

UPF Linz, Austria -- Interfaith Breakfast Discusses Young People's Faith

Maria Pammer
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Linz, Austria -- The most recent interfaith breakfast of UPF of Upper Austria had as its theme "Young Belief – the Young Believe."

The March 16, 2019, event dealt with the question of how young people find their own way to embrace the religious traditions of their parents. It was organized together with the Upper Austrian branch of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Inspired by two UPF interfaith breakfasts that they attended in 2018, the Latter-day Saints invited UPF to organize an interreligious breakfast together with them in their church in the city of Linz. They prepared a substantial breakfast buffet. Fifty people from five denominations attended the event.

After a welcome by Mrs. Gerlinde Merl of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Maria Pammer, the secretary general of UPF-Upper Austria, gave an introduction to UPF and its activities.

Mrs. Pammer then awarded Ambassador for Peace certificates to Mrs. Merl and to Mr. Mehmed Becirbasic of the Bosnian Mosque in the city of Steyr (the host of the previous interreligious breakfast).

After the guests had helped themselves from the buffet, six representatives of the different denominations gave a keynote speech on the theme of the day.

Mr. Bogdan Pammer (Unification Church) emphasized that faith, hope and love act to unify not only humankind with God but also one generation with the next. We can believe, because the heavenly and worldly parents believe in us, he said. We can love, because the heavenly and worldly parents love us. We can hope, because we have, had, are or will be parents.

God in His omnipotence did not interfere when Eve and Adam broke the commandment, Mr. Pammer said. But after it happened, God was immediately present. "Where are you, Adam?" are the simple words of God, who reaches to the bottom of the ocean and the boundaries of the cosmos.

Mrs. Anna Szabo (Catholic Church in Upper Austria, Interreligious Dialogue) said that parents often cannot hand down to their children the language to express their faith. Teachers and communities can help young people to find meaning, she said.

Mr. Ali Karadeniz (ALIF Islamic religious community) asked for a moment of silence for the victims of the mosque shootings in Christchurch, New Zealand, which had taken place one day earlier. Mr. Karadeniz said he chose the religion of his parents because religion offers a framework for getting along well together. For him it is important to be at peace with oneself, to treasure family values and to engage oneself for a larger group.

Mr. Sabahudin Mujevic (Bosnian Mosque NUR, Linz) underlined that Christians and Muslims are more linked by values than separated. He said that his group wants to intensify contacts in its community.

Mr. Mehmed Becirbasic (Bosnian Mosque, Steyr) was very touched by the topic of the meeting and attested personally how he found his way back to the faith of his parents. His grandfather was an imam, but he himself forgot his faith after his flight to Austria. What helped him to return to his faith was the behavior of his father, who did not blame him because of his deviations but still believed in him.



Dr. André Merl (bishop of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints) emphasized that we are all children of God and therefore brothers and sisters. The mosque shootings in New Zealand had nothing to do with faith, he said, but with hate, the inability to love, fanaticism and the lack of own identity. Joseph Smith, the founder of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, said: Believe in heaven and act! To believe means to act. One does not suddenly have faith; it grows organically. Furthermore, we cannot shoulder the responsibility for children to find their own faith.

There were two important messages in his speech: 1) The Lord works from the inside to the outside; the world from the outside to the inside. 2) A person who changes oneself also can change the world!

The speeches led to a lively exchange with many touching testimonies from the young and the elderly and representatives of different denominations.

After two hours of really deep religious exchange in which some said they felt the spirit of God, the participants were offered a tour through the premises of the church. Many guests accepted this offer. The kitchen, a playground for children, the big church interior, the room for baptisms and the genealogy center gave an insight into their active community.

