

## **ON THE SHARED OBSERVANCE OF RAMADAN AND THE LENTEN SEASON 2026**

This year, the holy month of Ramadan and the Lenten Season (Ash Wednesday) begin together on **18 February**. This shared beginning is a grace. It invites us to slow down, to return to God, and to walk together in faith.

In these sacred seasons, Muslims and Christians enter a time of prayer, fasting, repentance, and generosity. We turn our hearts to the Merciful. We learn again to see one another as brothers and sisters. Our sacred texts call us to peace: “Blessed are the peacemakers” (Matthew 5:9), and God “invites all to the Home of Peace” (Qur’an 10:25). In a world marked by violence and division, this moment calls us not only to pray for peace, but to **live it and work for it**.

Ramadan and Lent remind us that faith must transform the heart and shape our actions. Fasting opens our eyes to suffering and enlarges our compassion. Love of God is proven in love of neighbors, especially the poor and the forgotten. As Jesus teaches, what we do for the least, we do for God (Matthew 25:40). The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) likewise taught that the best among us are those who do good for others.

Peace, however, is more than the absence of war. It is the right relationship—with God, with one another, and with creation. Both our faith traditions teach that the earth is a sacred trust. Pope Francis, in *Laudato Si’*, reminds us that the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor are one. The Qur’an teaches that humanity is entrusted as *khalifa*, stewards of God’s creation. When forests are destroyed, waters poisoned, and land abused, peace is broken. Caring for our common home is therefore an essential **work of peace**.

In *Fratelli Tutti*, Pope Francis speaks of **human fraternity** and social friendship. He reminds us that we are created to live together, not against one another. No one is meant to be excluded. No one is meant to be left behind. This vision of fraternity resonates

deeply with both Ramadan and Lent. Peace grows where mutual respect is practiced, where dialogue replaces suspicion, and where solidarity becomes a way of life.

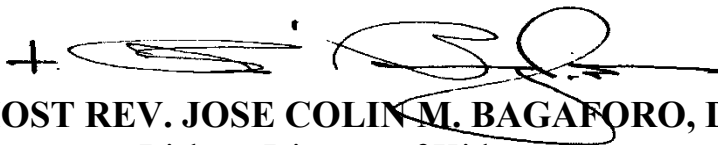
In the Philippines, this spirit of fraternity is lived through **Alay Kapwa**, a Lenten offering whose name means “offering to one’s neighbor.” It is not simply an act of charity, but a way of seeing the other as *kapwa*—one who shares our humanity and our future. Through Alay Kapwa, prayer becomes service, and sacrifice becomes hope for communities affected by poverty, conflict, disaster, and ecological harm.

Guided by **Pope Leo’s World Day of Peace message, “Towards an Unarmed and Disarming Peace,”** we are reminded that true peace is not built by weapons or fear. It is built through trust, justice, dialogue, and shared responsibility. Peace must be patient. Peace must be inclusive. Peace must be lived.

I therefore invite our Christian and Muslim communities, our interreligious dialogue desks, and our partners in civil society to pray together and to work together. Let us care for the poor. Let us protect creation. Let us educate for peace. Let us respond together to the wounds of our world. These are sacred tasks. These are **works of peace**.

May this shared observance of Ramadan and Lent become a living prayer. A prayer spoken through fasting and generosity. A prayer lived through fraternity, compassion, and care for our common home.

May God, the Merciful and Compassionate, guide our steps and make us instruments of His peace.



**MOST REV. JOSE COLIN M. BAGAFORO, D.D.**  
Bishop, Diocese of Kidapawan  
Chairman, CBCP Commission on Inter-Religious Dialogue  
Co-President, PAX Christi International

