Islamic Jewish feminist speaks at HC

By RABIA NIZAMI
CRUSADER NEWS STAFF

On Nov. 13 at 7 p.m., Muslim scholar Rabia Terri Harris presented a lecture entitled “September 11: An Islamic Feminist Perspective,” in room 519 of the Hogan Campus Center. Holy Cross’ Religious Studies, Asian Studies, and Women’s Studies departments sponsored the lecture given by the coordinator of the Muslim Peace Fellowship, part of the internationally recognized Fellowship of Reconciliation (FOR). The FOR is the oldest interfaith and international non-violence group, with an American branch which was founded in 1919.

The evening began with introducions from Professor Mary Hobgood who, in addition to teaching in the Religious Studies department, is director of the Women’s Studies department, and Professor Laury Sil- vers-Alario, who is an instructor of Islam. Harris began her speech with an Arabic blessing, “as duha bitihza min-nasbatun-nir rajm.” She translated the prayer as: “In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate.” Both of these expressions are used by Muslims when initiating a prayer.

Harris’ lecture touched on many is- sues within Islam, including the the- ology and practice of Islam in Amer- ica and the Middle East. In noting the particular situation of American Muslims, she referred to the group as an “interlocking community,” with individuals as members of both American society and the worldwide Muslim community, or ummah. As a group, American Muslims, having obligations to both their nation and religion, find themselves in a difficult position.

The trouble, Harris stated, arises from the fact that this dual responsibility causes them to “refuge with God from the outset, Satan.” This was followed by the commonly used phrase, “nabiilah rahman-nir rajm,” which Ms. Harris translated as “In the name of God, the merciful, the compassionate.” Both of these expressions are used by Muslims when initiating a prayer.

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