

## Famidah Dirampaten: Islam Essentially Teaches Love and Compassion

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June 4, 2018



New York – "Racism is rooted in the fact that we don't know other civilizations. We can easily hate or be afraid of something we really do not know anything about," said Famidah Dirampaten, a Unification Theological Seminary student who embraces the Islamic faith and is of [Maranao](#) descent in southern Philippines.

For the Tuesday prayer service at UTS, it was Dirampaten's turn to deliver a sermon one fine April afternoon. It was something students, faculty and staff looked forward to, because we wanted to

hear from a woman who is a practicing Muslim.

Dirampaten introduced to us a word for the day: taaruf or taarafna which means "knowing" or "knowing one another" in Arabic. "When we get to know each other, our assumptions will begin to fall away," she explained.

In Islam, Dirampaten said that, God or Allah is asking people to know each other and appreciate each other's humanity. Citing verses in the Quran, the [Surah Al-Hujurat 49 Ayat 13](#), Dirampaten explained that these are the beautiful verses that deal with diversity.

She emphasized that Allah [SWT](#) has called the attention to three cardinal truths: 1) that the origin of all human beings is one and the same; 2) that in spite of being one in origin, it is natural that we be divided into nations and tribes; and 3) that the only basis of superiority or excellence among peoples is that of moral elevation which is gained by a consciousness of God.

According to Dirampaten, the cardinal truth of humanity originating in one source should eliminate racism. "We are a large family, being a believer or non-believer doesn't even matter. We are of the same equal footing if we believe that we all came from the same God or same parents," she explained. She added that racism could be eliminated by acknowledging each other's diversity and distinctiveness, as God has created nations and tribes to be able to know "yourselves and one another".

"I think it is a good learning experience to meet people from other traditions. It is something which allows us to discover ourselves," she said. Dirampaten said that Islam teaches that the only basis of superiority or excellence is that of moral excellence which means that "the best among people are those who are most conscious of God, who do not establish themselves as nobler than the other." She is hopeful that one day, people will live a life of love and justice through constant education and reaching out, as all major faiths in the world teach similar values of pluralism, tolerance, love, compassion, and mercy.

### Worship service

It is important for students to take responsibility for their spiritual life through attending chapel services, prayer meetings, and engaging in individual prayer, reflection and religious study. Besides studying their own tradition's scripture, students are encouraged to build their spiritual life through studying the scriptures of other religions. Voluntary service, which is also encouraged, adds an active dimension to personal spiritual growth. Academic work is the core of Seminary training and is thoroughly evaluated, but intellectual activities without spiritual discipline and insight can become meaningless or destructive to balanced leadership education.

All UTS Students are encouraged to practice their own religious tradition while at UTS, and also to explore the practice of other religious traditions on campus. Students of all faiths are welcome to participate in the weekly community worship service that takes place every Tuesday at 5:45pm. The community worship service is organized and run by students, the Chaplain, and the Director of Student Life.

Chapel service is a great opportunity for students to

- Express their unique faith perspective in the seminary
- Practice of public speaking
- Create a sense of community for students
- Get to know one another.