

I realize that this homily may be controversial. But I believe it is something we need to hear and understand in light of much of the religious controversy in our world. By now we are all too familiar with the gruesome and heinous acts of terrorism and violence by ISIS and Islamic extremists. These acts and their justification (whether you like it or not) are found in the Koran (the Muslim bible if you will). Many Muslims (thankfully) choose not to focus on this part of the Koran as a “standing order” to wipe out all those who do not conform to their religion of Islam.

However, One could potentially draw a parallel to parts of the Old Testament where Israel with God's blessing and help slays and wipes out its enemies in its acquisition of the Promised Land. Read in a literal sense, certainly one could come away with this conclusion. But read as a whole, the Old and New Testament represent the ***gradual*** unfolding and understanding of God's revelation of himself; first to the Jews, and then to all of humanity over the course of 2000 years, culminating in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

In contrast, Muslims believe the Koran was verbally revealed by God to the prophet [Muhammad](#) through the angel [Gabriel](#) gradually over a period of just **23** years, beginning on 22 December 609 A.D. This revelation was then composed by the same prophet Mohamed. Again, this is vastly different from the Bible, which is a collection of inspired books, written by different authors, over a period of 2000 years.

The bible, then, is a record of the developmental revelation and understanding of God as He revealed himself to the prophets of the Old Testament through the culmination of his ultimate self-revelation in the person of Jesus Christ. As Christians we believe that the fullness of God's revelation of himself culminates in the life, ministry, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. For us Christians, Jesus is the last word of God's revelation of himself to the world and his command of how to act and be until he comes again.

For Christians, Jesus is our model of how to be fully human, as well as how to act in accord with the divine nature of our souls. Christianity teaches us that we are created by God and that God desires us to share in his divine life; first in a limited way here on earth, but eternally so in heaven. How we live and conduct ourselves in our earthly bodies in relation to our neighbors, determines how and where our souls will spend eternity. This destiny (as Jesus teaches us) depends largely on how well we have loved and forgiven. Jesus loved all and forgave all. If we can do (or at least try to do) the same, then the Good Shepherd will acknowledge us as one of his flock.

This is vastly different than the Allah of Islam. Many people will say that Christians and Muslims worship the same God. I don't know. Certainly both religions acknowledge their God as the God of Abraham. But from there, their understandings differ. Allah requires or demands "submission." Submission is the word from which Islam derives its name. Now, I doubt that Christians would say that they **would not** submit themselves to God. But here's the difference. Allah **demand**s submission of his followers. He can **command** his followers to give their lives for him at any time. And as we've unfortunately seen through acts of terrorism, many have adapted this radical, active theology. In contrast, the God of Jesus Christ submits **himself** (His Son) to the death that was meant for all of us. The God of Christianity submits **himself** to death, so that we might live; not the other way around. Yes, there are martyrs in the Christian faith, in fact millions of them. But they died for their **love** of God, who died for them; not as a way to "prove" their worthiness or "earn" their salvation. That's a big difference.

I say all of this to highlight the fact that the God of Christianity is a lover, a giver, one who does not **need** strict or blind obedience, but, rather, one who wants us to know His nature and the nature of our existence: namely, to live in the happiness of communion with Him (who has willed everything into existence) and to share in this divine life. While we may fall short of this call by going our own way, the God of Jesus Christ is always there to forgive us and put us back on the right track. The submission he asks of us is not to just follow a set of rules and regulations because He needs us to, but rather (the submission He asks of us) is to extend the same mercy, forgiveness, and love he constantly offers us, to all in our world, especially those who have hurt and offended us. This is what it means to be a disciple of Christ. This is what it means “to live in the light” of God.