

Christmas, Eid strikingly similar

With Christmas and Eid being about two days apart this year, one may ask if there is any similarity between the two. The most likely response would be that there is none.

Stripping both festivities of all commercialism, the similarity at a spiritual level is profound. While there are differences among Christians about where and when Jesus was born, Christmas is celebrated by most Christians on December 25.

Eid is a celebration that marks the end of one month of fasting which Muslims observe by abstaining from food, drink and sensual pleasures from just before dawn to dusk.

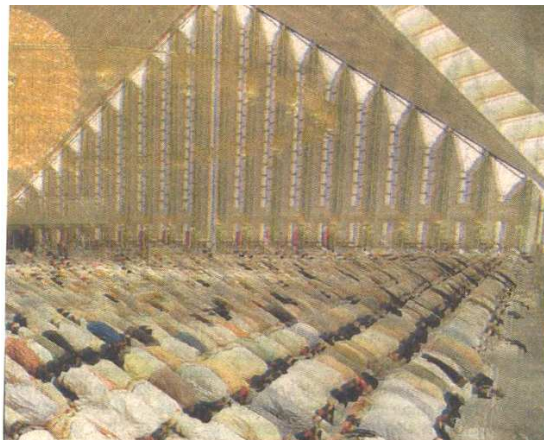
This lunar month is called Ramadaan and it is a significant month. During this month the first five verses of the Qur'an were

revealed. These verses refer to God as the cherisher and as being most bountiful, to birth and to the importance of knowledge and education.

In the 23 years that followed, the entire Qur'an was revealed with many references to Jesus and his noble and pure mother, Mary (God's peace and blessings be upon them). Both are considered as models for humanity. Christians and Muslims revere Jesus, and the noble and virtuous Mary.

Adam, Eve, Abraham, Moses, Jacob, Isaac, Ismail and other

prophets mentioned in the Qur'an (God's peace and blessings be upon them) are revered by one and half billion Muslims as well as by Christians and Jews. A Muslim stops belonging to the Islamic faith if he or she disparages any one of them or refuses to accept their flawless leadership and personalities.



"Spreading peace throughout the world... is one of the main goals of both Christianity and Islam"

This brings me to the point that Muslims and Christians share through Jesus (God's peace and blessings be upon him) a common basis, despite fundamental differences between the two faiths. Both Muslims and Christians acknowledge his existence and revere him.

The celebration of the birth of Messiah and Eid-ul-Fitr, the celebration of the end of Ramadaan, provide South African Christians and Muslims with an opportunity of injecting a spiritual dimension into the shaping of our fledging democracy.

The Qur'an makes references to Christians and Jews finding common ground with Muslims. In South Africa, the importance of moral values must be emphasised.

Christians and Eid-ul-Fitr should be a time to remind us all to work together with people of other faiths and creeds, including traditional African religious groups, for a better and just society.

Prophet Muhammad (God peace and blessings be upon him) said people are equal, just like the teeth of a comb; they are all children of Adam who was created from clay.

It is this principle of human equality and our common lineage that needs to be understood and appreciated in South Africa. This is should also be a time to remember the crisis in the Middle East where Christians and Muslim Palestinians are struggling against all odds to affirm their rights to Palestine, to dignity and freedom.

While observing the days of festivities, Christians and Muslims should reflect on spreading peace throughout the world. This is one of the main goals of both Christianity and Islam.

Mr SAYED-IQBAL MOHAMED