REPORT FROM THE INTERFAITH HARMONY WEEK 2016

INTERRELIGIOUS MEETING IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC

Some 70 people in audience participated in an interregilious and interfaith meeting in Prague on February 1, 2016. The event took place in the house of the Christian Community on ocassion of the Interfaith Harmony Week proclaimed by UN in cooperation with the Association for Religious Dialogue, Mosaics Platform Dialog, Community of Christians and Jews, and Community of Christians.

The speakers represented five world religions and four Christian denominations as well as three speakers from the public sector. The theme of the meeting was „*The Role of Religion for World Peace in the 21st Century - Religion as a Source of Reconciliation and Conflict Resolution*".

In his opening speech **Dr. Juraj Lajda**, secretary general UPF Czech focued on the role of religion in history. Different religions came into existence in different parts of the world on different level of understanding but the main purpose was the same – seeking for internal values, purpose of life and fulfilliing Gods will to establish a world of peace and harmony. It is necessary to bear this in mind lest we want to slip into confusion. It is not religions that fight against each other but it it the evil nature of people fighting aginst each other. The religious people should cooperate more, concluded Dr. Lajda.

Next speaker was **Rev. Tomáš Boněk**, pastor of the Community of Christians hosting organization. He remembered the event which we held 2 years ago and appreciated that this time we moved on as far as interreligious dialogue and cooperation are concerned. Each event which can contribute to mutual understanding is useful and we have to welcome any such an opportunity, emphasized Rev. Boněk.

Rev. Miluláš Vymětal, evangelical pastor has a lot of experiences as an activist with the minorities and people in need. He is taking care of such people in his parish. He is working with young people. He has a lot of experience with encountering people of different religious background, especially Muslim people.

Mrs. Nina Nováková, MP started her speech with an idea that we should be able to silence ourselves. We are not able to listen to each other. We are failing on the family level as well as on the level of politics and religions and churches. She as a Catholic expressed that we have to come back home. We need to know our own identity and then we can create harmony. Our legacy in Europe is Judaism, Christianity, antic and humanism. Coming back home means coming to the human integrity – the spiritul dimension is necessary even though people think econmics or politics are enough. Humbleness is important so that we can give respect to others. We need to involve mind and heart and spiritual dimension in our spiritual meetings. In the end she expressed her hope that next meeting will be sooner that in one year.

Rev. Petr Wagner, a pastor from the Hussite church mentioned that he is working with the Czech Radio in the religious section. He has the opportunity to meet people from many different denominations which is very good. Also in his marriage he experiences an interreligious tolerance because his wife converted to another religious. Nevertheles, as far as the children are concerned for them the religion does not matter, they want to be embraced.

Next speaker **Venerable Jiří Hazlbauer** represented Zen Buddhism. The Buddshists do not speak too much. They prefer to do something for the others. If we want to understand something we need to experience it. If we want to know the taste of an apple we need to eat it up. The experience is most important. We should always ask ourselves how we can hlep the others, explained J. Hazlbauer in his short speech.

Hüseyin Özörencik, the chairman of the Mozaiky organization represented Islam. Harmony is like music, it has emotional elements. In order to create harmony we need to clean up and remove the non harmonious sounds. The Muslim world has big problems, he said. Ignorance, poverty, hatred are some of them and often these lead to extremism. A terrorist cannot be a Muslim and no Muslim can be a terrorist, said the speaker. When the children have no educatiom, food, the hatred starts and then they try to find a scapegoat.

The Roman-Catholic Academic Parish in Prague was represented by P**. ThLic. Ing. Petr Vacík, S.J**. who claimed that there is no religious dialogie but the dialogue among people. We cannot destroy evil just to precede it. It is important that the message for the religious dialogue comes to people who oppose it.

Dr. Kateřina Děkanovská, chairwoman of the the Association for Interreligious Dialogue pointe dout that there is a gap between the secular and religious community. The secular world is ahead and the religious world is behind and has a delay. The situation will become even worse. It is importatnt to search honestly, she said. It is our responsibility and task to form a unity.

Dr. Tomáš Kraus, secretary of the Federation of Jewish Communities in Czech Republic explained that it is the ethics of religion which is important. Everything depends on people. We should cut off the politics from the religious relationships. The core of Judaismus is hope. Hope that we can create a better world.

The final speaker was **Trilomátmá Dás**, representative of the Harekrishna movement in Czech Republic. He emphasized the importance of a dialogue among people. The lack of dialogue creates an atmosphere of mistrust. A strong antimuslim influence is in those countries where there is little experiences with Islam. He appreciated this meeting and expressed the hope that religious people can meet on every level because finally we have one God who has many forms.

In the end Dr. Juraj Lajda introduced the RYS project as a tool for further cooperation among peole from different religious traditions and backgrounds.

The meeting was very useful and important, especially in this time of human history. Some participants expressed their desire to hold such meetings more often. There was a suggestion to organize regular common prayer meetings.