

Elizabeth, NJ Family Church's Multicultural Festival and Holy Marriage Blessing

Emiljun Rapada
March 31, 2018



On March 31, 2018, 60 people gathered at the Elizabeth Family Church (EFC) for a Multicultural Festival and Holy Marriage Blessing Ceremony, showcasing the food, dance, song and traditions of various cultures.

The festival was designed to support the tribal messiah work of the community. Seven new guests, from different cultural backgrounds, festival. One of the guests, Dorota Laskowska from Poland said, "This is the first time after twenty-five years of my life in the United States that I feel such joy in my heart. It is reminiscent of my younger years". Together with her friends, they thanked the organizers and vowed to attend again to future programs.

After the invocation by EFC Pastor Darryl Franklin, he sang a beautiful rendition of "What a Wonderful World" followed by a Thai folk dance performed by Narkkaew Takeyama. Four mothers from the Filipino International Community of America (FICA) presented a colorful Filipino folk dance called "Paypay." Then, the younger generations gracefully performed a Hawaiian dance "Pearly Shell." The audience was so mesmerized that they clamored for a second performance. The dancers obliged with an equally beautiful dance, "Hukilau." Two African ladies, Irene and Rebecca from Togo and Côte d'Ivoire, respectively, performed two songs, "By the Spring of Life" and "How Great Thou Art" in French.

After the wonderful performances, Rev. Jose Rafael Sanchez, the Blessing & Family Ministry coordinator for Elizabeth, gave a brief presentation on family values and the importance of the Marriage Blessing. He highlighted the essence of God-centered marriages and the flourishing of true love relationships between husband and wife, and parents and children, within the realm of the family. He encouraged all the participants to renew their marriage vows and inherit the love of God through the holy wine ceremony. All the guests received it with gratitude and sincerity. A few of those who were unmarried received it as a purity blessing. Following these ceremonies, couples shared their love together through dance to the tune of Ed Sheeran's "Perfect" performed by Jessmar Bahian.

The attendees then enjoyed a buffet filled with international cuisines, as the children of EFC entertained everyone with their modern dance. Rev. Emiljun Rapada, the Assistant Pastor of EFC, closed the program thanking and acknowledging all the performers, organizers, and most especially the guests who participated in the scenes of vivid diversity and fun. The festival was excellently hosted by Bishop Rene Ballenas, a Seventh Day Adventist minister and an Ambassador for Peace.

The Unificationists of the EFC determined to make this a monthly program with hopes to bring more families to the deeper experience of multiculturalism and the ideal of "One Family Under God."