

Working hard to become a religion of the people, needed by society...

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Appealing to the citizen's desire for unification, investing 100% into preparing the foundation for the age of unification in the Korean Peninsula

The Family Federation for World Peace and Unification held the “Interfaith Peace Blessing Festival 2015 – Philippines” on February 1st at the Marikina City Sports Complex, near Manila, the capital city of the Philippines. The Festival was supervised by the Family Federation and co-hosted by the Universal Peace Federation, a nonprofit peace organization, and the Philippines branch of the Family Federation. Under the slogan, “Let us build a peaceful world through true families,” the Family Federation also held a mass blessing marriage ceremony (known as the Marriage Blessing Ceremony within the Family Federation) and the 2015 Asian Summit at this time.

On this day, the Marriage Blessing Ceremony (hereafter the “Blessing Ceremony”) drew a crowd of 15,000 people to the Marikina Sports Complex, filling it up to capacity even before the event began. A representative of one of the host organizations estimated that about 150,000 people were in attendance, making it the largest scale Blessing Ceremony to ever be held in the Philippines. This is due to the fact that the general public, not Family Federation members, were the target audience of the event. The stadium was full of the 50,000 couples (including existing marriages) reborn as “blessed families” through the Blessing Ceremony, couples, families and members of the Philippine Family Federation and well-wishers from around the world. “I have never seen the stadium so full. We filled up both the bleachers and the field itself,” said a representative of the Philippine Family Federation. “This is the first time that the Marikina Sports Complex has been filled past capacity,” he added.

The “blessing” refers to the starting point of a family that lives centered on the will of God. It is a festival of peace established by Rev. Sun Myung Moon and Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon, that is meant to bring about religious harmony and peace in the family centered upon the ideal of marriage that transcends race, nation and religion. The Blessing ceremony began on April 16th, 1960, when Rev. and Dr. Moon blessed three families five days after their holy wedding ceremony. The next ceremonies expanded in scale to 36 families, 72 families and then 124 families, and have continued to expand since. Millions of families from around the world have received the Blessing.

The Blessing Ceremony is carried out through the Purity Vows, Holy Wine Ceremony, Interfaith Reconciliation Ceremony, Holy Water Ceremony, Declaration of Holy Marriage, Exchange of Rings and

the Proclamation of Holy Marriage. The “Interfaith Festival” was a fitting name for the event, as many leaders from around the world were in attendance. The event was attended by Former Prime Minister of Nepal Madhav Kumar, Mayor of Manila Joseph Estrada (formerly the President of the Philippines), Former Speaker of the House of Representatives of the Philippines Jose de Venecia, Jr., Family Federation International Headquarters Director-General Sun Jin Moon, UPF International chairman Chang-Shik Yang, UPF International President Thomas Walsh, UPF Asian Continental Director Dr. Chung-Shik Yong, American Clergy Leadership Conference Co-President Jesse Edwards, Catholic Priest Eliseo Mercado, Sikh Guru Ji Gurpreet, Philippine Orthodox Church Bishop Monsignor Veloso and Islam Professor Narong Vongsumitr, among other political, women’s and religious leaders from 30 nations. It was an event which concentrated on the wishes of the world’s people for peace.

50,000 Philippine Couples “Make a New Start through True Love”

During the preliminary event, a ceremony was held for peace and religious harmony. 20 religious representatives from the Family Federation, Islam, Christianity, Orthodox Church, Sikhism and Catholicism brought water and combined them in a “water merging ceremony.” The ceremony carried the meaning of Rev. Sun Myung Moon and Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon’s “interreligious, interracial and international” philosophy of humankind overcoming the walls of religion, race and nation as one family. They then adopted the resolution to love their enemies, live for the sake of world peace, to put society before their families, their nation before their society, God before their nation and to proclaim all of humankind as one family under God.

