



## Souvenir of a very special meal.

By Christophe Boyer, M.Afr

End of April 2017, I was back from holidays in France where the islamo-christian dialogue has improved a lot since the martyrdom of [Father Jacques Hamel during mass in a church](#). Of their own initiative Muslims have come to Church to show their opposition to violence and intolerance.

I was wondering what could be done here in South Africa. One day I received a phone call from [Toni Rowland](#) who is in charge of the family apostolate at the South African Catholic Bishops Conference. She asked me to advise her about a Muslim invitation since I am a contact person for islamo-christian relations at the SACBC. I was lifted up by this answer to my question.



We went together to meet Ayhan Cetin the CEO of the [Turquoise Harmony Institute](#). He told us that this year the Institute invites people motivated to inter religious dialogue to share the breaking of the fast in a Muslim family. Toni had already gone with the Institute to visit Turkey. We said it is a very good project and emailed the invitation to Catholics who might be interested. Toni went to such an *iftaar* and was delighted meeting such a diversity of people. So I asked Michel Meunier of Canada and George Okwii of Uganda, my two fellow priests in Edenglen if they would be interested in such an invitation. They answered without hesitations.

Then I registered on the Facebook page of the Institute and received an answer within the week with the professional assistance of Ayhan and his secretary. The 12<sup>th</sup> June at 17:30, we arrived at Sermin and Turker Isler's flat not far from Nizamiye mosque. We were immediately warmly welcomed by them and three neighbours. I gave in an envelope the [message of the Vatican for the Feast of the Sacrifice at the end of Ramadan](#) and a small box of mint green tea. We sat with our three male hosts. The food was tasty and rich. We closed the meal with black tea.



The conversation was lively: our respective lives, work, politics, soccer... One and the other went for a prayer at the end of the meal. Finally, after thanking the mistress of the house we moved at the invitation of our three male counterparts to the beautiful pastry parlour of the mosque. On the way **we could admire the illuminated mosque in the night.**

We were happily surprised to meet Uncle Ali, the builder of the mosque and the boss of the pastry who sat at table with us. There was another round of very refined Turkish delights one of them being hot ice cream... The conversation became more spiritual. We

need such table fellowship to anticipate the one at the end of the world when there will be universal love without discrimination of religion, race, gender, wealth or culture. We promised to follow up with other similar encounters even with the youth and during worship. We parted with a precious new memory in our hearts.