

World Interfaith Harmony Week and World Peace Blessing in Vienna

On Sunday, February 11, 2018 the Austrian Family Federation, UPF and Womens Federation had an event commemorating the World Interfaith Harmony Week, which concluded with a World Peace Blessing.

In preparation of the event I contacted the Austrian Thai community by visiting the responsible monk in his temple in Vienna. I got this inspiration through the successful cooperation between a Thai monk in Sweden and the Swedish National leader of the Unification Movement. The Thai monk from Sweden contacted the Austrian monk and informed him about our plans to organize an event. That's how I could receive the support of the Austrian Thai community.

This effort to reach out to the Thai community was combined with the foundation of previous years' conferences on the World Interfaith Harmony Week by UPF Austria.

The event was held at the Austrian headquarters at the Sunday Service time and it was attended by 240 people – 80-90 guests and the Viennese members of our movement.

The celebration started with a **Bosnian women's choir** singing two songs.



The first speaker was the **Minister Councillor of the Thai Embassy** who had accepted our invitation. He expressed his appreciation of us holding an interreligious event and bringing cultures together. He was followed by Peter Haider, UPF president, who explained about the World Interfaith Harmony Week and UPF's interreligious activities.



I myself gave an explanation about the Holy Wine and the Blessing, and then asked the religious leaders who were present to offer their prayers for world peace and for the couples who were going to receive the Blessing.

These prayers brought God's presence into the room and the atmosphere became very high and noble.

The prayers were given by:

- the 2 Buddhist monks: the one from Vienna and the one from Sweden
- a Christian minister from the Celestial Church of Christ
- the Imam of the Ahmadiyya Muslim community of Austria
- the Sikh community of Vienna
- the Hermetic Society of Austria.

After their prayers a Senior Blessed couple from Vienna, Dr. Wolfgang & Keiko Czerny, led the Holy Wine Ceremony and the Blessing Ceremony. The representative couple was an Ambassador of Peace with her spouse. She herself is organizing a yearly intercultural event in Vienna with several hundred people in attendance. She was awarded for her efforts by the city of Vienna. It was a special joy for us that she could get the Blessing this time.

During the ceremonies I provided the participants with the explanations about the meaning of the Blessing.





All together 40 persons attended the Blessing, among them 7 couples. The single persons were mainly Thai ladies whose husband had not been there.

Finally, the Peace Blessing Festival concluded with 2 Thai young ladies' dance, which we all enjoyed very much.



Lunch was prepared for everybody thanks to many members who had prepared Thai, Austrian and Korean food.

We felt much grace from Heavenly Parents that we could have this event, specially because at the beginning it was not clear how it would work out.

Our special thanks go to the Swedish National Leader, the Swedish monk, UPF and WFWP Austria and all the brothers and sisters who made this event happen. Our prayer is that the religious leaders who attended the Festival develop the desire to have a similar event in their communities.

Elisabeth Cook



