



Fellow Vincentians:

That one of my sons-in-law is a Muslim is only one reason why the new Vincentian Family Statement in Support of Our Brother and Sister Muslim is so meaningful to me.

The second is my fervent belief in the Vincentian and Gospel message to welcome the stranger among us and to demand social justice for those who are being ostracized, pushed to the margins (as Pope Francis so often notes and warns against), and discriminated against. As Vincentians and Catholics, we must speak for those whose voices are being muted and whose legitimate concerns and needs are being brushed aside in the “throw-away” culture that the Pope also regularly rails against.

Inad, my son-in-law and now the father of two of our grandchildren, was born and grew up in Amman, Jordan. He was educated there by French Jesuits. About five years ago, my wife and I have traveled to Jordan to meet Inad’s family and enjoyed with them a wonderful post-wedding reception for my daughter and her new husband. They and their friends are warm and caring, as indeed the overwhelmingly vast majority of Muslims are. Like us, they value peace and desire a just and equal society where all are respected and dignity accorded to each. Experiencing this all first-hand, it pains me greatly now to hear the discriminatory, ignorant, unkind, and unwarranted comments that some in our society do not hesitate to make these days about Muslims.

In this hyper-sensitive atmosphere where so much invective is being hurled at those who are not exactly like us, especially our Muslim brothers and sisters, it is worth remembering the Gospel story of the Good Samaritan, as well as the Vincentian call to welcome and assist the stranger without regard to denomination or even lack of religion. The Pope’s message in the Jubilee Year of Mercy about “Merciful and Kind” attributes Islam attributes to the Creator provides an especially compelling perspective.

To have a peaceful and loving society in which the human dignity of each person is respected, these messages from our Catholic Social Teaching and from our Vincentian heritage must be understood, heeded, and evidenced in our daily lives.

It is for these reasons that the Vincentian Family Social Justice Representatives prepared the following Statement in Support of Our Muslim Brothers and Sisters. The brief, one page Statement draws its inspiration and language from the very recent Papal declaration of the Jubilee Year of Mercy and from Pope Francis’s 2013 Apostolic Exhortation “Joy of the Gospel.”

In light of this, SVdP National President Sheila Gilbert and the Society’s Voice of the Poor Committee, which I chair, urge all Vincentians to prayerfully consider the Statement and use it as a basis for a Spiritual Reflection at a Conference, District, or Central Council meeting. Vincentians are also asked to distribute and publicize the Statement through their networks, both formal and informal. Post it on your SVdP Websites. Executive Directors are encouraged to circulate the Statement among their staff and boards.

We pray that the spirit of St. Vincent de Paul and Blessed Frederic Ozanam will enable us to see true followers of Islam as neighbors and friends who share our values and aspirations for a better and more humane world.

*Tom Dwyer*  
*Chair, SVdP National Voice of the Poor Committee*

## Vincentian Family Social Justice Representatives' Statement in Support of Our Muslim Brothers and Sisters

The Vincentian Family Social Justice Representatives embrace the call of Pope Francis in this Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy:

There is an aspect of mercy that goes beyond the confines of the Church ... Among the privileged names that Islam attributes to the Creator are "Merciful and Kind." This invocation is often on the lips of faithful Muslims who feel themselves accompanied and sustained by mercy in their daily weakness. They too believe that no one can place a limit on divine mercy because its doors are always open.

I trust that this Jubilee year celebrating the mercy of God will foster an encounter with these religions and with other noble religious traditions; may it open us to even more fervent dialogue so that we might know and understand one another better; may it eliminate every form of closed-mindedness and disrespect, and drive out every form of violence and discrimination. <sup>1</sup>

Likewise, we embrace Pope Francis' conviction from an earlier document:

Faced with disconcerting episodes of violent fundamentalism, our respect for true followers of Islam should lead us to avoid hateful generalizations, for authentic Islam and the proper reading of the Quran are opposed to every form of violence. <sup>2</sup>

The Vincentian Family Social Justice Representatives commit to publicize within our branches and with all groups and individuals with whom we interact this *Statement in Support of our Muslim Sisters and Brothers*.

The social justice representatives of the Vincentian Family of North America include:

- Congregation of the Mission - Eastern and Western Provinces
- Ladies of Charity USA
- Sisters of Charity Federation office
- Sisters of Charity of Halifax, NS
- Sisters of Charity of Nazareth, KY
- Sisters of Charity of Seton Hill, PA
- Sisters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul, NY
- Vincentian Lay Missionaries - MISEVI-USA
- Daughters of Charity - Provinces of St. Louise and the West
- Sisters of Charity Federation NGO
- Sisters of Charity of Cincinnati, OH
- Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth, KS
- Sisters of Charity of Our Lady of Mercy, SC
- Sisters of Charity of Saint Elizabeth, NJ
- Society of St. Vincent de Paul Canada
- Society of St. Vincent de Paul USA

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<sup>1</sup> *The Face of Mercy*, the Bull of Indiction of the Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy, April 11, 2015, 23.

<sup>2</sup> *The Joy of the Gospel*, Apostolic Exhortation, November 2013, 253