

## **Ramadan Greeting**

We are in the early part of the Islamic month of Ramadan which, for Muslims, is a month of prayer, fasting, almsgiving and spiritual reflection. As one of the Five Pillars of Islam, Ramadan is an opportunity for Muslims to renew their commitment to their faith in God and to the principles of charity and compassion.

'Celebrating Diversity' is one of the key characteristics of a Mary Ward school, and acknowledging the devotion and example of some of our Muslim students and friends at this time provides an opportunity to reflect again on how we are made strong by our respect for diversity and not in spite of our differences. We remember, also, how fortunate we are to live in a society where all people of faith have the right to worship freely and expect to be treated with respect. We remember religious believers throughout the world who practise their faith and turn to God under the tyranny of persecution.

In his Ramadan message a few years ago, Pope Francis expressed the hope that "all Christians and Muslims may be true promoters of mutual respect and friendship, in particular through education."

In relation to dialogue between Christians and Muslims, the Pope added, "We are called to respect the religion of the other, its teachings, its symbols, its values. It is clear that when we show respect for the religion of our neighbours or when we offer them our good wishes on the occasion of a religious celebration, we simply wish to share their joy without making reference to the content of their religious convictions... We all know that mutual respect is fundamental in any human relationship, especially among people who profess religious belief. In this way sincere and lasting friendship can grow."

Ramadan brings obvious challenges this year as people experience lockdown and isolation at a time when communities and families would usually support each other in observing the fast and celebrate with each other when breaking it each evening. But we hope that this discipline, self-denial and time of spiritual solidarity – even if at a distance – will bring growth to those observing it, and we wish our Muslim students and friends peace and blessings during their holy month, sharing in Pope Francis' prayer that their lives may glorify the Almighty and give joy to those around them.