

UPF Marbella, Spain's Peace Dialogue: Strengthening Ties among Different Paths

Marian Barnes
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Marbella, Spain -- One hundred representatives of different faiths attended the "Meeting for Peace and Dialogue: Strengthening Ties among Different Paths."

The event, held in the Hotel El Fuerte on January 18, 2020, was organized by UPF-Spain and the ANDECO ecotourism company.



The event organizers faced initial opposition from local religious groups and even the city government, which previously had supported UPF activities. However, UPF-Spain Director Armando Lozano was determined to find religious representatives in other parts of Spain and looked for them among his good friends.

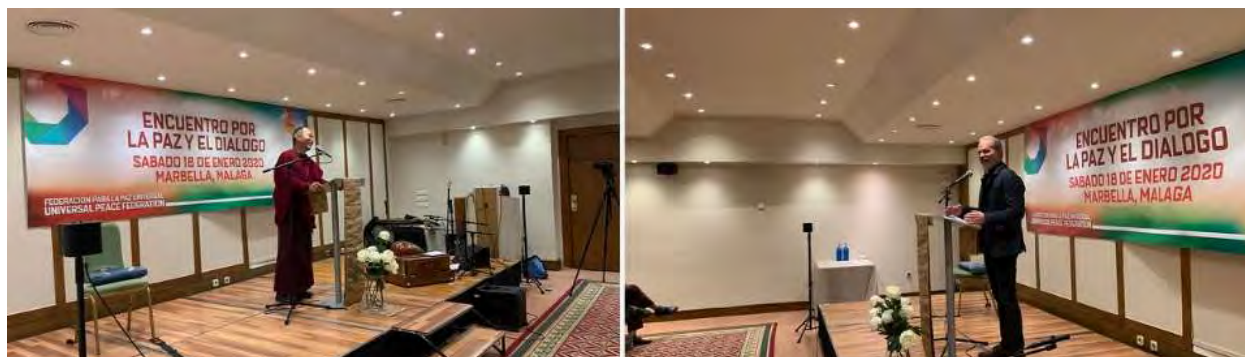
By January 2020 he had put together a magnificent program with speakers who support UPF, and the organizers spread word of it among friends and the people of the town.

Various associations promoted the event among other associations via Internet and WhatsApp, and thus many good people became interested. These people came to the meeting, generating a beautiful atmosphere, full of joy, tears of gratitude and a deep desire to repeat it and meet again.

The first part of the function, titled "Words for Peace," began with words of welcome from Armando Lozano of UPF. Juan Carlos Ramchandani, president of the Hindu Federation of Spain and a writer and lecturer, explained the basic precepts of the Sanatana Dharma, how Hinduism respects different religious traditions, and the need to expand interreligious dialogue.

Tritul Rimpoché, a Tibetan Buddhist monk of the Chakrasamvara Centre of Seville, spoke about

Buddhism and peace. He was followed by Samuel Benarroch, a surgeon and representative of Judaism, who spoke about respect, tolerance and fellowship between various creeds. Afterward Antonio Damien Requena, president of the Malaga UNESCO Club, gave a short but brilliant talk in which he said that spirituality and dialogue between cultures are the solution in these times of conflict.



The first part of the program finished with a talk by José Cruz Igartua, a Catholic priest, who spoke about the importance of meditation and prayer in all religious traditions.

The second part, titled "Prayer, Music, Celebration," began with a performance of Sufi music and a reading of the poems of Rumi e Ibn Arabi by Ignacio Béjar. Juan Carlos Ramchandani officiated Arati, the Hindu ceremony of the five elements, and then led a kirtan (hymn) in which the audience participated, dancing and chanting mantras. Then came the recitation of Tibetan Buddhist mantras by Lama Tritul Rimpoché, who explained the origin and use of various instruments of Tibet. Father José Cruz led the audience in reciting the Our Father (the Lord's Prayer), explaining its deeper meaning.



The musical section finished with cellist Erwin Graffe Urruela, who, in addition to playing a piece by Bach, performed sounds and incantations of the shamans of Siberia. The function finished with an interfaith water ceremony, directed by spiritual therapist Amparo Shalome, in which representatives of different religions poured water into a vase which then would be poured into the sea, symbolizing how all rivers (religions) flow into the sea (reach God). The culmination of the ceremony was a toast for peace and harmony in the world.

The audience at the end were very content and inspired. They expressed the great need for this type of event to be repeated more frequently.

Marian Barnes, is president of ANDECO