The World Interfaith Harmony Week 2019

The Ecumenical and Interfaith Affairs Office of Archdiocese of Toronto continued its tradition of celebrating “The World Interfaith Harmony Week”. The program **“Models of hospitality among religious and cultural traditions”** was hosted by the diocesan Office on February 7th, 2019 to close the celebration of World Interfaith Harmony Week.

The program started by opening remarks of Fr. Prakash director of Ecumenical and Interfaith Affairs Offices. He briefly talked about the Common Word Initiative and history of the W0rld Interfaith Harmony Week and the Common Word Initiative. He shared how love of God and love of the neighbour is closely attached to Christian faith. He mentioned that hospitality is one of the core themes of World Interfaith Harmony Week where neighbours and people from different faith or no faith show their warmth by being hospitable to their guests to show their love and respect.

The guest speakers from four different religious backgrounds and cultures talked about the importance of hospitality in their religions and cultures. They very discreetly mentioned that by being the followers of their faiths they think love of God and love of neighbour are the most compelling forces which help each individual to be warm and hospitable towards their guests.

Imam Dr. Abdul Hai Patel shared the Islamic perspective of hospitality. He presented some great examples of hospitality from the history of Islam and his culture. He mentioned that Prophet Muhammad has laid great principles in regards to treat the guests. He mentioned that honoring and treating a guest well is coupled with two of the most important beliefs in Islam, belief in God and belief in the day of judgement. He shared Prophet Muhammad exhibited admiration to his guests by offering them the excellent food and providing it in a suitable manner.

Mr. Chander Khanna discussed the Hindu viewpoint of hospitality. He used some very attractive power point slides to share how a Hindu household treats their guest. He mentioned “The ancient Hindu texts say the guest has to be shown honor by the host going out to meet him, offering him water to wash his feet, by giving him a seat, by lighting a lamp before him, by giving him food and lodging and by accompanying him some distance when he departs. Thousands of years have passed but this code of etiquette remains basically the same. He mentioned that a guest is given the same love and respect that you would offer to God”

Ms. Afreed Mistry shared the Zoroastrian perspective of hospitality. She gave an historical snapshot of her religion and discussed that whenever a guest visits a Zoroastrian home. They are given a warm welcome and a very special place to sit down and treated with best food and gifts.

Mr. Benjamin Lujan discussed the theological point of view of hospitality among Christians. He quoted some examples from the Holy Bible and mentioned a guest is always given a great respect in a Christian household.

The participants took great interests and actively asked various questions about hospitality.

The program was concluded with closing remarks by Fr. Darren Dias who moderated the program. He mentioned that the speakers and the guests showed great respect for each other’s point view. The speakers recognised that we can all live peacefully by building bridges, by being tolerant, by enhancing mutual understanding and cooperation. He mentioned that this is all possible by following the theme of the “World Interfaith Harmony Week” which is based on two Commandments; ‘Love of God, and Love of the Neighbour’.