



True Family Values Banquet and International Peace Blessing

Biel / Bienne, Switzerland, November 11, 2017

By Heiner Handschin

Based on a long foundation of regular outreach and educational activities in the City of Biel, the Swiss UPF Secretary General, Ms. Chantal Chételat-Komagata, proposed that this year's True Family Values Banquet in Switzerland could be held in her city and hometown. Biel/Bienne, a bilingual city in the vicinity of the Capital Bern, has been several times in the history of the FFWPU/UCS Switzerland in the headlines for its substantial contribution to the providence in the nation. The venue of this year's event was the hall of the Freemasons Society of the city of Biel/Bienne, a very gorgeous hall in a beautiful setting.

This year, we decided, unlike the past years of our traditional True Family Values Banquet, to combine the event with a World Peace Blessing Ceremony, trying to reach out to the many Ambassadors for Peace in the city in order bring them to a higher level. FFWPU and WFWP Switzerland decided to support and co-sponsor the event. For this reason, the event was planned as a banquet and a festive celebration of marriage and family. There was nevertheless also a conference part giving local, political, religious and civil society representatives a chance to contribute to a very rich program. There were also young artists represented who reached out to the audience with beautiful songs and dances.

The main part of the event started at 3pm sharp with a colorful potpourri of musical

and artistic presentations of all sorts, preparing the atmosphere for the festive event, celebrating marriage and family. At first, Mr. M. Diop, member of the city council of Biel/Bienne, addressed the around 80 – 90 persons in the audience about the importance of marriage and family and also the need for intercultural/interreligious understanding in a more and more multi-cultural society. He valued the event as an important step towards peace and harmony among the different faiths in our society. Mr. Heiner Handschin, President of FFWPU Switzerland, spoke after about the current state of marriage and family in a society that is more and more confused about this most fundamental institution. He emphasized the need for the religious communities to unite around marriage and family in order to uphold good Family Values and protect the family and especially children from a reckless socio-cultural revolution that would like to turn everything upside down. Finally, to close the first part, Ms. Chantal Chételat-Komagata, Secretary General of UPF Switzerland and citizen of the city of Biel/Bienne, introduced the concept of True Family Values and the World Peace Blessing in a very detailed presentation leading people to the point of understanding the purpose of the World Peace Blessing ceremony. Through this the stage was set for the next part of the program, the World Peace Blessing Ceremony.

After a short break, holy wine and scarves were distributed and the World Peace Blessing ceremony started. With the beautiful musical background, couples stood facing each other and shared the cup of Holy Wine. Around 20 couples from mostly local origins, but from different faiths and cultural backgrounds were present or represented. This brought a very rich atmosphere of interreligious and intercultural peace and harmony. After the completion of the Holy Wine Ceremony, the Officiators offered a prayer and meditation followed by the sprinkling of Holy Water. After the re-affirmation of the commitment to fidelity and peace in the couple and the family, the ceremony concluded with the proclamation of the completion of the World Peace Blessing ceremony in Biel, Nov. 11, 2017.

The atmosphere was joyful, and the final part of the banquet started combined with musical and cultural presentations of all sorts. All participants, at that time around 100 or more shared a warm fellowship, enjoyed the banquet with delicious food and offered some additional artistic contributions for the great enjoyment of the whole audience. The event concluded at around 9 pm and the organizers felt that it was a very successful combination of celebrating marriage and family, the True Family Values Banquet and the World Peace Blessing.

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