



10th International Nuremberg Forum Media Power and Religions

The Challenge facing Intercultural Learning
Wednesday 29th September – Saturday 2nd October 2010

Increasingly, the media define the public image of religions and cultures – an image that is frequently biased and negative. In the Western media Islam is often described as an aggressive religion, while in predominantly Islamic countries the West is portrayed as “decadent”. But Hindu extremists and ultra-orthodox Jews also create headline news. Sometimes, as in the case of the “Muhammad cartoons”, media reporting itself has triggered violent, “religiously motivated” unrest across national borders. Against this background there is an urgent need for education about the power of the media as public opinion makers and serious debate on the issues involved.

On the other hand, there are signs that the public media in Europe and beyond are making greater efforts to convey accurate information about religions. Many initiatives for discussion are already contributing to a better understanding between different ideological and religious positions. Interreligious and intercultural themes in films, television series and books with a mass appeal reach millions of people. The mass media even provide a common frame of reference for intercultural and interreligious understanding. An important task for education and learning is encouraging young people and adults to play an active part in media culture..

In a broad sense the media have always been indispensable to religions: Perception of transcendent reality can only be conveyed through metaphor and symbol; the traditions of the great world religions could not possibly have been handed down without the media of the written and printed word. Thus the media play an essential mediating role, particularly where interreligious learning and a methodology for teaching world religions are concerned. A special, and theologically relevant field of tension is the prohibition of images in Judaism and Islam.

The 10th Nuremberg Forum 2010 will address the various challenges posed by this theme and will develop further perspectives. Following a well-established pattern international personalities will be brought together from different religious, ideological, political and educational fields. On this occasion there will be a stronger emphasis on involving representatives of the public media, media education and media policy.

The Forum will provide fresh impetus for scholarship and social issues for discussion as well as for practical interreligious and intercultural work on dialogue, the media and education and learning.

Prof. Dr. Manfred Pirner, present holder of the Chair for Religious Education at the University of Erlangen-Nürnberg, his predecessor Prof. Dr. Johannes Lähnemann, and Dr. Werner Haussmann look forward to the next stage of this continuing work in the field of intercultural encounter.