Marikina Mayor Del de Guzman said that “You have come to visit Marikina. Welcome to our town. I am truly grateful that the Interfaith Peace Blessing Festival 2015 – Philippines has been held in Marikina. The family is the most basic unit of the world. Happy families full of love are the key to world peace. I promise that the Philippines will contribute to world peace from this day forth.”

Then, the 50,000 brides and grooms were blessed in the Holy Marriage Ceremony. UPF Asian Continental Director Chung-Shik Yong and his wife stood as the officiators of the Blessing Ceremony. 12 couples representing all of the brides and grooms came onstage to receive the holy water ceremony, which held the meaning of “rebirth as new families who live lives of transparency.” Then, questions of holy marriage were posed to the couples, who answered “Yes!” in a loud chorus.

Family Federation International Headquarters Director-General Sun Jin Moon, the fifth daughter of Rev. Sun Myung Moon and Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon, said that “Peace begins in the family. We can build a peaceful ideal society and nation when countless families from all denominations, races and religions come together in peace and love.” Mrs. Moon, who read a message in place of her mother, Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon, said “The greatest and dearest wish of all of humankind, which has been forgotten in these current times, is that of true love and of a world of eternal peace. When all people become one as the family of God, and regard each other with the highest, most unconditional love, a world of true peace can come to be,” she continued. “We have a special responsibility as the children of God, as blessed children, and as citizens of Cheon Il Guk, the Kingdom of God.” She then outlined our four responsibilities. The first responsibility is the establishment of True Parents’ tradition in our daily lives. The second responsibility is the completion of the three great blessings: personal perfection of character, “completion of the family” through the practice of true love and “completion of dominion” through harmony between humans and nature. The fourth responsibility is that of creating the culture of heart in the world.

“Today’s event was prepared under the banner of ‘Creating a World of Peace through Pure Families,’” said a representative of the Family Federation. “This Interfaith Festival held by the Family Federation in the Philippines, which has a history of Catholic and Islamic faith, was very meaningful. Married couples received the blessing alongside the new couples. This was an opportunity for Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon to let the world know about true families and world peace.”

How was the Family Federation able to grow so quickly in the widely-Catholic nation of the Philippines? “The evangelism of the Family Federation, which seeks to create true families through purity and true love, really moved the hearts of the Philippine people,” said UPF Philippines President Julius B. Malicdem. “80 to 90% of the Philippine population is Catholic. In the Catholic faith, abortion is prohibited. Thus, there are a lot of unmarried teenage mothers, so many that it is becoming a social problem in the Philippines. The Family Federation emphasizes the importance of purity and the preciousness of the family. Their evangelist movement really opened the hearts of the Philippine people.”

After the event ended, UPF Asian Continental Director Dr. Chung-Shik Yong (58) spoke about the success of the Family Federation in the Philippines. “Philippine people learn about the Bible from a very young age. They become familiar with it in their daily lives. The Unification Principle of the Family Federation is a sort of a guidebook to the Bible. Thus, it is relatively easy for Philippine people to understand the doctrine of the Family Federation. Furthermore, while the Bible names the individual as the basic unit for salvation, the Family Federation names the family as the basic unit for salvation. This point in particular appeals strongly to people of the Philippines.”

Carrying Out Educational and Medical Service Projects

Dr. Yong says that the continuous peace movements and service projects undertaken by the Family Federation have had a very strong influence on the growth of the congregation. The massive turnout and enthusiastic response to today's event is a direct result of UPF's diverse efforts in the Philippines, he added.

The effort of the Family Federation's peace movements and service projects in the Philippines is apparent in many areas. According to a Family Federation representative, in December 2012, 12,000 couples were blessed in Mindanao City, followed by Manila (13,000 couples in January 2013 and 13,000 couples in January 2014). The Family Federation carried out the large-scale blessing movement in 15 other major cities of the Philippines as well. In particular, the existence of the Family Federation and its peace principles in the city of Mindanao, a city of intense religious conflict, left a strong impression in the hearts of Philippine people, explained Dr. Yong.

