



World Interfaith Harmony Week Observed in Slovakia “Fanaticism and Tolerance – obstacle and impetus for the interfaith dialogue”

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By Barbara Grabner

Like in the previous years, UPF Slovakia made efforts to make known the World Interfaith Harmony Week. Since intolerance hampers the dialogue in our society, UPF organized a panel discussion to listen to diverging views. Five speakers from various backgrounds agreed to give a talk. To open up minds at the beginning the beautiful WIHW video “The Gift of Love” by Sami Yusuf was shown. Afterwards UPF Secretary General Milos Klas explained in his introductory message the nature of fanaticism. The latin word “fanaticus” implies a person inspired by the divine. “Therefore, an intolerant fanatic of some faith and an enthusiastic fan of something may have the same root. We need to train ourselves to develop true tolerance and our gathering today is an opportunity

to listen and accept views diverging from our own”. The first guest speaker was Ivan Mrva, director of the Slovak History Institute of the national cultural institution Matica Slovenská. He outlined various cases of tolerance, or the lack of it in national history. Then the historian Ľubomír Morbacher, who is specialized on the nature of totalitarian regimes and mindsets explained that the freedom of believe guaranteed by the Human Rights Charta actually has not been implemented in society and is ignored by the politicians and opinion leaders. He said that intolerance and fanaticism are dominant attitudes among atheist and leftwing liberals who want to ban religion from social life. The next speaker Anna Galovičová established yoga several decades ago during communist rule. Since then she tirelessly works to foster friendship between India and Slovakia. She

described her painful experiences of being rejected because of yoga and how difficult it was for her to visit an ashram in India. The fourth panelist represented Hare Krishna in Slovakia, Raghunatha Priya das, surprised the audience with his comparisons between the biblical Genesis account and the Hindu scripture Bhavisya Purana, explaining the roots of intolerance and violence. Finally, UPF vice-president Igor Koromház related his observations regarding religious divisions among families and the importance of the work of UPF as a bridgebuilder. The audience (33 persons) was very attentive during the 2,5 hours of presentations which ended with a discussion. The new guests received a copy of “As a Peace Loving Global Citizen”, and the panelists received as a gift a candle decorated with the WIHW logo.