

Farewell celebration of the MA11 Group Intercultural Theology students

On July 9, 2021 students, professors and guests from Göttingen and Hermannsburg met in the Theologicum and in the Zoom Room to celebrate the end of the four-semester study phase of the MA11 Group Intercultural Theology students.

In the winter semester 2019-20, the semester started for the MA11 students still under quite normal conditions. In early December 2019, we were able to celebrate the 10th anniversary of the Master's program Intercultural Theology without restrictions with a symposium in Göttingen. The Intercultural Theology students from the MA11 and MA10 group contributed a lot to the success of this event.

However, starting in the summer semester of 2020, the MA11 students in particular were hit with the full force of the Corona Pandemic. All events and exams had to take place online, which was a major challenge for both teachers and students. Initially, the technology did not work smoothly, and it was doubly difficult for students to find halfway decent Internet access. There was no planning certainty for the projects, which are always carried out primarily abroad in the 3rd semester. New considerations had to be made, plan B or C had to be prepared. Some succeeded in carrying out their original plan in the country of their choice, but the execution took much more time than in earlier times. As a result, very few of the 15 MA11 students have been able to start their master's thesis so far, quite a few will finish in the winter semester 2021-22 or not until the summer semester 2022. Nevertheless, we wanted to give the students the opportunity to come together as a group for the last time and exchange their experiences.

In his welcoming address, the Dean of the Faculty of Theology, Prof. Dr. Peter Gemeinhardt, emphasized how significant the Master's program in Intercultural Theology is for theology. Intercultural Theology is not an "add on", but just as important as the other theological disciplines. The goal remains to be able to congratulate the MA20 students on their completion in the foreseeable future.

The representative of the University of Applied Sciences for Intercultural Theology Hermannsburg (FIT) and at the same time academic coordinator for the Master's program in Hermannsburg, Prof. Dr. Moritz Fischer, sees the "mutual learning" with students from all over the world as a great privilege. He says the program brings together people from completely different countries, nations, cultures, denominations,

religions in each cohort, who not only discuss with each other on an academic level, but also have to meet and get along with each other in everyday life on the FIT campus. This is a great enrichment for all, he said.

The academic coordinator of the master's program in Göttingen, PD Dr. Fritz Heinrich, compared the past semesters to monastic life. We had to live in a kind of cloister most of the time, each and everyone stayed at home for themselves. Opportunities for exchange only existed on the Internet and during the few excursions experienced presently in the summer semester of 2020. The Corona period meant an acid test for intercultural learning, which thrives on exchange. In order to get through this, everyone needed an inner source, which gives and strengthens comparable to a well.

After the group photo, which was taken in the inner courtyard of the Theologicum, the students underlined that despite more difficult external conditions during the Corona period, they had learned a great deal in their academic as well as private lives and had understood what interculturality means, that they were proud to be part of the ICT program. "Intercultural theology is part of my life," one student summed it up.

A big thank you to all who helped make this hybrid graduation ceremony possible.

May all of you successfully complete your master's thesis and use your newly gained knowledge and skills for the benefit of all and for a peaceful coexistence of cultures and religions.

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