Remarks by Sayyid M. B. Kashmiri for the Commemoration of the 5th Anniversary of the Historical Najaf Summit

Organized by the Greater Washington D.C. Chapter of the Council of Shia Muslim Scholars of North America

Hosted by Idara Jafaria Islamic Center, Burtonsville, Maryland

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In the Name of Allah, The Most Compassionate, The Most Merciful.

Our distinguished guest, Your Excellency Cardinal Robert McElroy, esteemed faith leaders, respected officials, and dear sisters and brothers,

Peace be upon you all, and good evening.

I would like to title my remarks: **"You Are Part of Us, and We Are Part of You."**

More than fourteen centuries ago, in 631 CE (9 AH), the city of al-Madinah witnessed one of the earliest and most meaningful examples of Muslim-Christian dialogue, when Prophet Muhammad welcomed a delegation of bishops from Najran. Their meeting was founded upon mutual respect, understanding, and peaceful coexistence. It established a lasting principle for humanity: that people of different faiths can meet with dignity, sincerity, and shared moral purpose. It was as though the spirit of that gathering proclaimed: ***"You are part of us, and we are part of you."***

Nearly two centuries later, Imam Ali ibn Musa al-Rida, the eighth infallible Imam from the family of the Prophet Muhammad, welcomed representatives of faiths in Khurasan. Through dialogue, wisdom, and intellectual openness, Imam al-Rida demonstrated that knowledge and faith should unite people rather than divide them. Those who met him experienced compassion, respect, and spiritual closeness. Once again, the message was clear: ***"You are part of us, and we are part of you."***

As a legacy, today, the Najaf seminary continues this tradition. For more than one thousand years, the Najaf Seminary has remained one of the world's leading centers of Islamic scholarship, ethical leadership, and independent religious thought. Beyond education, it has played a major role in promoting moderation, social responsibility, coexistence, and service to humanity.

This historic legacy was reflected powerfully on March 6, 2021, when His Holiness Pope Francis met the supreme Shia religious authority, Grand Ayatollah, Sayyid Ali al-Sistani in the holy city of Najaf. The Najaf Summit became a landmark moment in modern interfaith relations and a symbol of hope for people around the world. It demonstrated that authentic religious leadership can stand together in support of peace, human dignity, coexistence, and the protection of the oppressed, and to repeat, ***"You are part of us, and we are part of you."***

The summit also strengthened relations between Najaf and the Vatican, opening broader avenues for dialogue and cooperation between Shia Muslims and Catholics. At a time marked by wars, violence, displacement, killing, and genocide, the message of Grand Ayatollah Sayyid Ali al-Sistani has consistently called for civil peace, the protection of minorities, respect among communities, and opposition to extremism and oppression. Likewise, late Pope Francis left a lasting legacy through his commitment to human fraternity and peaceful coexistence.

Today, we also express our appreciation for the principled positions of His Holiness Pope Leo and Your Excellency Cardinal McElroy in opposing war, violence, and oppression, and in advocating for peace, social justice, and human dignity.

In a world increasingly divided by fear and conflict, gatherings such as this remind us that our shared humanity is greater than our differences. And through that shared spirit, we continue to say to one another: **"You are part of us, and we are part of you."**

God bless you all, and thank you!