



A Gathering of Interfaith Ambassadors for Peace

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By Armando Lozano

One of the wonderful moments of our events is the break time. A loose moment where friends can relate to each other, coffee in hand, beyond boundaries of religion, age, race or culture. I witness that in our last UPF gathering in Vienna the end of April. As I looked people socializing with each other I thought why not to convert the breaks into a program and then I realize, 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 much. There was not a sense of an Interfaith Loving UPF Family. Therefore, the plan yesterday was very simple. I propose to the 100 speakers we had in last 10 years to come for a very loose event with many tempting foods and drinks and plenty time to get to know each other. Several told me they could not fully understand the program but at the same time intrigued by it. Speakers tend to be busy people. Gathering them on a Tuesday evening seemed improbable, but finally 23 of them came. They were very touched by it and expressed the desire to have this "inter-spiritual family" events in the future and help promote to other religious leaders. It is not an event open to public in general. For that we have other programs. We just invited several Unificationists to help and enjoy such unique event.

Of course, religious people cannot gather just for eating (on top of it in Ramadan!). We have to add 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 renowned poet on a national level), 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 me (Armando Lozano) on our interfaith projects as well as a short presentation of 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 afterwards, taking a group picture with the brothers and sisters we worked together for such a long time. We close

it with different prayers: Jewish, Tibetan Buddhist, Anglican and Catholic. For the final prayer we hold hands together, prayed and ended raising our hands pointing our palms to each other wishing each one to receive God's blessing. Very moving to look at each other eyes in the circle and give the blessing with our hands to everyone with full intention, taking 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 misunderstanding 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 Embassy of Peace, Sunni, Shia and Sufi Muslims, several Sikhs (among them the

president of European Sikh Council), a Zen Master and a Tibetan Monk, few Yoga teachers and the president of the Spiritualist Association of Spain.

All of them expressed at 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.

