

UPF Quebec, Canada Seminar Addresses Immigration, Faith And Politics

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Montreal, Canada – Ambassadors for peace and friends of UPF met for a conference on October 19, 2024, on the theme: “Is immigration a problem? When faith comes to the aid of politics.” The 26 participants included a mix of religious and community leaders, academics, and an elected official.

The keynote speaker, **Prof. Martin Bellerose**, director and full professor at the Institut d’Etude et de Recherche Théologique en Interculturalité, Migration et Mission, addressed the issue from three angles: from belief to faith, a privatized faith and a private sphere made “public,” and the praxis of hospitality as political action.

He recalled the very touching story of the theophany of the three angels at Mamre who announced to Abraham that Sarah, his wife, would have a son in her old age, as an analogy to those who welcome the immigrant – the stranger – as a manifestation of the Almighty.

Among the respondents, **Prof. Roger Alfani**, professor at Seton Hall University, School of Diplomacy and International Relations, concurred and amplified the argument of Prof. Bellerose, in noting the important intervening role that religions can play in supporting immigration, especially through hospitality.

The second respondent, **Mr. Abdelaq Sari**, city councilor for the borough of Montréal-Nord, spoke of the practical realities of responding to the immediate needs of suffering immigrants who have, for whatever reasons, not yet been received or processed into the system and are in political and often financial limbo.

The third respondent, **Mr. Robert Duffy**, secretary general of UPF-Canada, questioned Prof. Bellerose’s optimism in his analogy of the immigrant as a theophany, or manifestation of God, by suggesting that not all immigrants are positive additions to society. Noting that responsibility for the safety and security of their citizens is the priority of governments at all levels, he suggested that immigration policies have to balance security with welcoming new immigrants into the country. This is where faith-based groups can aid those in the political sphere, cooperating to solve difficulties in this domain.

Thoughtful questions and comments followed that sought clarification and questioned sensitive immigration issues.