

IAPD - Italian Chapter The Right to Spirituality for Peace and Human Development

Carlo Zonato
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"We dream of a world without violence, a world of justice and hope". On the notes of "The prayer", interpreted by Andrea Bocelli and Celine Dion, the Italian chapter of the "Interfaith Association for Peace and Development" (IAPD) was inaugurated on Wednesday, December 9th, on the occasion of the International Day of Human Rights.

The inauguration was opened by Carlo Zonato, president of the "International Federation for Peace" (UPF Italy), who summarized the purposes of IAPD with the words of Reverend Moon: "First of all, we must respect the traditions of other religions and prevent conflict and discord between faiths; second, to have all religious communities to cooperate in serving the world."

After the video showing the highlights of the association's life and a musical contribution, Imam Nader Akkad, PhD and researcher, took the floor and said how it was "very nice to see the composition of this inaugural day, made up of so many brothers from different cults and religions... and how this was precisely the meaning of the association, to work for peace, development and the prosperity of human beings and humanity."

For Rabbi Barbara Aiello, the first woman rabbi in Italy and founder of the Progressive Jewish Pluralist Movement, "it is an honor to share with you the holiday of "Hannukkah," of the Lights, which for us brings peace.... It is an opportunity to build the interreligious bridge." The Rabbi then lit the eight candles of the holiday candelabra, explaining their significance, and concluded with a song of blessing.

Don Valentino Cottini, professor of Islamic-Christian Relations, noted how the IAPD "aims for peace among religions. How could the Catholic Church not join an initiative that aims at peace by creating a dialogue among religions?" He then emphasized how the Catholic Church "does not cease to seek to

create links," he recalled Pope Francis' work with the grand imam of al-Azhar and the encyclical "Brothers All."

After a musical break with the Little Angels, a Korean dance troupe, Luis Miguel Perea Castrillon, Bishop of the Anglican Episcopal Church of Europe, took the floor. "We need to build more bridges of communion, rather than walls and borders that drive us away from peace." "The novelty of this association," he added, " is the concrete invitation to renew our most intimate vocation and the imprint of love that has been sown in our hearts."

Tibetan Buddhist monk Tenzin Khentse, said he was convinced that "those who see in other traditions only a difference and see theirs as better, are not making religion. On the other hand, those who see their own tradition confirmed and emphasized in the other traditions because they hear it told in different words and can understand it better, are really on the right spiritual path".

Francesco Canale, Evangelical Pastor, noted that "there are places in the world where believers are persecuted and places where there is the possibility of believing, but where people have stopped doing so, manifesting a spiritual dryness. That's why realities like IAPD can make a difference and should be supported.... They remind us how important it is to respect and listen to others' version of the truth".

The meeting continued with Michele Cavallotto, coordinator of the Italian section, who read the Founding Declaration of the IAPD, followed by messages of good wishes.

Gerardo Giovagnoli, San Marino's delegate to the Council of Europe, recalled how his country, "in 2007, when he was at the presidency of the Council of Europe, he wanted to bring the focus on the theme of intercultural and religious dialogue, because it feeds on the concept of peace and dialogue for the solution of conflicts."

In her message, Dr. Raffaella Di Marzio, founder of the Center for Freedom of Religion (LIREC), explained that she knows IADP not only because of its international activities, "but because I also know some of the people who work there, and for this very reason I want to wish this association the best of success, in a world, where values are often enunciated, but little practiced."

The event ended with the awarding of Ambassadors of Peace Award to the speakers. "By transcending racial, national and religious barriers," the diploma reads, "Ambassadors of Peace contribute to the realization of the hope of every generation: a world of peace and unity."