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## VATICAN SAYS CHRISTIANS AND MUSLIMS HAVE COMMON FAMILY VALUES

By staff writers

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Senior representatives of the Vatican have used the annual Pontifical Council for Inter-religious Dialogue message to Muslims for the end of the month of Ramadan to urge the two faiths to work together in promoting family life.

The Message bears the signatures of Cardinal Jean-Louis Tauran and Archbishop Pier Luigi Celata, respectively president and secretary of the council, and has as its theme this year (1429 AH / 2008 AD): "Christians and Muslims: Together for the dignity of the family."

The message has been published in various languages. It identifies common interests in family and community issues.

Critics both inside and outside the two religions will point out that both the Pope and senior Muslim leaders have been strongly critical of feminism and opposed to the dignity and rights of gay people, indicating an agenda which some would see as narrow and restrictive rather than broad and life-affirming.

But the Vatican's message seeks to be positive in tone. It reads, in full:

*"During this month Christians close to you have shared your reflections and your family celebrations; dialogue and friendship have been strengthened. Praise be to God!"*

*"This friendly rendezvous gives us an opportunity to reflect together on a mutually topical subject which will enrich our exchange and help us to get to know each other better, in our shared values as well as in our differences: ... the subject of the family.*

*"One of the documents of Vatican Council II, 'Gaudium et Spes', which deals with the Church in the modern world, states: 'The well-being of the individual person and of human and Christian society is intimately linked with the healthy condition of that community produced by marriage and family. Hence Christians and all men who hold this community in high esteem sincerely rejoice in the various ways by which men today find help in fostering this community of love and perfecting its life'"*.

*"These words give us an opportune reminder that the development of both the human person and of society depends largely on the healthiness of the family! How many people carry, sometimes for the whole of their life, the weight of the wounds of a difficult or dramatic family background? ... Christians and Muslims can and must work together to safeguard the dignity of the family, today and in the future.*

*"Given the high esteem in which both Muslims and Christians hold the family, we have already had many occasions, from the local to the international level, to work together in this field. The family, that place where*

*love and life, respect for the other and hospitality are encountered and transmitted, is truly the 'fundamental cell of society'.*

*"Muslims and Christians must never hesitate, not only to come to the aid of families in difficulty, but also to collaborate with all those who support the stability of the family as an institution and the exercise of parental responsibility, in particular in the field of education. I need only remind you that the family is the first school in which one learns respect for others, mindful of the identity and the difference of each one. Inter-religious dialogue and the exercise of citizenship cannot but benefit from this".*

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