

For The New Year, UPF Madrid, Spain Holds An Interfaith Peace Celebration

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Madrid, Spain -- UPF marked the coming of the new year with an Interfaith Peace Celebration that was dedicated to the current situations in Ukraine and Iran.



The event was held on December 13, 2022, in the Espacio Ronda conference center in Madrid.

The main speaker was **Rev. Andrey Kordochkin**, the dean of the Russian Orthodox cathedral of Madrid. He has been speaking strongly in the media against the Russia-Ukraine war and is an advocate of helping Ukrainian refugees. In his talk he mentioned that there is no such thing as a "holy war." Supporting such a concept would be like going back to the mentality of the Middle Ages. Only peace is sacred, he said; only peace can be blessed by God.

In the process of organizing the event, UPF realized how deeply the conflict is affecting both communities. No Ukrainian religious or lay representative accepted the invitation, knowing that a Russian priest would be part of the program. Finally, the Ukrainian side was represented by the pianist **Vadim Gladkov**, who played several pieces from Ukrainian composers.

UPF-Spain has organized several programs to support Ukrainian refugees. Also, for many years the Peace Embassy has hosted a variety of events for the Russian congregation of the St. Mary Magdalene Cathedral, thereby developing a close friendship. Cultural organizations, independent or belonging to the



Russian Embassy, also hold their events here. Although we thought that this would be a perfect event to help reconcile the communities, we realized it was still too early and still too painful for the Ukrainian side.



dealt with such painful situations, his prayer was on the verge of tears a few times, asking God for guidance in these troubled times.

Because we also wanted to give a voice to the Iranian fight for freedom, we invited the human rights activist **Ramtin Zigorat**, who has been tortured and imprisoned in Iran, to offer some words about the present situation. To soften his testimony a bit, we invited musician **Kaveh Sarvarian**, who sang Rumi's poetry and played traditional instruments, perfect for meditation and an inner search.

Next, the Catholic poet **Luis Miguel Uriarte** read from his works, accompanied by Kaveh Sarvarian playing the Persian *ney* flute. It was one of the highlights of the program.

Catholic theologian **Pepa Torres**, a nun who is a great fighter for the rights of refugees and minorities in poor areas of the city, gave a strong talk in which she called for an action-oriented Christianity, siding with those in society who are suffering.

The interfaith choir **Alborada**, directed by **Camino de la Puente**, performed. Finally, the Greek Orthodox priest **Archimandrite Demetrio** offered closing words and a prayer. As the whole event had