

UPF Bratislava, Slovakia's discussion for World Interfaith Harmony Week 2019

Barbara Grabner
February 8, 2019



Bratislava, Slovakia -- World Interfaith Harmony Week 2019 inspired a discussion of "Fanaticism and Tolerance – Obstacle and Impetus for Interfaith Dialogue."

Since intolerance hampers dialogue in our society, UPF-Slovakia organized a panel discussion to listen to divergent views. Five speakers from various backgrounds agreed to give a talk.

At the beginning of the February 8 program, the beautiful World Interfaith Harmony Week music video of Sami Yusuf singing "The Gift of Love" was shown.

In his introductory message UPF-Slovakia Secretary General Milos Klas explained the nature of fanaticism. The Latin word fanaticus implies a person inspired by the divine. "Therefore, an intolerant fanatic of some faith and an enthusiastic fan of something may have the same root," Mr. Klas explained. "We need to train ourselves to develop true tolerance, and our gathering today is an opportunity to listen and accept views that differ from our own."

The first guest speaker was Ivan Mrva, director of the Slovak History Institute of the national cultural institution Matica Slovenská. He outlined various cases of tolerance, or the lack of it, in national history.

Then the historian Ľubomír Morbacher, a specialist in the nature of totalitarian regimes and mindsets, explained that the freedom of belief guaranteed by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights actually has not been implemented in society and is ignored by politicians and opinion leaders. He said that intolerance and fanaticism are dominant attitudes among atheist and left-wing liberals who want to ban religion from social life.

The next speaker, Anna Galovičová, began to promote yoga several decades ago during communist rule. Since then she has worked tirelessly to foster friendship between India and Slovakia. She described her painful experiences of being rejected because of yoga and how difficult it was for her to visit an ashram in

India.



The fourth panelist, representing the International Society for Krishna Consciousness, Raghunatha Priya das, surprised the audience with his comparisons of the biblical Genesis account and the Hindu scripture Bhavishya Purana, explaining the roots of intolerance and violence.

Finally, UPF-Slovakia Vice President Igor Koromház related his observations regarding religious divisions among families and the importance of the work of UPF as a bridgebuilder.

The audience (33 persons) was very attentive during the 2.5 hours of presentations, which ended with a discussion. The new guests were given a copy of *As a Peace-Loving Global Citizen*, the autobiography of UPF founder Rev. Dr. Sun Myung Moon, and the panelists received as a gift a candle decorated with the World Interfaith Harmony Week logo.

