

Fr. Perozich comments —

I was surprised and delighted to see a bishop actually speaking on matters of faith and evangelization in proclaiming Jesus as God and as the one savior of the world, with the necessity of baptism, and not just empty dialogue.

It is quite a departure from AI, immigration, lgbtq, war, synodality, and other recent episcopal proclamations.

This call by Bishop Suetta is the Catholic faith.

This pastoral letter goes to the core of the Great Commission Mt 28:19ff as well as a true charity for the salvation of souls, rather than relying on more recent statements that say God wills all religions or that one can be saved by following one's conscience in contrast to the Savior's own teachings.

Respect for Muslims where they are in their faith is a key.

Kindness and gentleness in presenting Jesus is another.

Living a Christian life and not succumbing to secularism is essential for witness.

Read on.

Italian bishop calls on Catholics to evangelize Muslims as 'act of charity'

Bishop Antonio Suetta is spearheading a diocesan campaign to evangelize Muslim migrants through public witness to the Christian faith.

Bishop Antonio Suetta
Diocese of Ventimiglia-San Remo
Wed May 27, 2026 - 11:46 am EDT

VENTIMIGLIA, Italy ([LifeSiteNews](#)) — Bishop Antonio Suetta has issued a pastoral letter urging Catholics to evangelize Muslim immigrants living in northern Italy through public witness and explicit proclamation of the Gospel.

On May 24, Pentecost Sunday, Suetta published a [pastoral letter](#) [letter at the end of this article by google translate — rp] for the his diocese of Ventimiglia-Sanremo, Italy, calling on Catholics to engage in the evangelization of Muslims residing in the region. The document, titled “There Is No Greater Love Than This,” announces that beginning with the 2026–2027 pastoral year, the diocese will undertake a specific missionary effort directed toward Muslim immigrants through catechetical formation, charitable outreach, and public witness to the Christian faith.

“We must take seriously the mandate of Jesus Christ: Go therefore and make disciples of all nations,” Suetta wrote near the conclusion of the letter, adding that **proclaiming Christ is “the highest and most beautiful act of charity.”**

Suetta framed the initiative around the example of St. Francis of Assisi and his 1219 meeting with Sultan Malik al-Kamil during the Crusades. Referring to the Franciscan tradition, Suetta wrote that Christians should not conceal their faith among non-Christians, but should instead bear witness through both conduct and explicit evangelization.

The letter repeatedly stresses that Catholics should combine respect for Muslims with missionary activity. Particularly, Suetta underlined that Muslims arriving in Western countries often associate secularized European societies with Christianity itself, but may change their perception when encountering practicing Christians. According to the bishop, “welcome and witness already begin the proclamation [of the Gospel].”

He also argued that the Church cannot neglect missionary activity toward non-Christians. Addressing the question of whether Muslims may be saved without conversion, **Suetta wrote that salvation comes only through Jesus Christ, while also citing Catholic teaching that persons ignorant of Christ may possibly attain salvation under**

certain strict conditions. He compared evangelization to throwing a rope to someone being swept away by a river current.

“The Church certainly recognizes that the ways of the Spirit know no boundaries, and it teaches that someone who, in complete ignorance of Jesus, lives faithfully before God by following his conscience may, in some way, attain salvation – though with great difficulty and without any guarantee. **In any case, one can be saved only through Jesus Christ, for since the Son of God came to dwell among us and accomplished the work of redemption, He has become the sole access to the Father,**” Suetta stated.

The bishop announced that the diocesan Office for Catechetical Pastoral Care and the diocesan Caritas would organize formation programs and meetings dedicated to relations with Muslims. The first scheduled events include an October 2026 conference on interreligious dialogue featuring Cardinal George Jacob Koovakad, prefect of the Dicastery for Interreligious Dialogue.

Suetta also devoted part of the letter to theological differences between Christianity and Islam. While acknowledging shared belief in one Creator God, he contrasted the Christian understanding of God as Father and love with what he described as the Islamic conception of a more distant deity. He further emphasized Christian belief in the divinity of Christ and in salvation through Him alone.

“Jesus Himself revealed His divinity when He said: I am the way, the truth, and the life (Jn 14:6). For a Muslim, this statement is equivalent to saying that Jesus is God, because the **Truth and the Life are two of the 99 names of God found in the Qur’an,**” Suetta wrote.

