



# Ecumenical/Interfaith Committee Joint Committee on Franciscan Unity



## Assalamu Alaikum

by Mike Carsten, OFS

*Assalamu alaikum* is the traditional Muslim greeting, which is not something most of our sisters and brothers hear every day. Nor do we often hear positive comments when the name Allah is used in reference to God. In today's world, there are certain buzz words that catch our attention and give us pause, which makes our anxiety rise. What is the conditioned response to our angst? Fear. Keep people out. We must "build a wall."

My wife Kathy and I work and serve the poor on the streets of Detroit, a stone's throw from the city of Dearborn. Dearborn is home to the largest population of Muslims in the United States. If I have learned anything serving the poor on the streets of Detroit, it is that poverty, misery, hunger, and fear know neither jurisdictional boundaries, nor honor or recognition of religious affiliations.

This past month, a young man volunteered with us as we served the poor. He is 19, a Muslim, and his family has sent him here from Turkey to escape the current political turmoil and violence in his homeland. He is a senior in high school learning our language and experiencing our culture. For this young adult's parents, the United States is viewed and used as "sanctuary." Coming to downtown Detroit and serving the homeless and poor was not anything that was on this young person's radar when his parents sent him here for an education. Yet here he was. How did he come to us? He was brought by another 19-year-old high school senior who is here in Michigan from Poland. They are both looking to serve, and at the same time experience a place of peace and community. Imagine! A 19-year-old Catholic high school senior works side by side, hand in hand with a 19-year-old Muslim high school senior, serving those in need regardless of race, ethnicity, or religious affiliation, serving with volunteers who are Secular Franciscans, Southern Baptists, Romanian Orthodox, Lutheran, and agnostic.

Our Rule, Constitutions, and National Statutes call for us in our Ecumenical and Interfaith efforts to move beyond talk. We are called to follow the example of the young adults I have mentioned above and fearlessly move out into our communities

From our Rule, we read:

Secular Franciscans

- ❖ should seek to encounter the living and active person of Christ in their brothers and sisters. *Article 5*
- ❖ are stewards of the goods received for the benefit of God's children. *Article 11*
- ❖ should set themselves free to love God and their brothers and sisters. *Article 12*

- ❖ with a gentle and courteous spirit accept all people as a gift of the Lord and an image of Christ. *Article 13*
- ❖ place themselves on an equal basis with all people, especially with the lowly. *Article 13*
- ❖ seek out ways of unity and fraternal harmony through dialogue. *Article 14*
- ❖ trusting in the presence of the divine seed in everyone. *Article 14*
- ❖ strive to bring joy and hope to others. *Article 14*

We are called to **set ourselves free** to love God and our brothers and sisters — all of them.

It is my honor as the Ecumenical and Interfaith Chair to assist each of you to fulfill the plea of the National Fraternity.

### ***O Breath of God, unite us in action!***

2016-2017 Theme of the National Secular Franciscan Fraternity - USA

The Ecumenical and Interfaith Committee is here to help you in your journey, to encourage you to action, and then to help you tell your stories.

To empower you to “live the gospel of our Lord” and “make present the charism of our common Seraphic Father.”

To that end, we have created a new Ecumenical and Interfaith website: [www.ofsusaecumenicalinterfaith.org](http://www.ofsusaecumenicalinterfaith.org).

The website is active; the list below is our beginning.

- ❖ Calendar of events
- ❖ Photo gallery for your Ecumenical and Interfaith photos
- ❖ A page for each Committee component:
- ❖ Ecumenical and Interfaith
- ❖ Joint Community on Franciscan Unity
- ❖ Interfaith prayer services for your use, and
- ❖ Links with related information.



***Yes - O Breath of God, unite us in action!***

*Assalamu alaikum / Peace be upon you*

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Ecumenical and Interfaith Committee Chair

Our e-mail address – [info@ofsusaecumenicalinterfaith.org](mailto:info@ofsusaecumenicalinterfaith.org)

***Share with us your Ecumenical and Interfaith experiences, photos and stories.  
Please let us know how we can help you.***