

The news of the deadly attack at a Quebec City mosque on Sunday evening shocked and saddened me. My fellow Catholic Christians and Canadians across our country share these sentiments.

To the victims and their families, the Muslim communities in Quebec City and in Ottawa and the rest of Canada, I offer with my fellow Catholic Christians our sincere condolences.

The morning following the attack, I called Imam Metwally of the main Ottawa Mosque. Other religious leaders and I have become friendly with the Imam in recent years. Our conversations have been open and warm, and we share similar values and concerns. My call was simply to assure him of my closeness to him and my solidarity with his congregation at this tragic time.

Later, I wrote a note to him and to his fellow Muslims in Ottawa and across Canada to offer them sincere condolences in the name of the Catholics of Ottawa:

“Together with Muslims,” I recalled, “Catholics revere the faith of Abraham, and together with you, we call in prayer on the one, merciful God.”

The Catholic faith recognizes a special bond with Muslims and with the people of the Jewish faith. Together, we revere the faith of Abraham and believe in the one, merciful God. The Qur’an acknowledges the Jewish and the Christian Scriptures, the Prophets, Jesus, and Mary.

The senseless attack one week ago in a place of prayer furthermore hurts all Canadians who value our freedoms of conscience, speech, and religion.

Violence perpetrated in the name of religion or against people of faith is never justifiable.

In the global community, we see acts of persecution and violence done in the name of “true faith” every day.

We know, as believers, that a good and benevolent God does not approve of these acts. Each human being is made in God’s image and likeness.

Together we share a common, inherent dignity. We aspire to the same basic goals in life. We want our children to grow up in peace with an opportunity to make a good life for themselves and one day, for their own children, too.

The Christian response to persecution and violence is not to respond in kind. Meeting violence with violence perpetuates an endless cycle of revenge and retribution. The first people to hear the Gospel message of Jesus Christ were puzzled by His new response to persecution.

Instead of insisting that His followers meet aggression in kind, He challenged them to behave differently. Jesus instructed His followers to “love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you” (Luke 6.27).

Following this divine injunction is the best way to break the cycle of violence and to achieve a true, lasting peace. Violence begets violence. Love breaks that cycle and allows a new beginning. God’s grace is always available to help us love and bless.

We in Canada enjoy freedoms of conscience, speech, and religion. All of these are necessary foundations for open dialogue, understanding, and mutual respect. True democracy can thrive and a healthy, multifaceted cultural mosaic can flourish only where these freedoms are present.

Canadians espouse values that promote peaceful coexistence and mutual respect. Together, we reject acts of violence against our neighbours and stand united in solidarity and support for victims of these crimes.

I pray for the victims and families of the Muslim community of Quebec City, as well as for others who suffer because of this tragedy, including all Canadians of goodwill. May God grant you divine assistance, consolation, and peace.