“Certainly, **the Qur’an rejects the idea that God could have a son, but the context refers to the polytheistic notion of generating offspring – something that cannot be attributed to God. It does not refer to the generation**

of the Word, which is eternal and purely spiritual, for the Son is the very Word of God. This is why the core of the Christian faith is not a theoretical doctrine but a Person: Jesus Christ,” the bishop continued.

Suetta’s pastoral letter appears unique against the background of the modern Italian church, where the leadership of the Italian Bishops’ Conference – including its president Cardinal Matteo Zuppi – has [a leftist reputation](#) on matters concerning migration and interreligious relations.

Suetta has previously attracted national attention for his public positions on moral and cultural issues. In December 2025, the diocese of Ventimiglia-Sanremo [installed](#) a “Bell for Unborn Children” at the diocesan curia in Ventimiglia as part of a pro-life initiative promoted by the Bishop.

The bell, dedicated to unborn children and rung daily at 8 p.m., generated much criticism from left-wing politicians in Liguria and across the nation, who accused the diocese of promoting “moral judgment” regarding abortion.

Responding at the time, Suetta defended the initiative as a call to prayer and reflection rather than a condemnation of women. He reiterated the Catholic Church’s teaching that abortion is morally wrong while also insisting on pastoral care for women who have undergone abortions.

The new initiative on evangelization follows several years of increased Muslim immigration in Italy, including areas near the French border administered by the diocese of Ventimiglia-Sanremo. In the letter, Suetta wrote that **Catholics must maintain both charity and clarity in dealing with religious differences, insisting that “the announcement of the Gospel to Muslims must be made with delicate respect for their freedom.”**

Google Translation of the bishop’s pastor letter below

Dear friends,

This year marks the 800th anniversary of the death of St. Francis of Assisi. Pope Leo XIV has established that, from January 10, 2026 to 10 January 2027, a special Year of St. Francis is proclaimed, in which every faithful Christian following the example of the Saint of Assisi, let himself be made a model of holiness of life and a constant witness of peace. What can he say to us, today, to our territory, to our Church, the Seraphic of Assisi? Let's look at our reality. In it we see the presence of men and women of faiths other than Christianity. The Patron saint of Italy, he certainly has something to suggest to us. Just think of an event in his life, which has remained in history: it was 1219 when, in Egypt, the simple Friar of Assisi decided to cross the frontier of the crusader camp and meet the leader of the opposing faction, armed only with the habit and his faith. It is the famous meeting between St. Francis and the Sultan. An encounter that, after eight centuries, does not cease to question us. The biographer of St. Francis, Thomas of Celano, writes that it was "the ardor of charity" to move the Poor Man: "to spread, with the outpouring of the faith in the Trinity" (St. Bonaventure, Legend Maggiore, c. IX, n. 7, in Fonti Francescane, n. 1172). We cannot know for sure what St. Francis and Malik al-Kāmil said to each other. With security, we only know that the Sultan of Egypt welcomed the Seraphic and the released unharmed, which in itself is inexplicable given the period of strong tension between Muslims and Christians. What we read is interesting in the Regola non bullata of 1221, written just two years later the meeting with the Sultan, which leaves no doubt about the Franciscan vision of evangelization.

Francis says that friars who go among the "infidels" can behave spiritually in their midst in two ways: that they do not make quarrels or disputes, but they are subject to every human creature for the love of God and confess to be

Christians; and, again, that they proclaim the word of God to raise up faith in Almighty God the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, the Creator of all things, and in the Son Redeemer and Saviour, and are baptized, and are made Christians, for unless one is born again by water and the Holy Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God (cf. FRANCIS OF ASSISI, Regola non bollata, XVI, in Fonti Francescane, nn. 42-44).

The friars must therefore not hide their faith, but – on the contrary – they must manifest it, first of all with the witness of life, which is more important of words, as Assisi reiterates in various writings: the words they risk being sterile; it is the acts that allow hearts to be opened and manifest the love of Christ. In fact, he said: "All the friars, however, may they preach with works" (Francis of Assisi, Regola non bollata, XVII, in Fonti Francescane, n. 46). At a later time we will have evangelization proper.

