

Huffington Post - Ramadan Reflection Day 30: "A Final Reflection on Ramadan"

This Ramadan, Imam Khalid Latif, Executive Director and Chaplain of the Islamic Center, will for a second year in a row be keeping a daily journal for the Huffington Post. His twenty-ninth article, entitled "Ramadan Reflection Day 30: "A Final Reflection on Ramadan" was published earlier today. To read the entire article in full, please [click here](#)

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Imam Khalid Latif

A Final Reflection On Ramadan

Imam Khalid Latif is blogging his reflections during the month of Ramadan, featured daily on HuffPost Religion. For a complete record of his previous posts, click over to the Islamic Center at New York University or visit his author page, and to follow along with the rest of his reflections, sign up for an author e-mail alert above, visit his Facebook page or follow him on Twitter.

As this month of Ramadan draws to end, the moment is bitter sweet. Muslims will be celebrating Eid ul-Fitr, a holiday that takes place on the first day of Shawwal, the month after Ramadan, either Sunday or Monday. The different days are based off of different methods in determining the start and end of months on the Islamic calendar based off of the cycle of the moon, but each opinion has its evidence and would be considered valid. The holiday definitely brings celebration with it, but it also brings a realization that Ramadan is over. Many people think that it is taxing on Muslims to fast for these 30 days, but the reality is that for most of us its a time that is immensely enjoyable and beneficial, and always hard to let go of.

This year I met and heard of a lot of people who are not Muslim who tried to experience Ramadan. Some attempted fasting a few days, others fasted the whole month. My friend Zeba Iqbal referred me to the website of Wes Magruder, an ordained elder of the United Methodist Church serving in the North Texas Conference, who fasted the entire month and kept reflections of his experiences on his website The New MethoFesto.

As I'm trying to reflect on what the last 30 days have meant for me, Pastor Magruder's reflection on day 28 reminds me that it will really be the next few weeks and months that will show me how beneficial this Ramadan was. His sentiment reflects my own and probably many others':

It makes me a little sad that I will be following this routine for only a couple more days.

But I hope that my life is forever changed by the experience, and I hope there are long-term effects of my fast. The whole point of Ramadan is to be changed -- for good. It's not simply a set of exercises that one must endure for 30 days so that you can earn a reward in heaven, or earn a check mark next to your name on the "Good" list.

And living "right" during Ramadan does not give one license to live "wrong" the other 11 months of the year. As one Muslim friend told me, Ramadan is like a spiritual "boot camp," training for the rest of the year. It's intended to make it easier to live in submission to God's will all the year round.

I've heard it explained that fasting is learning how to say "no" to permissible things, in order that it may be easier for us to say "no" to things which are not permissible. I would add that it also helps us to say "yes" to the eternal, spiritual blessings which God offers to us in tiny, subtle ways throughout the day. That is a discipline we all need throughout the year.

Christians make the same mistake, of course. A colleague told me about a parishioner he knew who gave up drinking beer during Lent. On Easter morning, the man loaded a cooler full of beer, and started drinking as soon as the sun came up.

My colleague commented drily, "I don't think he really understood what Lent was all about."

When we view the practice of fasting as something which must be endured in order to earn a reward, then we have entirely missed the point. Fasting is a discipline which forms and shapes us, makes us into people who are more responsive to God.

That's why I don't think I will know how effective my Ramadan fast has been until a few weeks after Ramadan is over. Will I act differently? Will I be closer to my God? Will I be more loving to my family and neighbors? Will I be more sensitive to people in need, to the poor and destitute?

If I manage to complete the 30-day fast successfully, but end up acting selfishly and hatefully on the 31st, or 41st, or 60th day, then my first Ramadan will have been a failure."

For all of us who observed this month of Ramadan, I pray that we carry forth the lessons learned within it throughout each tomorrow that we are blessed to be in this world. Remember that knowledge necessitates action, and what we have learned and gained consciousness of this past month should find manifestation in deed and decision beyond the month's ending....to continue reading [please click here](#)