

East Meets West



Chris Williams

Two neighbors—a mosque and a church—found out how much they have in common Feb. 28, when Sheikh Yassir Qassim (pictured, right), imam of Masjid Al-Ittehad Mosque in Vista, and Father Michael Ratajczak (pictured, left) pastor of St. Thomas More Catholic Church in Oceanside, led about 200 participants in an interfaith dialogue at St. Thomas More.

“We are called not to judge others but to grow in friendship,” said Father Ratajczak. “Then we can share our religions’ past and present vulnerabilities.”

The dialogue focused on similarities, such as a belief in one God, a disposition to prayer, and charity to the poor.

“We are all children of God, and when our lives come to an end, we are accountable,” Sheikh Qassim said. He added, “Do what is good and what pleases God, not what is evil and aggressive.”

Both congregations look forward to establishing an ongoing relationship. Ideas included meal sharing and working together to promote social justice.