

FFWPU Europe and the Middle East: 20th Anniversary for Thousands of Couples

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July 29, 2024



The [Marriage Blessing ceremony](#) of the [Family Federation](#) in Cheonan, South Korea 26th July 2004

The thousands of couples of 26th July 2004 celebrate their 20th Marriage Blessing anniversary



[Father](#) and [Mother Moon](#) officiating 26th July 2004

On 26th July 2004, a [large wedding ceremony](#) was held by the [Family Federation](#) at the [Yu Gwan-sun gymnasium](#), an indoor stadium in the city of Cheonan, approx. an hour's drive south of Seoul. The event was officiated by the founders, [Father](#) and [Mother Moon](#), who gave their [blessing on the marriage](#) of the 4,600 couples present in the stadium and thousands of others attending simultaneous ceremonies in cities around the world, connected to the main one in South Korea via internet.

*Religious leaders at the Marriage Blessing ceremony of the Family Federation in Cheonan, South Korea
26th July 2004*



Michael Jenkins, writing for the American newsletter Unification News - August 2004 issue - described the event,

"The stadium was literally filled with blessed couples of both first and second generation. The brides looked stunning and beautiful in their white bridal gowns, and the men also looked great in stature and dignity, as these families pledged they would not only build true families with no divorce and no adultery, but also that they would seek to build a new world through linking their family together beyond race and religion, to build the [Kingdom of God](#)."



Stanislav Shushkevich speaking 26th July 2004 in Cheonan

Jenkins also reported on the numerous religious leaders who also gave their blessings on the many couples,

"Prominent religious leaders representing various faiths of the world came forward to bless the couples. Standing on the stage in a line, each one offered a prayer from their own religious tradition asking [God](#)'s blessing upon the couples. Archbishop George Augustus Stallings

represented Christianity. Imam Muhammad Elahi represented the Shia Muslim faith. They were joined by Dr. Hamdi Mohammad Murad, professor at Al Baraqa University, a leader of the Syrian Orthodox Church, a Hindu leader, a Shinto leader, and a Buddhist leader. The invocations of blessing from religious leaders affirm that there is one [God](#) and that all the faiths are coming together now to invoke the collective power of their foundations in strengthening and uplifting [marriage](#) and family."



[Father](#) and [Mother Moon](#) officiating 26th July 2004

Several former presidents, prime ministers and current heads of state attended the event. Stanislav Shushkevich (1934-2022), the first President (1991-1994) of Belarus after it seceded from the Soviet Union, said in his congratulatory speech:

"I have been privileged to attend these kinds of ceremonies ever since I participated in the First World Culture and Sports Festival in August 1992 as head of the state of Belarus. Since that first meeting, I have been given many opportunities to see, first-hand, the great works that have been done by [Dr.](#) and [Mrs. Moon](#). It was a privilege to have Mrs. [Hak Ja Han Moon](#) speak in my home country in November 1993.

Today we are witnessing the moving scene in the holy [blessing](#) ceremony of so many beautiful young couples representing dozens of nations, religions and races from throughout the world. Truly, this is a profoundly historic occasion, and I heartily congratulate each one of you! In an age when divorce rates are rising and we are confronted with the plague of AIDS, you represent the brightest hope for a better future. You are pioneers at a time when many people question the [meaning and validity of marriage](#) and family. Through you, the world will have hope to turn the tide and create model families which can inspire others."



One of the many couples in Cheonan 26th July 2004

In the keynote address, Jeong-hwan Kwak, representing the organizers, said,

"Although civilization today boasts of prosperity from the advancement of science and technology, it is being shaken to its roots by conflicts arising between races and religions. Moral values have deteriorated as time has passed, and humanity faces an uncertain future because of immorality, the breakdown of the family and the corruption of youth. Under such circumstances, this amazing [marriage blessing](#) is being fulfilled internationally, interracially and interreligiously, leading to the realization of harmony through [true love](#) and the ideal of humanity as one family. An unprecedented revolution to hasten a beautiful culture of heart - a [true love](#) culture - is happening across the globe."

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25 Years Ago: Amazing 1998 Blessing

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June 13, 2023 • Knut Holdhus



Father and Mother Moon fill Madison Square Garden for 1998 Blessing



From the 1998 Blessing of marriages in Madison Square Garden 13th June 1998. Photo: FFWPU

Congratulations to all the couples who participated in the 1998 [Blessing](#)

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of **Marriage** in Madison Square Garden, New York, and at other locations, 13th June 1998 – 25 years ago. **Father** and **Mother Moon** officiated at the ceremony. Other religious leaders also gave their blessings on the couples.

This was the third time **Father** and **Mother Moon** had filled the Madison Square Garden. They held a **large mass wedding** there for 2,075 couples in 1982. Before that, in 1974 **Sun Myung Moon** spoke there to an audience of 25,000 as part of an 8-city speaking tour throughout the USA.

