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## A Journey toward the Excellence of the Human Family *Historic Malcolm Shabazz Mosque – May 20, 2012*

Muslims and Christians recommit to persevere in dialogue

May 20, 2012 in the Malcolm Shabazz Mosque in Harlem, New York marked the 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the encounter and pact “to work unceasingly for peace and unity” made by two giant luminaries of the human spirit in interfaith dialogue, Imam Warith Deen Mohammed (1933-2008), son of Elijah Muhammad, religious and spiritual leader of the largest Muslim association in America, and Chiara Lubich (1920-2008), a Catholic lay woman, founder of the international Focolare Movement.

Muslims, with Imams from various parts of the United States, Christians, members of other religions and representatives of Religions for Peace-USA filled the prayer hall of the mosque and adjacent rooms. Cardinal Theodore McCarrick, Archbishop Emeritus of Washington, gave a heartfelt message encouraging this dialogue to continue. Cardinal Timothy Dolan, Archbishop of New York and Cardinal William Keeler, archbishop Emeritus of Baltimore, sent messages of appreciation and support for this fruitful dialogue and its contribution for the good of humanity and our communities.

The program was designed to help participants not only retrace the steps of a journey that began with that first encounter on May 18, 1997 at the historic mosque, but to give witness to the developments that have followed. Excerpts of talks and interviews given by Chiara Lubich and Imam Mohammed charged those present with a renewed desire to adhere to their message and persevere along the challenging journey of dialogue. Youth from both communities prepared together musical pieces offered to all present.

In 1997 the main protagonists were Chiara Lubich and Imam Mohammed. This event witnessed how two communities, one Muslim and one Christian, have become a tangible sign and proof of the vision of that pact which sealed a commitment “to work unceasingly for peace and unity.”

Focolare president Maria Voce said in a video message, “The certainty that we are together strengthens us with courage to follow this road, to show to the world that it is truly possible to live together as brothers and sisters even though we are of different faiths, cultures and ethnic groups.”

Religions for Peace-USA concluded their message on this occasion saying, "May you continue to inspire all of us in building a sense of belonging to the one human family."

One of the participants said, “A new phase has begun in our relationship with new ideas of concrete joint projects. There is great hope!” And another, “It was important that 9/11, present in every dialogue involving Muslim friends, was mentioned. Relationships based on love have a healing effect.”

Read more about the ongoing relationship between the two communities in the May 2012 issue of the Focolare magazine *Living City* ([www.livingcitymagazine.com](http://www.livingcitymagazine.com)). Photos available upon request at: [livingcity@optonline.net](mailto:livingcity@optonline.net). [www.focolare.us](http://www.focolare.us)