

**Cast out into the deep: missionary reflections (2003 – 2010)**  
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**It is during** the month of Ramadan, the ninth month of their lunar calendar, that Muslims observe the Fast. Strict restraints are placed on their daily lives: among those, the prohibition to eat or drink during the daylight hours. At the end of the day the fast is broken with a large meal. Before their fast is resumed, at dawn the next morning, they usually have another large meal. All my neighbors were Muslim. The Ramadan fasting was not at all an easy time for them. If you cannot eat, you cannot work. If you cannot even drink water, then you had better stay home: the scorching heat of the Southern Philippines would dry you up! So they rested during the day, but after sunset the entire village came back to life.

I truly admired them for their spirit and commitment to the rules of Ramadan. What I could not really stand was the stench of fish, deep fried in coconut oil, that infested my room at three o'clock every morning, while they were preparing the last meal before dawn. Unfortunately, my bamboo shutters were not enough to keep the smell away.



One year, Ramadan fell almost exactly on our Lent. Wasn't it meaningful that God was calling both Christians and Muslims to concentrate on their faith, to review their priorities and put first things first in their lives?

True enough, Lent is not simply a forty-day endeavor to gain some credits for our salvation through self-inflicted penance or to lose some pounds. It is a joyful walk towards Holy Easter, aware that Jesus Christ already saved us and at the same time conscious that we really have not accepted his salvation yet. If we had, probably the world would be a little better, don't you think?