 48. It is part of God's plan to test people from living a virtuous life based on their own revelations and to strive in all good works.*

Pastor Ted Schapp of the Coastside Lutheran Church dedicated his sermon on, loving your God with "all thy mind, all thy heart and with all thy soul and on loving thy neighbor as thyself." The rest of the Bible is irrelevant if a believer in Jesus does not follow these two rules.

The message was so spiritually uplifting that I walked out of that church deeply engrossed in the wisdom of Jesus' teachings.

The congregation wanted me to stay further and talk about how Muslims and Christians could work together along with our Jewish co-religionists. After all, Christianity and Islam are deeply rooted in the wisdom of the Torah - the word of God given to the Jewish people. So I stayed answering how to bring peace in Iraq, Afghanistan and in the Holy Lands where Palestinians and Israelis are at war.

From Pescadero, I drove back to San Bruno along the picturesque Highway 1. The morning sun was dancing in and out of the foggy skies. The landscape full of yellow flowers sprinkled over a green carpet of lush grass on one side and on the other side, little ponds had formed after the high tides had receded. The sea gulls flew low to get to their prey in the shallow stranded seawater. So is nature full of beauty, life and ecstatic love for any who can see the signs of God.

I reached St. Roberts Church completely energized from Pastor Schapp's preaching. The Interfaith Prayer for Peace had a tremendous turnout. There were Presbyterian, Lutheran, Buddhist, Jewish and Muslim religious leaders all praying for peace.

***Each religious leader spoke from their own tradition and I read from Quran Chapter 24: verses 35 to 39, God is the Light of the Heavens and the Earth.**

Catholic worshippers welcomed the interfaith religious leadership with love and plenty of good food for all. There was a sense of unity in the diversity of religious practices of all the faiths.

The core message coming from all was the same: We all agreed to work together to heal the wounds of war that is happening in Iraq and Afghanistan.

That day, I kept thinking, maybe the time is right for all of us to begin to find ways of how to turn swords into ploughshares and spears into pruning hooks.

We have to bring the time of man, not learning about war anymore, but learning about loving thy neighbor as thyself. I hope the residents of Zion are listening, too.

Iftekhhar Hai is president of the United Muslims of America Interfaith Alliance ([www.http://umaia.net](http://umaia.net)) in South S. F. He along with other religious leaders write regularly in Faith column. Next week: Mike O'Berg.

***editors did not print because if they quote one religious leader then they have to quote all. The newspaper will not accomodate this kind of proselytizing.**