

Interreligious-Monastic World Monastery Dialogue

Report: Mag. Alexandra Mann

Spiritual practice- rooting in one's own as a starting point for acceptance of the other

"If you are deeply rooted in your tradition... you don't have to be afraid of immersing yourself in another religion. It's not a question of compromise, saying I'll accept this, but not that. No. I accept everything! But I accept it from [within] my everything. It's a meeting from faith to faith..."

Pierre-François de Béthune OSB, Saint-André de Clerlande Monastery, Belgium

The activities of our Weltkloster Trägerverein are oriented towards the monastic exchange programmes which were established especially after the Second Vatican Council and have since been promoted by organisations such as DIMMID, a committee of the Benedictine Order: the facilitation of meetings between religious and clergy of different religions at eye level.

As a platform for a deepened exchange in the field of meditation and contemplation, theological and philosophical discourse, we therefore provide a forum in which insight into one's own religious roots can be deepened and made tangible for the encounter with practitioners of other religions by getting to know and appreciating each other in theory and practice.

Our association sees it as a central task to network monasteries and traditional religious centres and to support them in passing on and preserving their spiritual heritage developed over the centuries to the next generations in an authentic way - also to make it fruitful for an urgently needed dialogue of religions and spiritualities and thereby to have a unifying effect on society.

The implementation of this concept work, developed since 2010, has now been made possible on a larger scale by German Benedictine abbeys and the European Monastery Gut Aich as well as by support from the Austrian Benedictine Congregation.

In the context of cooperation events this year, we began to invite spiritual representatives of different religions to the abbeys of Münsterschwarzach and St. Ottilien for several days in order to discuss the respective traditional roots and paths in a joint exchange. At the heart of the Weltkloster Begegnungskonzept is the sharing of individual experiences and forms of spiritual practice, in which the encounter on the level of shared inner experiences plays a central role. It serves as a bridge between religious traditions and is to be promoted and cultivated in particular through the presentation and performance of authentic forms of traditional monastic exercises/rituals and a common, contemplatively oriented daily routine.

In addition, the group dealt with the questions of what role being at home in one's own tradition and contemplative training plays in being able to engage with different models of thought and interpretation and to what extent it might be possible to make moments of mutual understanding and recognition experienceable from the aspect of acceptance.

Here the participants came from the Benedictine area, the Tibetan Buddhist Gelug tradition, the Islamic-Sufi lineage of Hazrath Inayat Khan, the Gaudiya-Vaishnavatum and the Christian Protestant teaching.

During the contemplative sessions, Hindu and Islamic recitations and the prayers of the other religions were included.

During the evening readings of the scriptures, topics such as love were discussed.

The "Song of Songs of Love" as well as excerpts from texts by Hazrath Inayat Khan on "God as Love" were supplemented by parts of the Metta Sutta (the speech of Loving Kindness) and verses by the reformer Shri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu (Hinduism, 15th century).

The Archabbey of St. Ottilien hosted the second dialogue meeting. Under the guiding theme Community and Spiritual Leadership- The importance of those who had already preceded on the path as role models and teachers brought together clergymen from the areas of Theravada Buddhism, Sikhism, Judaism and Protestantism, who discussed in particular the responsibility and role model function as well as theories on the self-image of religious teachers and leaders.

Among other things, the teacher was said to have a profound experience which enabled him to accompany the students on the spiritual path with support, advice and blessing. Ideally, however, this does not mean that in the end one should be able to pass on responsibility for one's own actions to another; the teacher cannot take the necessary steps in the development process of those entrusted to him or her.

Forms of student body and the respective attitudes towards traditional teaching and individual interpretation were discussed.

Silence and meditation sessions were enriched by comparing different gestures of prayer, forms of devotion and recitations.

The guided tours of the monasteries led by Br. Jakobus Geiger in Münsterschwarzach and Br. Josef Götz in St. Ottilien met with great interest and admiration from all dialogue partners. In particular, as they revealed the valuable and experienced tradition of the Benedictine monasteries as well as the wisdom and knowledge of human nature of their founder, St. Benedict of Nursia.

For Hüseyin Haybat, Sufi teacher and Muslim, the Weltkloster format provides a framework in which these encounters are possible. Encounters in which the love for God can be deepened through exchange with one another. An exchange that makes deeper mutual understanding possible and tangible.

According to Tenzin Peljor, a Buddhist monk of the Tibetan Gelug tradition, it is much easier and deeper to establish contact - from heart to heart - with people of other religions.

And despite all the differences on the surface, there are much more similarities, if one looks in depth, Rev. Dr. Markus Beile noticed.

Krishna Premarupa Das, a priest of the Gaudiya-Vaishnavatum, feels this aspect of common experience, which actually creates space for authentic spiritual practice and an encounter from person to person, beyond top-heavy dogmas and prejudices, as the very special and unique aspect of the Weltkloster Arbeit.

For Rabbi Dr. Tom Kučera the stories about the structure and motivation of the Benedictines were emotionally memorable, and a special experience for him was the time spent in the meditation room, be it with words or chants, with movements or shared silence.

Br. Dr. Ignatius Ruppert OSB added: "The religious believes to know, the wise know to believe". A decisive key in inter-religious dialogue is the common practice - seekers of all religions find a common ground of experience in the mystical communion practice.

The next World Monastery Dialogue of Experience will take place from 22-26 June 2020 in the Europe Monastery Gut Aich.

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<http://weltkloster.de/weltkloster/>

Event in the abbey Münsterschwarzach

<http://weltkloster.de/neues/2019/interreligioes-dialog-munsterschwarzach/>

Archabbey of St. Ottilien

<http://weltkloster.de/veranstaltungen/2019/gemeinschaft-und-geistliche-fuehrung-st-ottilien/>

General Secretariat DIMMID (Dialogue Interreligieux Monastique-Monastic Interreligious Dialogue

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