For the 1998 **Blessing**, according to the organisers, 523 buses helped to bring the 20,000 participants to the large indoor stadium in New York City. The **Marriage Blessing** event was preceded by a Pro-Family Rally with Rev. Dr. Wyatt Tee Walker, senior pastor of the Canaan Baptist Church of Christ in Harlem, New York as keynote speaker.

21 “Blessing 98 Family Awards” were presented, honouring individuals who had shown outstanding leadership in their churches and communities, affirming true **family values**. A 2000-voice choir with singers from 75 different churches performed.



The main **Marriage Blessing** event represented the very culmination of a worldwide campaign to give **marriage** the central place in our lives that it deserves. Many of the couples **blessed** by **Father**

and **Mother Moon** on this occasion came from other religions or beliefs.

They had all been “pre-blessed” and had declared their agreement to base their **marriage** on **true love**, **God’s ideal**, faithfulness to each other, raising the children to abstain from pre-marital sex, contributing as a family to world peace. Members of the **Family Federation** had gone from door to door all over the world and given “pre-blessings” in the form of holy wine and holy water to couples who wanted a new start in their **marriage**. This was a large campaign at the time, also in most European countries. However, such couples were not fully **blessed** without the **True Parents’ Blessing** prayer at the main ceremony on 13th June 1998.

Father Moon confirmed that the many couples had been **blessed in marriage**, saying,

“As heaven and Earth are watching, may **God’s** eternal blessing be abundantly bestowed upon all the **Blessed** couples and the people of the world through this holy **Marriage Blessing** ceremony given by **God** and **True Parents**.”

Father and **Mother Moon** sprinkled holy water on representative couples on the dais in front of the stage, while elders sprinkled it on the thousands of other couples.

All the couples shouted a loud “Yes, I do!” to the vows read out by **Father Moon**,



Father Moon 13th June 1998. Photo: FFWPU

1. Do you as mature men and women who are to consummate the ideal of the creation of **God**, pledge to become an eternal husband and wife?
2. Do you pledge that you shall become a true husband and wife, and raise your children to live up to the will of **God**, and educate them to become responsible leaders in front of the Unification Family, all humanity and **God Almighty**?
3. Do you pledge that, centering upon **True Parents**, you shall inherit the tradition of the Unification Family, and pass this proud tradition down to the future generations of the Unification Family and to all humankind?
4. Do you pledge that, centering upon the ideal of creation, you will inherit the will of **God** and the **True Parents**, establishing **God’s** traditions of the **four great realms of heart** and the three great kingships and loving the people of the world as **God** and **True Parents** do, and ultimately will consummate the ideal family, which is the building block of the **Kingdom of God** on earth and in Heaven?

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Madison Square Garden, NYC. License: CC Attr 2.0 Gen

2824 couples had been matched by **Father Moon** for the 1998 **Blessing**, including 65 second generation couples.

There was a satellite hookup to the rest of the world, including large events with thousands of participants in Seoul,

Tokyo, Ivory Coast, Sao Paulo and other locations.

Here in Europe, the main event was held in Bratislava, Slovakia. It was led by the head of the **Family Federation for World Peace and Unification** in Europe, Kwang-kee Sa and his wife. They led the European movement from 1993 to 2003.

As mentioned, there were leaders from other religions giving their benediction to the couples. Sri Shrivatsa Goswami from India represented Hinduism, Rabbi Herzel Kranz from Maryland Judaism, the Venerable Seol-jeong Jeon from South Korea Buddhism, Archimandrite Vyacheslav Petrovich Miskov from the Ukraine Orthodox Christianity, Professor Paul Swanson from Chicago Lutheran Christianity, Dr. Hycel Taylor from Illinois Baptist Christianity, Sri Sarabjit Singh Gobindpuri from the USA Sikhism, Grand Mufti Cheikh Becaye Kounta from Senegal Islam.



Sri Shrivatsa Goswami



Rabbi Herzel Kranz



Seol-jeong Jeon



Vyacheslav Petrovich Miskov



Paul Swanson



Hycel Taylor



Sri Sarabjit Singh Gobindpuri



Cheikh Becaye Kounta

There were congratulatory addresses by Dr. Aziz Sedki (1920-2008), Prime Minister of Egypt 1972-1973, and Kenneth Kaunda



Dr. Aziz Sedki

(1924-2021), the first President of Zambia from 1964 to 1991. He said, "We are all human beings, beyond colour or religion. We have come here from all points to hear your powerful message of true family love, **Rev. Moon**, and we thank the Lord for this example."



Kenneth Kaunda

One revolutionary new aspect of the 1998 **Blessing** was that it included persons in the spirit world. Since **Father Moon** had his truly life-changing **encounter with Jesus** Christ in 1935, he communicated extensively with saints and others in the hereafter.

Based on that, it was decided to hold a "physical and spiritual world ceremony", presided over by International Director of Education of the **Family Federation** at the time, Cheong-hwan Kwak, and his wife. He declared that along with the couples in the stadium, also couples in the spirit world would be included in the 1998 **Blessing**. That would help to bring down existing barriers in the eternal world, including the "wall of hell". Thus, many couples – invisible to us – received the **Marriage Blessing** that day.

Text: Knut Holdhus



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