

*ST John Reads "Do We Worship the Same God?" George Dardess*

In our March 28 evening discussion we covered parts of chapters 5-8 including our beliefs about Satan, Adam and Eve in the Garden, the Annunciation to Mary, and the Birth of Jesus. Here are some of the observations:

Satan/Iblis has a very large hold on humanity but it is primarily because we are drawn away by fear from believing in the power of the goodness of God. Satan is the great deceiver and confidant of the unfaithful. God is confidant of the faithful.

Muslims see no need for a Savior (Jesus the Christ) because God forgave humankind immediately upon their leaving the Garden.

We simply do not hold the same belief in the divinity of Jesus.

Jesus as prophet (Quran) or Jesus as Son of God (Bible) - Jesus is still a powerful example and revered as a prophet, but the concepts of a "son" of God makes no sense to Muslims because that makes the need for an intermediary between God and humanity (Jesus, Mary, saints...) when they go directly to God with prayer. Also, because of their perspective on God's forgiveness, there is no need for a "Savior" to reconcile us with God.

Jesus is perceived as a prophet in both the readings for Lent, the woman at the well, and the man born blind, but the woman and the blind man each go further in their revelation of Jesus' true identity as divine healer/reconciler.

Some of the questions that arose were:

To what level does the Immaculate Conception of Mary raise her?

Does Allah ordain fate of humans so there is no free will?

Allah/God has no need for a "son" but does humanity need that incarnate presence?

So as we go forth we are left with two stories from our evening of encounter:

One woman is close friends with a Muslim family. She had just come from the hospital after being with the family and helping understand a significant health issue. From this Catholic woman's faith, she provided compassionate presence of Christ to the family.

Another woman had an opportunity after some time of being with a young Muslim person, to build a level of trust and caring that allowed them to pray together. The young person opened up and was able to share some very difficult things of life ending by saying this was the "best day" ever! Compassionate presence, again from the heart of faith, of both people.

Our next, and final session on this book will be Monday, April 11, 6:30pm in the St. John Fellowship Area. Please pick up a book (Gifts of Faith or online) and join us!