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# ASIA/PHILIPPINES - "Ramadan is an opportunity for dialogue and friendship": message from the interfaith movement "Silsilah"

Zamboanga City (Agenzia Fides) - "Ramadan is an opportunity for everyone to reflect, to find spiritual meaning of life. For the Muslim it is an obligation, for others it is a challenge. The Movement 'Silsilah' has always emphasized the spiritual aspect of life. This is an opportunity to reflect on the importance of spirituality of life-in-dialogue, and help Muslims and Christians to treasure their faith ": this is what a message sent to Fides Agency says and released by the Movement for Islam-Christian dialogue "Silsilah", on the occasion of the month of Ramadan that the Islamic community will live in the period from July 20 to August 18. The movement "Silsilah" was founded in the southern Philippines, on the island of Mindanao, by the missionary of the PIME (Pontifical Institute for Foreign Missions) Fr. Sebastiano D'Ambra, along with some Muslim leaders, and has been working for the formation of young people and social and religious harmony for 25 years. It operates in a context, the southern Philippines, full of tensions, since the area is home to a significant Islamic component (about 6 million people), which has also led to guerrilla separatist movements.
The work of the dialogue is now well developed in Mindanao: as learned by Fides, the "Inter-religious Council of Leaders" of Zamboanga, in a recent meeting noted some key elements and benefits in the month of Ramadan: the emphasis on the spirit of sacrifice, repentance for sins, the communion with God, love for God and neighbor, the need to give time for meditation, forgiveness and charity, the obligation of fasting, spiritual purification, the virtue of tolerance toward other faiths. These values, the Council of Christian and Muslim leaders agreed on, allow the believers of different religions to get closer. In view of Ramadan, "Christians are encouraged to better understand the religion of Islam and appreciate more the spiritual journey of the Muslim community" they underline. The Muslim leaders have admitted that "Islam is frequently used by members of our religion for their own purposes and interests" and that "violence and abuse affect the freedom of religion and the name of religion." For this reason they hope that "the spirit of Ramadan may lead to the search of the best ways to build ties of friendship with Christians, fruit of mutual love and compassion." (PA) (Agenzia Fides 19/7/2012)

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