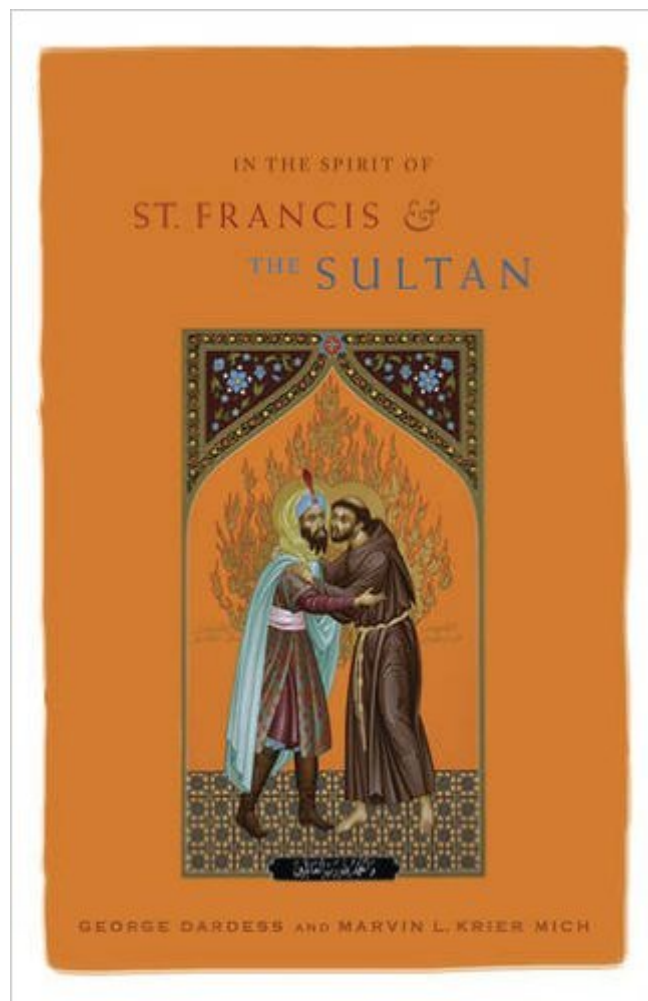


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# In The Spirit Of St. Francis And The Sultan: Catholics And Muslims Working Together For The Common Good



## Synopsis

A guide for Catholics and Muslims on how to reach greater understanding of the other's tradition in order to work together to end social injustice. This book takes on a specific challenge: We all, Muslims and non-Muslims alike, have a choice. Either we allow our fears to bear us along towards what could eventually become a war of apocalyptic dimensions. Or we can rouse ourselves from our fearful obsessions and search for ways not only to reverse this negative trend but also, and most importantly, to focus the world's energies on achieving peace and human flourishing (from the Preface). Taking up the story of the peaceful encounter between St. Francis of Assisi and Sultan Malek al-Kamil, the authors attempt to increase understanding between Christians and Muslims and to demonstrate how Christians and Muslims can work together for social justice. Basic tenets of both Christians and Muslims are described using clear, accessible language intended for general readers. After demonstrating how both the Bible and Qur'an call for actions that promote the common good and love of neighbor, Dardess and Mich suggest practical ways for Muslims and Christians to come together to implement specific programs of social justice.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Please take and read this book, written by a well known and respected Roman Catholic Deacon, George Dardess, and the head of a Catholic social action agency, Marvin Mich, regarding the prophetic life and example of one of our best known and beloved Saints, Francis of Assisi. I was drawn to this book initially to learn more of Saint Francis, having heard he opposed the unjust invasions by our military Crusades, by himself traveling, personally, on foot, as Jesus commands

