



Christian Ude

Speech by Lord Mayor Christian Ude on the occasion of the
Eugen-Biser-Award Ceremony
on November 22, 2008, at 11.00 hrs., Allerheiligen-Hofkirche

(The spoken word prevails !)

(Address !)

Even though it has been repeated like a prayer wheel in recent weeks and months, what could be more appropriate on this occasion than quoting the motto of this year's 850th Anniversary of the Foundation of the City of Munich once again:

„ Building Bridges „

Let me say that you, dear Professor Biser, have distinguished yourself over a number of years as a bridge-builder, so to speak, as a pioneer and patron, not just of Christian religions, but also in promoting as the interreligious dialogue with Judaism and Islam.

And the Eugen-Biser Foundation, which is presenting the Eugen-Biser-Award today for the third time, and, for the first time, to three Muslim dignitaries, has put its focus on the building of bridges between the religions, no doubt.

On this occasion, I wish to extend a cordial welcome to you here on behalf of the City of Munich and greet all guests present here today.

Let me express, above all, my heartfelt congratulations and expression of gratitude to the three dignitaries,

Prof. Dr. H.R.H. Prince Ghazi bin Muhammad bin Talal of Jordan,
Shaykh Al-Habib Ali Zain Al-Abidin Al-Jifri from the United Arab Emirates and H.E.
Shaykh Prof. Dr. Mustafa Cerić, Grand Mufti of Bosnia and Herzegovina !

You also greatly distinguished yourselves in the building of bridges between Islam and Christianity.

„Together, Muslims and Christians make up for more than half of the world population. Without peace and justice between these two religious communities there can be no noteworthy peace in the world.“

This is a quotation from „A Common Word between Us and You“ which you had addressed to the representatives of the Christian churches at the close of Ramadan together with over 100 other Islam Scholars.

And this precisely reflects how we feel in the multireligious City of Munich. Even in Munich, the religious community of the Christian sister churches and Muslims combined constitutes far more than half, almost 70 % of the population of the city.

Even here, the fruitful common grounds of the denominations, in particular of Muslims and Christians, are an indispensable precondition for peace in the city.

Therefore, the example of Munich, clearly demonstrates what is needed to accomplish interreligious cooperation: The precondition for mutual recognition is not distrust and isolation, not even just leaving each other alone, but showing respect and tolerance and a dialogue on an equal footing.

And the City of Munich has already launched a number of initiatives along these lines to provide the necessary support, starting from the Muslim Round Table which meets twice a year, including the Muslim religious education which is taught at two Munich schools since the beginning of the school year, and the new further training programme for Muslim ministers.

A central concern of our city is here even to ensure that the Islam in Munich is coming out from the backyards and become evident. With the opening of the Jewish Center, Jewish life has returned to the city center of Munich. Likewise, we also want to enable

the Muslims in our city, they also need an open house of prayer at a central location of the city where movement and dialogue can happen.

Muslims are a part of the civic society. They also bear responsibility for the inter-religious discourse in the city. This includes, of course, coming to terms with differences and accept them.

And it is absolutely indispensable that all people living here are respecting the basic rights of all other people and our constitutional order.

Every process of rapprochement looks for the common things at first. What Christians and Muslims unifies is the faith in one God, are values like humanity and love, and, it is the desire to live in peace.

And in this sense, this award ceremony today, and in particular the three dignitaries themselves, are a prime example.

Let me kindly thank you for all that.