"Religious conflict is very intense in the Philippines, and many people have cried out for religious reconciliation in Mindanao after the loss of many lives to the conflict every year. It seemed impossible to unite all of the religious orders and hold the blessing ceremony with all of them together. However, we were able to draw a crowd of over 40,000 people, including the 12,000 couples. It was an historical event in which all religions were able to come together in reconciliation."

The medical service projects and educational volunteering services consistently provided by the Family Federation have yielded substantial fruits. Rev. and Dr. Moon spent four billion won over the course of four years to build a university of peace in the Philippines. The school holds 1,200 people, so they built two 500-person capacity dormitories as well: one for men and one for women. The school currently has 420 students enrolled and expects to see the student population grow substantially by the end of the year.

The era of peace can begin when we respect each other and talk to each other.

The evangelist movement of the Family Federation in the Philippines can be traced back to the 1970s. According to a representative of the Family Federation, "At the time, Rev. and Dr. Moon emphasized that service was the way to show one's sincerity to locals. Currently, the Family Federation has 150,000 followers in the Philippines. Excluding the two major religions of the Philippines, Catholicism and Islam, the Philippines was close to a religious wasteland. The growth of the congregation of the Family Federation in the Philippines is a remarkable event."

The "2015 Asian Summit" was held at the same time and was co-hosted by the Family Federation and UPF. The event was held in Manila from January 30th to February 2nd, and was attended by about 500 political, women and religious leaders, university professors and businessmen from about 30 different nations, including Korea, the Philippines, Nepal, Malaysia, Thailand and India.

The summit was held in the Manila Hotel, which holds a deep meaning as it holds the office of General McCarthy, who brought about victory in World War II. Under the motto, "Toward Peace, Security and Human Development in the Asia Pacific Region," the summit was divided into six sessions: "Toward a New Paradigm for Sustainable Peace and Development in the Asia Pacific Region," "Building a Roadmap for Sustainable Peace in the Asia Pacific Region," "The Impact of Interfaith Cooperation and Harmony Towards Peace in Asia and the World," "Peace and Development: The Role of Media and Education," "The Founder's Legacy – World Peace Through True Love," "Strengthening Families, Rebuilding Nations, Creating a World of Lasting Peace" and others.

In his opening address, UPF Asian Continental Director Chung-Shik Yong said, "In December, 2005, Rev. Sun Myung Moon and Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon of the Family Federation founded UPF Philippines, here at the Manila Hotel. Peace will only come about when humans overcome their selfishness and set aside their self-centered lifestyles. Let the island nations of the Pacific Rim become one and create the long-desired homeland of God."

Former Prime Minister of Nepal Madhav Kumar, who received the Leadership and Good Governance Award, gave the keynote address. "Asia, while caught between the proxy wars and conflicts of other nations, is becoming devastated and exhausted. With this and the threat of the proliferation of nuclear weapons, Asia has been undergoing great suffering. Through dialogue that transcends culture, religion and civilization, let us, as Asian people, work tirelessly to bring about understanding and tolerance." Manila Mayor Joseph Estrada also gave a speech. "We can surely bring about the era of peace through respect of each other's religions and interreligious dialogue."

The Family Federation has brought about astonishing results after 40 years in the Philippines. Their path as pioneers and the way they overcame suffering and adversity is truly moving. At the center of all of that hard work was the preciousness of the family centered on true love and the teachings of Rev. Sun Myung

Moon and Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon to realize a peaceful world.

“After the Yoon-Hwei Jung Report of Segye Ilbo, the Family Federation could be perceived to be in a difficult situation. However, in March, we are continuing to carry out many tasks and responsibilities: the 3,000 couple International Blessing Marriage Ceremony, the WonmoPyeongae Foundation Scholarship Awards Ceremony to 1,700 students from around the world, the World Press Conference and many other events,” said a representative of the Family Federation. The unwavering advance of the Family Federation under the motherly leadership of Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon is truly a sight to see.

“When all people become one as the family of God, and regard one another with the highest, most unconditional love, a world of true peace can come to be.”