us, to speak peace with the Sultan. Their conversation is a model of the effectiveness of nonviolent direct action, one we need now more than ever to put into action. This historical study therefore serves as worthy example for what we must now do, and includes concrete steps we must take now in the true practice of our Faith, if we deserve the name of Faith. Please see also these thoughtful and well researched studies by Deacon Dardess *Do We Worship the Same God?: Comparing the Bible And the Qur'an*, *Reclaiming Beauty for the Good of the World: Muslim & Christian Creativity as Moral Power*, *Meeting Islam: A Guide for Christians* (A Many Mansions Book) and others. Please also study *The Tent of Abraham: Stories of Hope and Peace for Jews, Christians, and Muslims*, written in part by the very Reverend Sister Joan Chittister OSB. For further studies on this historic meeting of Saint Francis with the Sultan, a history suppressed and ignored at our peril, please see *The Saint and the Sultan: The Crusades, Islam, and Francis of Assisi's Mission of Peace*, *Saint Francis and the Sultan: The Curious History of a Christian-Muslim Encounter* and many others. Work for peace through Nonviolence. Study *The God of Peace: Toward a Theology of Nonviolence*. For further information on Islam please read *For God And Country: Faith and Patriotism Under Fire*.

In the spirit of *St. Francis & the Sultan: Catholics and Muslims working together for the common good*. By George Dardess and Marvin L. Krier. Mich, Maryknoll, NY, USA, Orbis Books, 2011, 205 pages, \$20.00. The authors of this book have the credibility to write about Muslim Christian dialogue because they have organized and participated in interfaith dialogue groups already (pp xiv-xv). The authors envision organizing eight gatherings which would incorporate JustFaith's key elements: prayer, community-building, study of each religion's scriptures and social justice traditions, and the planning of actions to promote the common good (p. xiv). The authors chose to base these Muslim Christian encounters on the model of a meeting that took place in 1219 near Damietta, Egypt between St. Francis of Assisi and Sultan Malik al-Kamil. This meeting took place as the colleagues of these two individuals were at war with each other. Both the Bible and the Qur'an encourage such encounters: *Mat. 5:9 Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God. James 3:18 Peacemakers who sow in peace raise a harvest of righteousness. Sura 5:48 Strive together as a race to do works of justice.... Sura 2:62 To those who believe, Muslims, Christians... and do works of justice -they shall receive their reward from their Cherisher and Sustainer. Sura 29:46 Listen and respond to the People of the Message (Jews and Christians) only in the fairest way - unless they are behaving maliciously.* The authors suggest that the initial meeting of today's Muslim-Christian groups include tracing some of the commonalities between the two religions - commonalities of creed, symbol, and practice because without an appreciation of the commonalities, dialogue can not

begin (p.27). Dealing with differences can be left for later. The authors help Christian readers understand how Muslims usually misinterpret (and reject) Christian scriptures based on a misreading of the word 'beget'. In the Qur'an, the word beget refers only to the physical act of fathering a child. But based on this interpretation, Christians can point out that they are as adamantly opposed to the literal meaning of 'beget' as Muslims are (p.58). I was sad to learn about some of the dark aspects of Christian history such as: (1) After the Crusaders of the Second Crusade of 1187 surrendered Jerusalem to Saladin's armies, Saladin ordered that Jerusalem's conquered Christian population be treated humanely, in contrast to the slaughter visited on the then-Muslim inhabitants in 1099 by the Christian knights of the first Crusade, (2) In 1218, Cardinal Pelagius Galvini, an Italian Bishop to whom Pope Honorius had given the duty of crushing Muslims, insisted that the Crusaders attack Damietta immediately. We learn of his attitude toward Muslims from an eye witness who overheard his prayer, "...that we may be able to convert the perfidious and worthless people...(p.91), (3) Opposition to the Crusades was considered a sign of heresy (p.133), (4) The Church seemed to foment the idea of the Crusades and to suppress the efforts of people like Francis, who embodied a completely different (peace making) response to Muslims (p.136). One practical way for Muslims and Christians to work together is in the area of alternative models of food production and distribution to address the food needs of our communities. The authors discuss community gardens in vacant city lots, and church or mosque properties as well as Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) that establish direct links between farmers and consumers. Other possible joint projects include defending the right to life and the family and promoting justice for the poor. Scott Hedley, Research associate, Dallas, TX, USA

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