CBS NEWS   > BACK   > PRINT

freeSpeech: Irshad Manji
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(CBS) As a faithful Muslim, I do not believe the pope should have apologized. I've read what's been described as his inflammatory speech. Actually, he called for dialogue with the Muslim world. To ignore that larger context and to focus on a mere few words of the speech is like reducing the Koran, Islam's holy book, to its most bloodthirsty passages. We Muslims hate it when people do that. The hypocrisy of doing this to the pope stinks to high heaven.

Yet some Muslims have gone further. In the West Bank, churches have been firebombed. During a big protest in London, placards proclaimed "Islam will take Rome." In Somalia, a Catholic nun was murdered shortly after a Muslim cleric urged violence against the Vatican.

Coincidence? I think not.

And thinking is what the Quran encourages. It asks Muslims to reflect far more than to retaliate. Even if someone mocks your religion, the Koran says, walk away. Later, engage in dialogue. Wasn't that the pope's point?

We Muslims should remember that God told the Prophet Muhammad to "read." My advice to fellow Muslims: Read the pope's speech — in its entirety — and you'll see that his message of reason, reconciliation, and conversation would make him a better Muslim than most of us.

Now if only I could make him a feminist ...

Irshad Manji is a Muslim, a feminist, and a best-selling author who writes about the need for reform in Islam. She is the author of *The Trouble with Islam Today: A Muslim's Call for Reform in Her Faith*. It has been published internationally, including in Pakistan, Turkey, India and Lebanon.

Currently, Irshad is based at Yale University as a Visiting Fellow with the International Security Studies program. She writes columns that are distributed worldwide by the New York Times Syndicate. You can read more about Irshad and her work on her Web site, **Muslim Refusenik**.

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