
Poland: Catholic Church celebrating Islam Day on 26 January. “To overcome prejudice and show true face of Muslims”

“Islam is one of the main fears Polish Catholics have”, said Karol Wilczyński, member of the Council for Dialogue of the Archdiocese of Krakow, who for years has been engaged in promoting exchanges between Christianity and Islam. According to him, one of the goals of Islam Day, celebrated by the Church in Poland on 26 January, is to “overcome prejudice and show the true face of Muslims”.

“Many Poles, unfortunately, believe the fake news about Muslims”, Wilczyński pointed out, stressing that “even some priests speak of Muslims in a way that frightens people”. “Due to the influence of the media in Poland, it is difficult to gain public support with the idea of dialogue between Catholics and the Islamic faithful”, said Shiite Imam Rafał Berger, co-chairman of the Polish Council of Catholics and Muslims, for whom there has been no or little change in Poland since the first celebration of the Day twenty years ago. However, according to the Imam, this unprecedented worldwide initiative has been a success in that “the idea of the Day is engaging more and more people”. Mgr. Henryk Ciereszka, President of the Polish Bishops’ Committee for Dialogue with Non-Christian Religions and Delegate for Dialogue between Catholics and Muslims, stressed that in her dialogue with the Muslim world, the Church “is open but, at the same time, well aware of her Christian identity”. “This year, we particularly want to emphasise the value of the encounter and mutual knowledge, and of being together”, the prelate remarked, adding that “when people meet, the simple fact of talking and exchanging views makes them closer”.

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