

## Austria's conference with faith communities: Transition to the Spirit world

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November 7, 2020



An online conference was held with representatives of several faith communities. The topic was "Transition to the Spirit world – faith communities' practices and their understanding of the eternal world"

The first speaker, a Catholic woman priest, spoke about how she helps people deal with the fears that are connected with departing from this world on one hand, and on the other hand, how she deals with the fears of the relatives of the dying person are faced with. "If you love that person, you have to let her/him go to a place where she/he is destined to go!", is one important conclusion she drew from her experiences of more than 30 years' work with sick and dying people.

The President of the Islamic community of Upper Austria emphasized that his faith community views death as the time when eternal life starts. Especially in the Sufi tradition, they consider the day of death as the day when humans can meet their beloved creator.

Even if there is the fear of death, people believe strongly in the Creator's mercy and benevolence.

A member of the Family Federation who had worked for 20 years in an institution caring for sick and dying people, recalled some of his deepest experiences during his work. Asked what his views about the afterlife are, he answered "On earth we are building a house of love which will be or home in the eternal world, that's why it is essential to practice true love during our lifetime."

A spokeswoman of the Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter-day-saints shared her community's view of the eternal world, namely that humans have been sent to earth in order to make certain experiences. Therefore they see all the relationships we build during our earthly life as essential, as they are for eternity, like the marriage vows and the family bonds. Death causes pain, but the prospect for eternal life makes it a transition filled with hope.

The last speaker's topic was on how to prepare the deceased person for her/his last journey on earth. She said it is a pity that in our days people leave the last acts of love towards the deceased person, such as dressing him/her up, etc., to the funeral parlor. She encouraged the audience to be more involved in sending their loved ones to their eternal home.

Despite the serious and unusual topic, everybody appreciated the speakers' input. One person mentioned that she was especially grateful, because not often can people get advice on how to deal with the death of a loved family member and with all the procedures involved.