

Christmas coffee with refugees in Kloster Marienhain, Vechta, Germany

More than a year ago, refugees from Syria and other countries found accommodation in a refugee hostel opposite Kloster Marienhain. Meanwhile, they have become dear neighbors to the sisters. Some sisters give German classes, others organize game afternoons for children. On January 3, the sisters invited them to a Christmas coffee.



The refectory could not have been decorated more beautifully: In the middle of the room there stood a Christmas tree. Red glitter balls are shining in a chain of lights. Straw stars are swinging smoothly on green twigs. The tables have been laid with love. About 20 adults and 35 children will follow the sisters' invitation to celebrate Christmas with them.

At 3p.m., the guests arrive at the main entrance where they are welcomed by the sisters and the interpreter, Mrs. Khalaf. First, Sr. Josefa Maria leads the guests into the chapel and shows them the crib. They show great interest in Jesus and Maria, who are very important also in the Muslim faith.

In the refectory, Sr. M. Birgit explains the German tradition of Christmas and promises a nice Christmas program which will be presented by the sisters and the children. But first, everybody enjoys lots of different drinks and waffles around the coffee tables.



Finally, Sr. M. Birgit drums up all the children. Now the Christmas program starts for which the children have practiced for a long time. They sing and dance and one of the boys recites a poem.



At the end, the children dance a dance of lights. "Carry the light into the world" is the message. Symbolically, the children carry a tea light to every table. Then they leave the refectory because in the adjacent room, little presents are distributed.

The afternoon comes to an end. The guests leave and the sisters tidy up. Outside it's cold and raining. But inside, the children's joy will warm the hearts for a long time.

Sabine Heise (text)
Sr. Josefa Maria Bergmann (photos)