

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا كُنْتُمْ عَلَيْكُمْ أَنْصِبًا كَمَا كُنْتُمْ عَلَى الَّذِينَ مِن قَبْلِكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَّقُونَ

❶! You who believe! Fasting is prescribed for you as it was prescribed for the people before you, so that you may acquire self control and God-consciousness -

Quran 2:183

1431st Ramadan - the Month of Blessings and Peace



2.8 billion Muslims of the world will celebrate the blessed month of Ramadan starting Wednesday, August 11, 2010. During this month, healthy Muslim adults will observe fasting during the daylight hours.

Muslim Fasting is a total abstention from eating and drinking from dawn to dusk for 29 or 30 days of the month of Ramadan. In addition, avoiding immoral behavior and anger and showing compassion is part of the requirements of the fasting. The purpose of fasting is manifold. Allah (the God Almighty) mentioned it in the Holy Book of the Muslims, Quran, that the fasting is prescribed for the believers as it was prescribed for the people before them, so that they may acquire self control and God-consciousness (Quran 2:183). Therefore, the purpose of fasting is to develop self-control, God-consciousness, improvement of health by reducing or eliminating impurities from the body, and to become aware of the plight of the poor, hungry, and the sick.

Ramadan is a month of spiritual consciousness and high sense of social responsibility. The fulfillment of one's obligations during this month is rewarded by 70 times. Fasting is one of the 5 pillars of Islam including Announcement of Faith, Salaat (praying 5 times a day), Zakaat (the right of the poor on the wealth of the financially able), Fasting during the month of Ramadan, and Hajj (once a life time pilgrimage to Kaaba). It is an obligation on every adult and healthy Muslim to fast during the month of Ramadan.

The month of Ramadan is also the month in which the Holy Quran was sent down from highest level of heaven to the 1st level, from where it was revealed to Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) in a piece meal basis over a period of 23 years. It is a

very joyous occasion for the Muslims of the world. They fast during the day, pray, and read Quran during the part of the night.

There is a special night called the Night of Power, which is mentioned in the Quran (Chapter 97), as a night of peace, mercy, and light. Worshiping during this night is better than the worship of 1,000 months. During this night, Muhammad was chosen by Allah, as the Messenger and Quran was sent to the 1st level of heaven. During this night, Allah (the God Almighty) sends down an army of special angels, under the leadership of Archangel Gabriel, who go to every nook and cranny of the earth to pray for the mercy of Allah (the God Almighty) and salvation of the believers.

Unlike common calendar, which is Solar based, Islamic calendar is Lunar based. It does not mean that Muslims worship moon. It is another way to count days of the month and the year. Like all Islamic months, Ramadan, 9th lunar month, begins after sighting the Crescent, but not the new moon. The probability to see the Crescent for Ramadan is on Tuesday, August 10, 2010 just after sunset on the western horizon.

The population of Muslims in the US is estimated at 9 million, of which about 2 million lives in California. All healthy Muslim adults including homemakers, school-going kids around the age of 13, factory workers, businessmen, and others among them will be fasting. Your Muslim neighbors will be getting up very early to take their sahoor, a pre-dawn meal before starting their fast. So, don't get alarmed if you hear lot of noise next door. School staff has to show understanding and consideration towards Muslim students fasting during the month of Ramadan from August 11 to Sept. 9, 2010. They should be assigned alternate activities instead of strenuous gym activities.

Physicians should also understand that their patients might be fasting. They should prescribe the medicine in a way that they could take it with their pre-dawn or after sunset meals. However, if the patients' life may be in jeopardy, explain it to the patients or seek help from a Muslim Medical Chaplain at a local hospital, (like Imam Ali Siddiqui, 707-545-5234, Siddiqui@aol.com) or an Imam/director of a local Masjid/Islamic Center. According to Muslim physicians, there are some physiological benefits from Muslim Fasting (total abstention from food and liquids) including lowering of blood sugar, lowering of cholesterol, and lowering of systolic blood pressure.

At the completion of month of Fasting, Muslims all over the world celebrate their holiday of Eid al-Fitr. It is the biggest Muslim holiday. It is a true thanksgiving for a Muslim believer for having the opportunity to obey Allah (the God Almighty) by observing Fasting. It is celebrated on the 1st day of 10th lunar month, Shaw'waal. This year, it will be on Friday, September 10, 2010. The holiday begins with Muslims putting on their best, preferably new clothes and going to the Eid congregation. Eid congregations are very large gatherings of Muslim men, women, and children across the country. You can witness these gathering at local Convention Centers, Fair grounds, and/or Community Parks. Afterwards, people greet each other with hugs and handshakes. The children receive gifts of money and toys. After the congregation, Muslims visit each other at their homes and hold lunches or dinners for family and friends. Don't be surprised if you are

invited to an Eid dinner or Eid celebration by your Muslim neighbor or friend. Please do accept such an invitation. The hospitality, friendliness, and variety of international Muslim cuisine will pleasantly surprise you. Greetings of Ramadan, Ramadan Karim!

The local police and other law enforcement agencies should take extra precautions, during this month around the local Masjid / mosque / Islamic Center and where the Eid Congregation will be held, for the safety of Muslims and their facilities. The Muslim Communities across the nation appreciate the local police officers and the law enforcement agencies for looking after their safety. They are also thankful of interfaith volunteers who have provided support and vigilance. Thank you! May Allah, the Creator, look after you in your hour of need! Amen!

© Imam Ali Siddiqui

P.S. Muslims should call their local Masjid for the beginning and end of Ramadan.

Additional information can be acquired through e-mail: siddiqui@aol.com

About the author:

Imam Ali Siddiqui serves the North Bay Muslim Community, CA. His other responsibilities include President, California Muslim Institute & Center for Interfaith Studies, Santa Rosa, CA; Co-Coordinator, North Bay Jewish Muslim Dialogue; Member, Sonoma County Interfaith Council and Japanese American Citizen League, Florin, CA. Previously, as an imam, he has served the Southern California Muslim Community. His other engagements were the Chairperson, Peace with Justice Center of the Pomona Valley; Member of the Board, Clergy and Laity United for Economic Justice, Los Angeles and UNA of Pomona Valley; and the President, Corona-Norco Interfaith Association.

For additional information about author's involvement, please visit onenationforall.org and/or Google: "Imam Ali Siddiqui"

Other publications by the author:

Zakat-ul-Fitr is Wajib

Zakat al-Maal - the right of the Poor

Lai-la-tul Qadr - The Night of Mercy and Peace

Eid al-Fitr - A True Thanksgiving

The Significance of Eid

A PowerPoint presentation About Ramadan for schools is also available.

Imam Siddiqui is also available for speaking engagement. Please contact him at Siddiqui@aol.com ; 707-5455234.

Published by California Muslim Institute & Center for Interfaith Studies:

*Bridging the gap of understanding between the Muslims and the community
through teaching about Islam, Muslims, and the Islamic Civilization.*

California Muslim Institute & Center for Interfaith Studies, 1841 Vermillion Way,
Santa Rosa, CA 95403; siddiqui@aol.com; 707-545-5234