

## **The Christians are all from abroad, and cannot become citizen of the country.**

To begin from the experience of Morocco (25,000 Catholics of 90 nationalities in a population of 33 million Moslems); the Christians are all from abroad, and cannot become citizen of the country, even if there is "freedom of religion". That involves those who take part in the cultural, social and economic life of the country, but they absolutely cannot get involved in the workings of national or international political decisions. Our responsibility as a Church is to help these foreigners in transit, to understand that they are in the front line of the dialogue of life with the Muslims. In the companies where they work, in universities or schools, they are the link to this Muslim society.

- they are witnesses of a Love which exceeds them;
- they are witnesses of this God who carries "a loving sight" on men, no matter what their culture or their religion is.

Their witness of life is fundamental for the life of the Church. A Muslim friend told me one day "your presence, however small, is very important so that we can understand that there are different ways towards God."

**Our responsibility as a Church** is to help these Christians to accept, along with their Muslim friends, going back into a path of acceptance of the difference of the other, of meeting, in a spirit of total freedom, going back to a humble attitude of trust towards the other. That is not always easy to accept in a world of efficiency, but it is this attitude that allow us to continue to live in these countries in peace and serenity, even if there are tensions sometimes. And the Christians notice with joy, that in contact with Islam their Christian faith is purified and deepened.

**Our responsibility as a Church** is to help these passing Christians to better understand that they can live their Christian faith with joy and passion, in a totally Muslim society. This will help them to return to their countries with another view of the Muslims they will meet, and to destroy some "a priori" ideas that threaten to corrupt the world.

**Our responsibility as a Church** is to help Christians understand that they are "signs"; and as reminded by Pope John Paul II during an ad limina visit "**we do not ask a sign to be numerous, but they are asked to signify something**".

Our church is a "sign" in virtue of the communion we try to live, despite the differences in our cultures and nationalities. Despite the very small number of Christians who are from the Middle East, our "sign" would be even stronger **if we had one or two Arab priests in our presbyterium**. Such a presence, far from any proselytism, would be a great richness for the Church.

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