

An Awesome Experience...



The 7th Parliament of the World's Religions was held in Toronto Nov. 1st-6th, 2018 bringing together more than 11,000 people from over 80 countries. It scheduled world-renowned speakers and gave the possibility of participating in more than 500 truly unique programs, events, panel discussion and workshops, together with sacred music and films.

An unparalleled set of resources was made available to us, so numerous and attractive that we were not able to make use of all of them.

Toronto was the perfect venue: more languages are spoken there than in any other city in the world. The city itself has a long-standing tradition of living together, avoiding polarization of ethnic groups or religions and of fostering respect for differences. While in Canada, we felt that respect went beyond mere tolerance to acceptance and even embracing of differences.

The Parliament was created to cultivate harmony among the world's religious and spiritual communities, and to foster their engagement to achieve a just, peaceful and sustainable world. It seeks to promote interreligious harmony, rather than unity of faiths as in dialogue.

The theme chosen for this Parliament was ***"The promise of Inclusion, the Power of love"*** to make our world a safer and more beautiful place to live in.

The word ***"Inclusion"*** is used here to describe the exhilarating discovery that one belongs to other. The word ***"Love"*** describes not only as friendship and devotion, but also as a decision of the mind demanding a particular way of acting toward the one that is loved. When these two realities start working in synergy, the circle of our friendships enlarges and brings people together.

During the days we spent together, the Parliament became a stunning microcosm of what our world can become by inclusion and love: they have the power to instill true justice, enduring peace and a thriving earthly home for all living creatures.

As the Parliament ended, we felt that the next step we must take now is that we must pray together because ***"Prayer is the shortest route between two people."*** (Pierre-François

Béthune). Set in the presence of the Absolute, at the heart of reality, all recognize each other as brothers and sisters, sparks of the same fire.

The Parliament reflects a desire for an interfaith encounter at a deeper level and seems to encourage a journey into the profoundest depths of the individual and the community, going beyond verbal dialogue and common action.

During the days we spent together, we found ourselves drinking at the wells of each other's spiritual traditions, and engaging in a deep and common quest.

We discovered that one of the richest forms of prayer can occur when the heart is absolutely quiet: "Be still and know that I am God" (Psalm 46:10).

We realized that if we still our mind, we can hear our own heart and that at the core of our heart is the indwelling of God. It is an awesome experience. God is present and we are present—to each other. It's a matter of just being there.

~ Fr. Michael Davitti SX