

## UPF Madrid, Spain's relaxed moment with friends - for UPF event speakers

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Madrid, Spain -- One of the wonderful moments of our UPF events is the break time -- a relaxed moment when friends can relate to each other, coffee in hand, beyond boundaries of religion, age, race or culture.

I witnessed this phenomenon at the UPF International Leadership Conference held in Vienna, Austria, in April 2018. As I looked at people socializing, I thought, "Why not convert the breaks into a program?" Then I realized that even though many of our religious friends have been very loyal to our projects for years (some of them over 20 years), they didn't know each other so well. There was not a sense of an interfaith, loving UPF family.

Therefore, the plan for our meeting in Madrid on June 12, 2018, was very simple. I proposed to the 100 speakers who had attended our UPF programs over the past 10 years to come to the UPF offices for a very relaxed event with many tempting foods and drinks and plenty of time to get to know each other.

Several told me that they could not fully understand the program but at the same time were intrigued by it. Speakers tend to be busy people. Gathering them on a Tuesday evening seemed improbable, but finally 23 of them came.

They told me that they were very touched by the program and expressed the desire to have these "inter-spiritual family" events in the future. They also promised to promote these events to other religious leaders. It is not an event open to the public in general. For that we have other programs. We just invited several Unificationists to help and enjoy such a unique event.

Of course, religious people cannot gather just for eating (especially not during Ramadan!). We have to add a few extra spiritual goodies to make it exciting. But our friends usually have so much to offer, not only talk.

In the first part of the program, we had a mantra guided by our Sikh friends, a couple of religious poems by a Catholic priest (a nationally renowned poet), a moving reciting of an Islamic text by our Shia friend (comparable to deep flamenco singing), a strong prayer by a Catholic theologian (a top Liberation

Theologian in Spain and Latin America), and a presentation by myself (Armando Lozano) on UPF interfaith projects as well as a brief report on UPF international events.



After that, we had the break with enough food to feed 100 people, some of it prepared by the wife of one of the guests. A beautiful moment came afterward: taking a group picture with the friends with whom we have worked together for such a long time.

We closed it with different prayers: Jewish, Tibetan Buddhist, Anglican and Catholic. For the final prayer we held hands together, prayed and ended by raising our hands with our palms facing each other and wishing each one to receive God's blessing. It was very moving to look at each other's eyes in the circle and give the blessing with our hands to everyone with full intention, taking our time, slowly.

I was glad to see among the assistants five very prestigious Catholic priests (professors and theologians) and several lay Catholic leaders. One of my main concerns in the interfaith outreach here is to overcome misunderstandings with our Catholic brothers and sisters. They are the spiritual foundation of the country, and we need to work together for the wellbeing of society.

Besides the large group of Catholics, we had one Anglican minister, one Mormon bishop, the Jewish director of the synagogue we have in our Peace Embassy, Sunni, Shia and Sufi Muslims, several Sikhs (among them the president of European Sikh Council), a Zen master and a Tibetan monk, a few yoga teachers, and the president of the Spiritualist Association of Spain.

All of them expressed at the end of the program how moved they were by each other's sincere heart and how they felt God's presence in this unique gathering of peace-loving people.