



# Interreligious Event

Zaragoza, Spain, November 11, 2021

By Concha Garcia, UPF Aragon

**O**n November 11, UPF organized an interfaith event in the city of Zaragoza, in which three different speakers participated: the Reformed Evangelical Church of Aragon, the Center for Zen and Mindfulness Meditation, and UPF, Aragón, Spain. The theme was “Spirituality in our time: challenges and opportunities”. The event took place in Pastor Augusto Gil’s Reformed Church of Aragon.

The first speaker was Augusto Gil. He stated that in these modern times, the people have changed the way of approaching God or another divinity and the publishing houses know it. That is the reason for many books in the market today dedicated to religiosity and spirituality. Either from the Buddhist tradition, the Catholic tradition, or the Evangelical tradition. What is spirituality? Spirituality is a new, emergent term. In the European and Spanish context, the noun spirituality has been absent from our vocabulary. The spiritualist were the Confucianists, the Tibetans, the Hindus, the Sufis, but from Greece to the West we were considered more “religious” than spiritual.

He spoke about his experience with his Reformed Christian tradition and mentioned four vocations: 1- A shared spirituality, 2- An open spirituality, 3- A communal spirituality 4- an evangelizing spirituality. Having presbyterian ancestors, he shared he was born in Cuba under a dictatorship of Marxism-Communism. “I am a third generation of Reformed Christians, living

in that country that is Cuba, it was a daily challenge to be a Christian. I was born in a rural family, and we did not have a Bible, so we children learned the texts by heart”. He added that if something is going to transcend our way of living faith, it will be through compassion.

The next speaker was Enrique Puyalon from Buddhism Zen Mindfulness (Thich Nhat Hanh tradition). He said how spirituality in Zen Buddhism is lived in the past, present, and future. But they always try to live in the “here and now”. We are all connected but our ego creates emotions that takes us away from our inner essence. How is spirituality lived in Buddhism? With the energy of full consciousness, in the present moment. The energy of concentration originates from full consciousness, and this leads to compassion with oneself and towards others.

In Buddhism there are four mental practices that help us to get closer to other people: 1- Open-mindedness, no dogma, no fanaticism, inclusivity, tolerance. From compassion we embrace people. 2- Non-attachment to ideas. Avoid letting it separate us from others. 3- Freedom of thought. Feeling it in the heart. 4- Awareness of suffering. Compassion is being next to the one who suffers.

The last speaker was Armando Lozano, Director of UPF in Spain. According to the news and what some people think about the current moment, it seems very dramatic because the churches and temples are empty, there are no vocations, etc. However, Armando Lozano

said that it is something positive because it is like the end of “formal religiousness”, it is not the end of God it is the end of religion as we understood it. The sacred will always be by our side, knocking on our door.

Throughout history there has always been a move towards greater spirituality. Today the ability for people to access their traditions is better than ever. What does the world need? Today due to tourism, internet and media, we feel closer to each other. More than ever the winds of the world point towards a global family. Therefore, a spirituality that does not support the global family is going to have a difficult time. How can interreligious dialogue help us? To go to the essence of things. And what is essential? It is a

common language, the language of love, the language of service, the language of sacrifice. It is a universal language.

UPF is a movement established in 2005 by the Rev. Sun Myung Moon from Korea. The Rev. Moon promoted interfaith dialogue for decades. He added that spirituality is the path of serving. An open-door spirituality, serving neighbors, serving the community, serving society. Society needs people who are good examples. In short, whatever path we follow, God will work in a mysterious way if we put our abilities at the service of others.

Although we were a group of 26 people, a fraternal atmosphere of mutual respect was created, with the desire to meet again soon.