

Catholic

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WHAT CATHOLICS SHOULD KNOW

BY MARY MARGARET FUNK, OSB

As time progresses, we Catholics are going to rub shoulders more and more with Muslims, those who follow the Islam religion. After all, there are 1.57 billion Muslims, compared to about 2 billion Christians, 1.2 billion of whom are Roman Catholic. The Muslims we hear most about in the news are fundamentalists who in no way represent the Muslims living in our communities. Our challenge as Catholics is to get to know more about our Muslim brothers and sisters. As the bishops at Vatican II wrote, "Although in the course of the centuries many quarrels and hostilities have arisen between Christians and Muslims, this sacred Synod urges all to forget the past and to strive sincerely for mutual understanding." In this *Update*, we'll look at Islam in a broad sense. We'll look at the founding of Islam and examine the five pillars of Islam.

WHO WAS MOHAMMAD?

Unlike Christians, who believe that Jesus was the Son of God and an indivisible part of God, Muslims believe

in the revelation of God through the Quran that was given to Mohammad. For a Muslim, the Quran is God's word.

Mohammad was born in Mecca (in what is now Saudi Arabia) in 570.



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When Mohammad grew up, he became a merchant, traveling as far as Yemen and Syria with his uncle, Abu Talib. On these long journeys, Mohammad mixed with Christians and Jews and was attracted to the notion of One God. He keenly felt that the Arabians, who worshiped many gods at that time, were bereft of a calling to One God.

Mohammad was also acutely aware of the unjust distribution of wealth and the plight of the poor, the masses of people who had no access to the necessities of food, clothing, and shelter in the harsh climate of the desert where everything was scarce.

When Mohammad was forty years old, he experienced a profoundly life-changing mystical experience. Through the mediation of the angel Gabriel, Muslims believe, Mohammad received the first in a series of revelations, which

that the Holy Prophet Mohammad (570–632) was a man and that he followed Adam, Abraham, Moses, David, Solomon, and Jesus as the last of the great prophets to receive divine revelation. A Muslim believes in the

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