

UPF Prague, Czech Republic's Hosts Webinar That Focuses on Role of Religion

Juraj Lajda
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Prague, Czech Republic -- Fifteen religious representatives and others took part in a one-hour webinar on "The Role of Religion and the Importance of Interreligious Dialogue and Cooperation."

The webinar, which was held on April 30, 2020, was international and included participants from Slovakia.

Representatives of four world religions were invited to speak as panelists.

Dr. Juraj Lajda, UPF president for the Czech Republic, explained that the online meeting was based on the World Scripture Study Group project, which was initiated two years ago with some representatives of world religions.



At monthly meetings, the participants discussed various topics concerning the life of faith, the spirit world, and the role of religion, he said. Using the World Scripture book, they studied and compared sacred texts of the world's religions and came to realize that the religions' messages are similar up to 80 percent of the time

The first speaker was Dr. Tomáš Kraus from the Federation of Jewish Communities in the Czech Republic. Referring to the rise of online meetings as a result of the coronavirus pandemic, he said it is very important to continue efforts to foster interreligious dialogue. We should transform what is negative into something positive, he said. Some decades ago, interreligious dialogue was unthinkable, and today the situation has changed. The message about interreligious dialogue should be spread widely to reach the wider public, he said.



The next speaker was Rev. Dr. Mikuláš Vymětal from the Evangelical Church of Czech Brethren. There are many theories about what religion is, he said, but they should correspond to the current reality. Technological progress has caught up with religion. Technology should not be a danger but a help. Religion needs technology. In this situation of the global pandemic, people have realized how many things in our lives are superfluous, Dr. Vymětal said. Unfortunately, technological progress nowadays is prevailing over religion. We need to do something differently, he concluded.

Alalanath das, representing the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON), said that only human beings have the ability to understand religion. Animals do not have this ability. A society without religion is animalistic, and a human being without religion cannot be considered a human being, he said. Through religion we can recognize the existence of a higher power, God or Creator. Modern technology should be used for religious purposes, he said; otherwise it can be misused. Concerning interreligious dialogue, he said religions should unite against their common enemy, which is atheism.

The final panelist was Dr. Vladimír Sářka, representing the Muslim community in Prague. We need to know why we are here, he said. Even though there are different religions, they all try to answer these questions. Faith gives us a feeling of security, justice which is timeless, and shows us the way of life. People need faith; it is natural for them, Dr. Sářka said. We should develop interreligious dialogue and projects, because without peace among religions there will be no peace in the world.

After the presentations there were some questions and answers. Dr. Lajda reported on World Summit 2020, which was held in Seoul in February, as a big meeting of people from all over the world and all walks of life. He also mentioned the centenary of UPF co-founder Rev. Dr. Sun Myung Moon this year and his worldwide activities which are being continued by his wife, Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon, who is called "Mother of Peace" by some. A virtual exhibition on Rev. Moon's centenary is being prepared, Dr. Lajda said.