

FFWPU Düsseldorf, Germany: Interreligious Prayer Circle for Thanksgiving

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The Interfaith Prayer Circle was all about Thanksgiving in the light of the Feast of St. Michael. A beautifully decorated table was adorned with gifts of nature. After we had admired these gifts and our welcome round was completed, Mr. Frank Bernhard from the Old Lutheran Church explained the meaning of this celebration.

He emphasized that many people in urban areas today have little idea of where our food comes from and how much work is involved, from the seed grain to the meal on the table. Mr. Bernhardt explained that in the past, September marked the end of the year in many rural societies and farming activities. At this time, the harvest ends, and preparations for the winter begin. In the fall, weather conditions are usually more stable and milder than in the winter, allowing the harvest to be completed and preparations for the winter, such as bringing in fodder and repairs. At the same time, this allowed farm workers to prepare for other activities or look for winter employment.

St. Michael's Day is celebrated on September 29. It marks the end of the harvest season and has a religious connection to the archangel Michael. In contrast, Thanksgiving is more of a general celebration in which thanks are expressed for the harvest and the gifts of nature. While Thanksgiving is a time to give thanks for the harvest, the Feast of St. Michael is also a time to ask for protection and help from the approaching winter.

Mr. Bernhardt also addressed the issue of sustainability, the importance of valuing and respecting the earth's resources, and ensuring that they are preserved for future generations. Finally, he emphasized that everything comes from God and is in His hands and that we should be grateful for His goodness and generosity. He also addressed the equitable distribution of food worldwide and emphasized that we have a moral obligation to ensure no one goes hungry.

Mr. Bernhardt's presentation received much applause, and after discussing what had been said, we opened the prayer time. Given the current global unrest, it was necessary to imagine what a world of peace could look like. Each of us recited prayers related to this, such as that no person in this world would go hungry, that all wars would end and people would reach out to each other, embrace and help each other rebuild after destruction, and that all children in the world would receive education and be able to develop their talents to enrich the world.

It was a moving experience to envision a world of peace and send positive thoughts and prayers. As a community of different religions, we felt united and had inspiring conversations.

Report: Anja Brina