

Muslims

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cently, Iraq's Saddam Hussein — call for a jihad, Renard observed, they are using the word as a rallying cry. The U.S. government did the same thing during the recent Persian Gulf war, he remarked, when the conflict was referred to as a "just war," even as many religious leaders denied that it was.

The fact that Islam is spread throughout so many countries helps to account for some diversity in its practice, Nahas said. "Islam as practiced in Indonesia is different than the way it is practiced in Egypt," Nahas said, adding that even among Catholics, religious practices differ among ethnic groups such as the Italians and the Irish.

Athletes

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The only ND student/athlete who has verbally committed to a school, however, is Rick Shaw, who accepted a four-year basketball scholarship to Bryant College (Division 2) in Smithfield, Rhode Island.

The 6-0 senior said it was tough to predict what next season will bring as far as playing time. He does know, however, that the team will need a couple of big players because several seniors will graduate in May.

Shaw is not the only Notre Dame athlete drawing attention from colleges. Geoff Woodworth and Brian Sheehan are considering basketball and football scholarships, Mike Bennett is hoping for a baseball or football scholarship, and Rich O'Kane is being considered for a football scholarship.

School officials at the Aquinas Institute and Our Lady of Mercy noted that several students are being recruited at their respective schools. They were unable to disclose any specific information, however.

Islam can even differ as practiced in neighboring nations.

For example, during the recent Middle East conflict, one item receiving play in the media was that women in Saudi Arabia are not allowed to drive automobiles.

Laila Abdel-Dayem, who moved to the United States from Egypt 17 years ago, observed that in her native land, women have been allowed to drive for many years. But when they go on pilgrimage to the holy sites in Saudi Arabia, they have to forgo driving. "With the practice of any religion, the culture interferes," she said.

Meanwhile, Abdel-Dayem is herself a counter to the notions that Islam is somehow inherently sexist. She graduated college in Egypt, and is now a mechanical engineer with a doctorate.

"The religion itself says that a woman has the right to be educated," Abdel-Dayem explained. "A woman has the right to her own inheritance. If she comes into a marriage, she can be a separate entity from an economic point of view from her husband. A woman does not have to take her husband's name in Islam. She keeps her own identity."

In fact, when Islam emerged in the seventh century, it was radical in the way it treated women, Renard noted.

"The Koran's attitude toward women represented a tremendous improvement in the lot of women over previous times," Renard observed.

Women frequently held positions of authority in Islamic society, Renard pointed out. The Koran, meanwhile, abolished infanticide, which some tribes practiced on female babies. And Islamic women are allowed to initiate divorce if they are abused.

Still, inequities do exist in the treatment of women, Homerin acknowledged. Although Muslim law requires that women receive a portion of inheritances, they are entitled to only half of what men receive (because of the assumption that husbands or male relatives will take care of them). Husbands are allowed to beat their wives — but only as a last resort, and not brutally. Muslim men can marry Jewish or Christian women, but a Muslim woman is only allowed to marry a Muslim man.

Homerin observed, however, that Islam is not alone in sometimes according lesser status than men to women. "In the Christian world," he said, "throughout the

The Five Pillars of Islam

The duties of Islam are summed up in what are known as the "Five Pillars of Islam."

- reciting the profession of faith — "There is no god but God, and Muhammad is his prophet."
- praying five times daily while facing Mecca;
- fasting from sunrise to sunset during the month of Ramadan;
- giving alms (a set percentage of one's wealth) to the poor;
- undertaking a pilgrimage to Mecca during the first 10 days of the last month of the lunar year at least once in one's life (if financially and physically possible).

Middle Ages it was hotly argued whether women had souls. This was not the case in Islam.

"No religion has a particularly good record about women," he added.

Further, Islam differs from Judaism and Christianity in that it has always avoided race and class distinctions, Homerin said. In Islamic society, he explained, a person's abilities decide his or her status. Thus the political leadership can include non-Moslems — as is the case with Tariq Aziz, Iraq's foreign minister, who is a Catholic.

