

World Cafe: My Faith and Global Citizenship

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On Tuesday evening, October 14th, Youth UPF in Vienna came together to discuss about the role of religions in a pluralistic Europe and a globalized world. The moderator of the evening, Anja Weiskopf, gave a short introduction about the activities of UPF and a special greeting to the new and known faces, who joined this evening. Inputs to the discussion about the topic Global Citizenship & My Faith were given from the young religious representatives, Jennifer Miftaroska, Marijan Oršolić, Deacon Athanasius Buk and Matthias Grümayer, who shared their thoughts based on two questions:

- 1) How does your faith help or hinder your engagement with people of other cultures and religions?
- 2) How does your faith inform your sense of responsibility in the global community?



Jennifer Miftaroska from the Islamic community gave an insight on what it means to be a Muslim and how it is related to her faith. She stressed that Islam calls for a global citizenship by defining the role of human beings on earth as: cultivating earth, worshiping God and taking the role of God's administration on earth. She also explained that the Quran teaches Muslims to have sympathy toward all humanity, animals, plants, nature without any discrimination of faith, race, country, colour or anything else. She emphasised that the Quran also teaches to have love for every creature and the universe since all are created by Almighty God. She quoted the messenger Muhammad (Pbuh) who says: "Religion is dealing with people." Faith is the mutual respect to other nations. She ended her speech with a quotation from the Dalai Lama who said: "Every religion emphasizes human improvement, love, respect for others, sharing other people's suffering." On these lines, every religion has more or less the same viewpoint and the same goal.



Marijan Oršolić (from the Bosnian Youth Interfaith Council) associated faith and the engagement with people of other cultures and religions with the bridge builder and keeper. He stressed that religion alone is the bridge between God and men, and a bridge between humans. For him the bridge also means a dialogue which symbolizes one new, unique entity and togetherness. He also stressed that the love of God for human beings doesn't have any borders and that Jesus testified this borderless love, by socializing with the marginalized, outcasts, and public enemies. He said the responsibility in a global community should go in the direction of constant spreading of freedoms, and the best method for reaching this goal is the networking of people, i.e. by learning and sharing experiences, thoughts, ideas and projects. Religion has to help the building of healthy, open democratic civic societies.

Deacon Athanasius Buk, the representative from the Greek-Orthodox Church, said that he as a Christian believes that God created man in his image, so all human beings have similarity with God Himself. Therefore a Christian has to try to see in everybody the image of God, regardless of his cultural or social background or his beliefs and opinions. He also emphasised that the main role Christianity and the church has to play is in how to teach and encourage people to love each other and to see in every man the image of God. He stressed that the centre of the Christian faith, according to the gospel, is love. He believes that differences in religiosity and the cultural backgrounds should not be denied and every human being should feel free to have his or her own opinion. He said we should accept that the other is different from me and that I am different from him. This is what he calls tolerance, not to avoid difficult discussions or controversial statements, not being scared to express an opinion. He believes that everybody can make his individual contribution to the transforming of the world into a better place.

Matthias Grümayer, the young Buddhist representative, said that Buddhism offers tools and practices that help to cultivate openness and care towards other living beings regardless of species, religions and cultures and these are imbedded in the practice of the 4 Brahmaviharas, which are loving-kindness, compassion, empathetic joy, and equanimity. For him, global community includes humans, animals, plants and minerals. He explained Buddhism offers the teaching of kamma (law of causation) and paticcasamuppada (dependent origination), which inform the Buddhist sense for responsibility. He ended

his speech with the very emotional poem, “Call Me by My True Names” by Thich Nhat Hanh, where the sense of responsibility and interconnectedness is articulated very clearly



Right after the speeches the audience came together in a World Café setting and discussed the same questions:

- 1) How does your faith help or hinder your engagement with people of other cultures and religions?
- 2) How does your faith inform your sense of responsibility in the global community?

After the discussion the participations had the chance to share their ideas and statements on a sheet of paper and pin them all together on a big poster to create an overall picture of the evening.

