



## MARY A MEETING POINT OF CULTURES, SAYS MUSLIM ENCOURAGES PILGRIMS TO MARIAN SHRINES

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Rome, June 29, 2006. An Egyptian Muslim and deputy director of a prominent Italian newspaper suggested that Mary could be the figure who brings Christians and Muslims together.

Magdi Allam of *Il Corriere della Sera* spoke to Zenit about the appeal he launched in the pages of the national daily newspaper to Muslims living in Italy to visit Marian shrines in their host country.

The journalist said that he is convinced that the Virgin Mary is a meeting point between Christians and Muslims.

“Mary is a figure present in the Koran, which an entire sura [chapter ed.n.] to her and mentions her some thirty times. In Muslim countries there are Marian shrines that are the object of veneration and pilgrimage by Christian and Muslim faithful,” he said.

“therefore, I believe that if this happens in Muslim countries, why can’t it happen in a Christian country, especially in a historical phase in which we need to define symbols, values and figures that unite religions, spiritualities and cultures?” he asked.

In Allam’s opinion, “the Marian pilgrimage of Loreto—Italy’s National Shrine—could represent a moment of meeting and spiritual gathering between Muslims and Catholics, around Mary, a religious figure that is venerated by both religions.”

Vittorio Messori, is author of book-interviews with Pope John Paul II and Cardinal Ratzinger (now Benedict XVI) also wrote in *Il Corriere della Sera* on June 15<sup>th</sup> in support of Allam.

He said that the dialogue between Christians and Muslims “can begin afresh from Mary”.