

## **UPF Nigeria's Marriage Peace Blessing Festival held in Diakuma Kingdom**

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On January 2, 2018, more than 210 couples in Diakuma Kingdom of Onuimo Local Government Area in Imo State, Nigeria participated in a special Marriage and Family Peace Blessing festival being organized by UPF Nigeria and the affiliated organization FFWPU Nigeria, as part of activities to mark the 15th anniversary of the coronation of His Royal Highness Eze (Elder) Amb. E. I. G. Anyabuike, an Ambassador for Peace and king of the Diakuma Kingdom.

The Marriage and Family Peace Blessing brought together traditional rulers, chiefs, elders and couples from the community and their neighboring areas to the Palace of the traditional ruler of Diakuma kingdom. Participants in the blessing were only monogamous couples, while others who were polygamous, widows and widowers only observed the ceremony.



The program is part of efforts to renew the Diakuma kingdom to become a peace kingdom where citizens live together in peace as brothers and sisters centering on strong and stable families. The program was designed to promote healthy marriage and family relationships grounded in true and selfless love, mutual respect, interdependence and “living for the sake of others.”

The event began with registration of participants by their area coordinators and taking of photograph by each participating couple. This was followed by opening prayers by representatives of different denominations in the kingdom and the recitation of the national anthem of Nigeria. His Royal Highness, Eze Anyabuike gave the welcoming remarks and thanked everyone for honoring the invitation to the ceremony which was the first of its kind in his kingdom. He introduced the UPF and FFWPU and spoke highly of the lifelong commitment of the Founders, whom he frequently referred to as Father and Mother Moon.

Apart from the 12 local coordinators who were expected to mobilize 36 couples each for the program, FFWPU members from Rivers state were mobilized to help in organizing the event. Each of the FFWPU couples was introduced and participants were inspired by the international outlook of the couples from the FFWPU. The introduction was followed by the marriage blessing lecture by UPF Nigeria Secretary General, Dr. Raphael Ogar Oko who spoke about the purpose of the program and the steps involved in participating in the program and the expected outcome of the program.

Participants on the Marriage and Family Peace Blessing ceremony who were mostly previously married couples followed each step of the lecture and committed to renewing their marital vows with a sacred promise as husband and wife to love each other faithfully, live together in peace, and raise their children and grandchildren to uphold purity. The first day event featured about 144 couples while those who could not participate promised to come back the following day. The blessing ceremony was officiated by the National Leader of FFWPU Nigeria, Rev George M Ogorie and his wife with 6 other couples as assistant officiators. Rev Ogorie guided the couples through the basic steps of the blessing and prayed for peace in their families and communities.



On December 27, 2017, before the commemoration of the anniversary of the Eze Anyabuike, a brief blessing ceremony was held with the support of some of the coordinators who could not complete their mobilization of 36 couples. Over 54 couples participated in the second day blessing. Thereafter, several political and community leaders gathered at the Palace for the coronation anniversary celebration. During the celebration, the UPF founders, True Father Sun Myung Moon and True Mother Hak Ja Han Moon were presented with a chieftaincy title by the elders and chiefs of the Diakuma Kingdom as Omeudo Ndi Igbo (Propagators of Peace) in recognition of their lifelong devotion to the realization of a peaceful world. The presentation of the chieftaincy title on the UPF founders admitted them into the membership of Council of Traditional Rulers of the Diakuma Kingdom. The chieftaincy title materials were received by the Secretary General of the FFWPU Nigeria, Mrs. Margaret Kikunda and her spouse on behalf of the Founders. The chieftaincy title to UPF Founders attracted several commendations and was reported on the local radio station of Imo Broadcasting Corporation (IBC) in Owerri and broadcast across the state.

Following the two day event, some of the participating traditional rulers requested for the blessing ceremony to be extended to their communities. With the determination to organize the blessing of 430 couples, Eze Anyabuike approved the organization of a follow up blessing on January 2, 2018 in one of the communities in the neighboring Okigwe LGA of Imo State. The blessing was held at the Methodist church hall and 30 couples participated in the program. The church leaders have also requested that another blessing program be organized for their church members in a later date.

To all the families that have participated in the blessing festival, the message has been to ensure that they are faithful to each other, raise up their children to practice chastity before marriage and to learn and practice the true family values in their families as a way to renewing their families and communities.