Dear friends, another cue that urges me to this Pastoral Letter is the 60th anniversary of the declaration *Nostra Aetate*, of the Second Vatican Council, celebrated at the end of October 2025 by Pope Leo XIV. This short but important document puts us in front of the reality of a multi- and guides us in our relationship with people of different religions. I would now like to address its application to the concrete situation of our Diocese, which in recent years has seen an increase in the presence of Muslim immigrants. This presence puts us in front of questions that we cannot avoid: the Christian perception of God and the Are Muslim women the same? What should be the Christian attitude in the their regards? What testimony can we give? How to maintain the balance between respect for their faith and the need for the proclamation of the Gospel?

To answer these and other questions, we ask our attention to the declaration *Nostra Aetate*, which teaches us to look with esteem for Muslims, "who worship the one God, living and subsisting, merciful and almighty, creator of heaven and earth"

(Our Aetate, 3). The Christian faith teaches us that "God created man in his own right." image; in the image of God he created him: male and female he created them" (Gn 1:27), which has as a consequence the recognition of the dignity of the of the whole human person. In addition, the common aspects with Muslims of the belief in God add a new stimulus to have a welcoming attitude full of respect and sincere deference. Also, recognize ourselves with them creatures of the one God puts us together before the responsibility of making to understand to a world that is distancing itself from the Creator the transcendence of life of man, and this opens the door to a collaboration with the municipality objective of honoring a basic morality that our secularized society often refuses. Hospitality and collaboration are already two ways of witnessing in a practical way the true faith in Jesus. Muslims arriving in countries Western people are often confused by observing the secularization of the society because they tend to identify – in a way that is certainly wrong, but also understandable – public immorality with the Christian faith. **Only When they get in touch with Christians who are consistent with their faith, they realize that secularization is a corruption of Christianity, and thus they begin to know the true face of Jesus** and to perceive, often without even thinking about it, the depth of God's love. This is the best and most precious gift we can and we have to give them. In the words of the declaration Nostra Aetate, **we must bear "witness to the faith and to Christian life", always "with prudence and charity, through dialogue and collaboration"** (Nostra Aetate, 2). That's how we begin to share what we do. that we have more precious. With acceptance and witness, the proclamation already begins. **Loving the neighbor, especially the stranger, also means wanting to make him sharing in the joy of the Gospel.** The Church "proclaims, and is bound to to proclaim, the Christ who is "the way, the truth and the life" (Jn 14:6), in whom men they must find the fullness of

religious life and in which God has reconciled with himself all things" (Nostra Aetate, 2). **Reception, therefore, must always be accompanied by our spiritual identity, speaking of Jesus Christ not with impositions, but with love.** Thirty-five years ago, Saint John Paul II said: "I feel the time has come to commit all the ecclesial forces for the new evangelization and for the mission ad gentes. No believer in Christ, no institution of the Church can escape." (Redemptoris Missio, 3).

If in the past the mission ad gentes, the non- had as its privileged scenario countries with a non-Christian majority Christian, now is the time to take up this responsibility at home and, for us, particularly towards Muslim immigrants. **Also Pope Francis emphasized that proclamation is everyone's duty:** "Each one baptized, whatever his or her function in the Church and the degree of instruction of his faith, he is an active subject of evangelization" (FRANCESCO, e.g. ap. Evangelii Gaudium, 120). Some might ask: "Is there really a need to announce Jesus? Can't they be saved by being faithful to their religion?" **The Church certainly recognizes that the ways of the Spirit have no frontiers, and teaches that those who, with complete ignorance of Jesus, live faithful to God following his conscience, he could somehow arrive at the salvation, but with great difficulty and without any guarantee. And, in every can only be saved through Jesus Christ, because since the The Son of God, he came to dwell among us and did the work of redemption, has become the only access to the Father:** "No one knows the Father if not the Son and the one to whom the Son wishes to reveal him" (Mt 11, 27). Therefore, to neglect the proclamation of Jesus Christ would be to despise the his saving cross and his universal mediation. After all, it would be betraying our mission as baptized persons. If we see someone trying to get out of a river, but it's swept away by the current and we have a

rope to help him, it would be gross negligence not to throw the rope, thinking that perhaps it could usher alone, so as to feel freer: the rope is liberation!