This lack of racial prejudice helps to account for some of the spread of Islam in the Third World, Homerin suggested. It also helps to explain the rate of its growth in the United States, where Blacks account for many of the converts, he said.

A further misconception concerning Islam focuses on the current tensions in the Middle East between Israel and its neighbors. Abdel-Dayem said that the conflict is not with the Jewish people per se, but with the state of Israel.

"Before the 1967 (Arab-Israeli) war, Jews were living in Egypt," Abdel-Dayem said. "I had classmates who were Jewish. I had teachers who were Jewish. My uncle married a Jewish woman."

"(The conflict) is political, not religious," Abdel-Dayem declared.

This is further borne out by the fact that Muslims and Jews are currently involved with Christians in interreligious dialogues, noted John Borelli, staff member of the Interreligious Relations of the

National Conference of Catholic Bishops' Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs Committee.

"There are a lot of dioceses where dialogues are going on," Borelli said. "I think after the (Persian) Gulf war there are many opportunities for people to build on the dialogues."

Rochester is among the dioceses taking part in such a dialogue. An interreligious council including Christians, Jews and Moslems — as well as other faith traditions — has begun meeting. The most recent session took place March 19 at the Islamic Center.

Margery Nurnberg, director of the the Diocese of Rochester's Department of Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs, pointed out that prior to Vatican II, such dialogues would not have been possible. In its 1965 *Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions*, however, the council delineated some areas of similarity between the beliefs of Christians and Muslims, thus opening the door to discussion.

The pattern for interreligious gatherings was established by the ecumenical gatherings with Christian denominations, Nurnberg noted. Once that groundwork was laid, she said, "It made good sense to work with other faiths. We do not worship separate gods."

Environmental and social issues are becoming global, Nurnberg said, thus the different faiths traditions need to work with each other to find solutions. In fact, she will be leading a workshop focusing on global spirituality at the Conference of the North Atlantic Region Interfaith Forum, scheduled for May 12-14 in Buffalo.

The conference, entitled, "Harmony Amidst Diversity: A Multi-Religious Vision for Today," will include faith communities ranging from Muslims to Native Americans.

Such dialogues are precisely what Muslims would like to see, especially in light of misperceptions of the Islamic faith engendered by centuries of misunderstanding and conflict with the Christians, Nahas noted.

"We have selfish reasons," Nahas said. "We want to learn how other people think."

"We want people to learn about Islam," Nahas added, "how it really is and not as it is stereotyped to be."

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| Guardian Angels Church 2051 E. Henrietta Rd. 334-1412 Wed. 7:30p.m. | Holy Ghost 220 Coldwater Rd. 247-3535 Fri. 8p.m. | St. Ambrose 25 Empire Blvd. 288-5000 Sun. 2p.m. & Sat. 8p.m. | St. Casimir's 1004 Davis St., Elmira 607-734-1622 Sat. 8p.m. | St. James 119 Brockley Rd. 482-9796 Thur. 7:30p.m. | St. Philip Neri 1772 Clifford Ave. 482-2400 Thur. 7:30p.m. | St. Theodore 170 Spencerport Rd. 429-6811 Sun. 7:30p.m. |
| Holy Cross 4488 Lake Ave. 663-2244 Thur. 8p.m. | Most Precious Blood 179 Stenson St. 458-6079 Fri. 7:30p.m. | St. Anne 1600 Mt. Hope Ave. 458-6079 Thur. 7:30p.m. | St. Cecilia's 2732 Culver Rd. 467-4286 Fri. 8p.m. | St. Mark's 54 Kuhn Rd. 225-3710 Fri. 8p.m. | St. Rita's 1008 Maple Dr. 671-1100 Sun. 7:30p.m. | St. Thomas The Apostle 41 Colebrook Dr. 342-2323 Sat. 8p.m. |
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