

A Special Christmas coffee in Marienhain, Germany

Invitation of the refugees from Hedwigsstift, January 5, 2016

Sr. Josefa Maria Bergmann



After having welcomed our new neighbors from across the street in Germany, we wanted to get to know them more closely. So we invited the 30 inhabitants of the refugee center at Hedwigsstift to a Christmas coffee in Marienhain. We did not want to impose our faith on them but to share our Christmas traditions with them. They should see the crib, the decorated Christmas tree, a Christmas coffee table and listen to some Christmas songs.

At 3 pm, some sisters had gathered at the main entrance to welcome our guests. The director of the residence was accompanied by the caretaker whose mother tongue is Arabic but who also speaks perfect German and therefore was able to translate. After having asked them, we first went to the church and showed them the crib. There we learnt that the Syrian-Kurdish refugees, who belong to different Muslim branches, had been used to celebrating Christmas with the Christians in the church in their home country. They know tolerant working and living together without any fears of contact. One woman was wondering about Josef's role at the manger because God is the Father of Jesus.

Each guest found a little angel for table decoration at his/her place. He shall become their guardian angel in their first year in Germany. After a brief introduction of our congregation, we helped ourselves at the delights of the buffet. Sr. Birgit was quickly surrounded by the children. There were 18 adults and 12 children. At the different tables, we managed to talk in English or with the help of translation. Accompanied by Sr. Ursula we sisters sang some Christmas songs with the children clapping. Some of our guests could sing "Jingle Bells" in Arabic. It was a joyful afternoon.

As a token of farewell the guests could take some games as well as warm, knitted clothes such as socks and hats. The guests expressed their gratitude in writing in the snow. Certainly, this encounter was not unique. We are curious to know how the relationship with our new neighbors will develop.