How many Muslims who live among Christians will turn to them in the day of judgment saying: "Why didn't you throw me the rope? Why Have you not made me know the truth?" Therefore, the urgency of the mission that made St. Paul exclaim: "Woe to me if I do not announce the Gospel" (1 Cor 9:16). **First of all, an interest in faith must be aroused, and this is possible through the witness of a Christian life, of a life of love, which makes others wonder what are the deep reasons for such an attitude.** And when the time comes for these questions it will be necessary – as St. Peter advises – to be **"always ready to to answer anyone who asks you to account for the hope that is in you. But let this be done with gentleness and respect"** (1 Pet 3:15-16).

But is the Islamic faith so different from the Christian faith? We have in common is faith in one God, creator of all. **For Christians, however, God he is our Father and, in his essence, he is Love. This comes as a surprise for a Muslim, who is accustomed to seeing God farther away, to whom we must submit, but we cannot know them. Even though God is unattainable by natural human forces, Christians know that in Jesus we have the full revelation of his love.** While the Qur'an admits that Jesus is "His [God's] word that He threw into Mary" (Qur'an 4:171), the Gospel of St. John says that – from the beginning – "the Word was with God and the Word was God [...] and the The Word became flesh and dwelt among us" (Jn 1:1, 14). And Jesus He himself made known to us his divinity when he said: "I am the the truth, and the life" (Jn 14:6).

This phrase, for a Muslim, is equivalent to saying that Jesus is God, because "truth" and "life" are two of the 99 names of God, which we find in the Qur'an. **Certainly the Qur'an rejects that**

God can have a son, but the context refers to the polytheistic generation of children, who certainly do not we can attribute to God. Therefore, it does not refer to that of the Word, which it is an eternal and purely spiritual generation, because the Son is the same Word of God. For this reason, the core of the Christian faith is not a theoretical doctrine, but it is a Person: Jesus Christ.

Catholics, moreover, following Jesus, must show that the reason to do God's will cannot be fear of punishment or fear of punishment. desire for a reward, but love. We are not slaves, but children; children who know that they are loved by God the Father through his Son, Jesus Christ; We want and must respond to this love from the heart.

This same reason leads us to share the great joy with others that the Son of God came to save us and teaches us to love one another. There is only one way to make people understand that God truly is love: manifest it with one's own life; becoming ourselves an expression of God's own love for others, first of all for Christians, and then for Muslims and for everyone. The best gift, the greatest good we can to give to these brothers of ours is to become a manifestation of the love of God for them. Love must be free: therefore, the proclamation of the Gospel Muslims must be asked with a delicate respect for their freedom. Dear friends, I am therefore pleased to announce that, starting from the Pastoral Year 2026/2027, our Diocese will commit itself to address in a special way, with Christian charity and with the witness and proclamation of the Gospel of Truth, even to those Muslims who dwell in our own territory.

For this reason, the Office of Catechetical Pastoral Care, in collaboration with with the Diocesan Caritas, will propose a specific and opportunities for meeting will be promoted. The next

missionary month in October will be propitious for undertake this path. In this way we will be better acquainted with the faith and culture of Muslims, that we encounter daily, and we will also know more aware of how to exercise our duty as baptized persons, which is a a task of love and, therefore, of proclaiming the One who is salvation of man. **Welcoming with a disinterested charity, the testimony of and the proclamation of God's love in Jesus Christ with freedom and sincere respect are the human means that the Lord asks of us to evangelize.** This must always be accompanied by prayer, convinced that the Holy Spirit is the only one capable of changing the heart and of to fill him with the inner peace that accompanies his presence.

Under the power of the Holy Spirit, who on the day of Pentecost having filled the souls of the Apostles with enthusiasm and courage, **we must also we, at today's Pentecost, take seriously the mandate of Jesus Christ: "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (Mt 28:19).** It is, after all, a matter of thus to perform the **highest and most beautiful act of charity: to proclaim the One who it is the way, the truth and the life.** And – we know – there is no greater love than this (cf. Jn 15:13)! Let us entrust to Our Lady, our mother, who is venerated as a mother of Jesus, even by Muslims, this desire to transmit the love of Jesus, God to all, with the joy and strength that Easter has brought us: Jesus Christ He is risen, he is truly risen!

Sanremo, Sunday 24 May 2026. Solemnity of Pentecost

✠ *Antonio Suetta*

Bishop of Ventimiglia-San Remo