

Getting ready for the Holy Blessing in Korea

Crescentia DeGoede
February 11, 2014
Blessed Family Ministry USA Director



The brides and grooms from America.

The Beginning of a Relationship February 7, 2014

Today was an exciting day here at Chung Pyung. 140 (43 male and 97 female) Unificationist-born young adults gathered at the Cheon-a Camp from 10 different countries to participate in the Cheon Il Guk (CIG) Matching Ceremony. Five of them were from America—four brothers and one sister.



Crescentia DeGoede, Blessed Family Ministry USA Director, greets and signs in couples from America.

Yesterday, all of the CIG Matching candidates spent the entire day receiving education to prepare their hearts, minds, and spirits for what they would experience today. They were all a bundle of nerves this morning, anticipating the big moment. One American candidate said, "It's weird to think that any one of these women who I am sitting next to during lectures, or eating lunch at the same table with, could be my future spouse."

After a morning of internal guidance and a tasty lunch, the candidates put on their white dresses and dark suits, stepped out into the snow-filled air, and loaded into buses that would take them up to the Cheon Jeong Gung to greet True Mother. An anxious feeling was in the air.

Once all were assembled, True Mother entered the room and began giving guidance and instruction to all the candidates. Among her many words of guidance, she emphasized the importance for the candidates to make an absolute commitment to keep their marriage blessing for all eternity, and said that anyone who is

not ready to make this commitment should feel free to go.



Brides and grooms from America board the bus from the airport to HanWha Condo.

She began the matching ceremony starting with the oldest candidates and working her way down to the youngest. She guided the candidates to select their own spouse, sometimes having the men initiate, sometimes the women. Within a short period of time, 42 matches were made, including all five American candidates! After the matches were confirmed, it was a joy to watch the new couples converse happily with one another, many of them with the help of a translator.

The energy was very high and hopeful. The couples feel full of promise. They spent the rest of the day getting to know each other. Tomorrow they will be joined by couples from around the world, matched by parents or matching advisors including 50 matched couples from North America who will participate in the upcoming Cosmic Blessing Ceremony.

More Couples Join the Party February 10, 2014



Doug Burton, who is currently working with ABC News Crew on a story about the Blessing, and Crescentia DeGeode, Blessed Family Ministry USA Director, introduce the ABC Nightline crew to the brides and grooms.

Today was quite a busy day!

Yesterday our BFM staff spent the day scoping out the scene at HanWha Condo, to learn all the fun things the couples can do to spend some quality time with each other. As couples arrived, we were able to invite them to enjoy karaoke, billiards, a game room, the supermarket, sauna, and cafe.

The majority (44) of our North American (all but two) matched couples and their family members have arrived in Korea, and are now settled into the HanWha Condo. Most were weary after long hours of travel, but happy to finally have arrived at their destination. Some leaned on each other for support, barely

able to keep their eyes open as they received their room keys and registration information. Our BFM staff answered many questions throughout the day, like... "Where can I find an iron?", "Where can I buy Blessing rings?", "Where can I find Wifi?", and "How can I connect my family back home to the broadcast of the ceremony?"



ABC News interviews couples participating in the 2014 Cosmic Blessing on February 12 in Korea.

In the evening, we greeted the ABC News Crew, who will be filming throughout the next few days, and introduced them to all the matched couples and family members gathered at the orientation. The staff members of the various regions staying at the HanWha Condo for the 2014 Cosmic Blessing Celebrations—Europe, Asia, Oceania, and North America—introduced themselves to start off the orientation. We went over the schedule for the "Western Group" (as we are referred to here in Korea), and logistics.

Looking out at the crowd, you could see the 200 some people gathered, of all different backgrounds, races, and cultures. As one of the staff mentioned in their opening remarks, "It is inspiring to know that we are able to come together because of our True Parents."



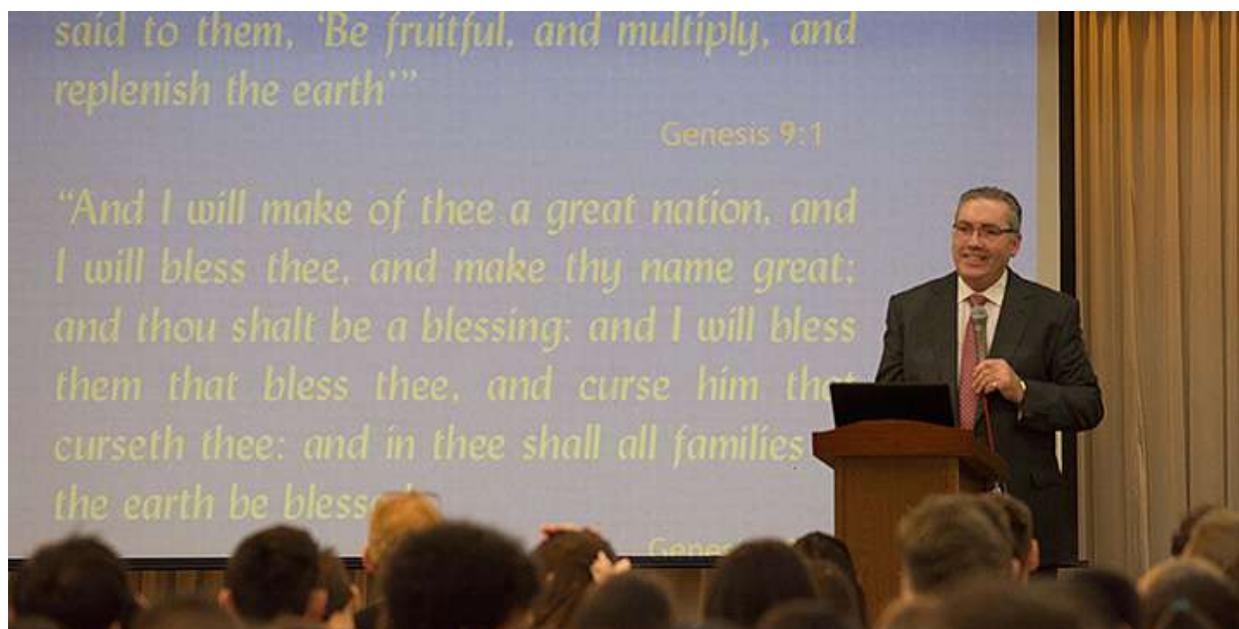
ABC News interviews second generation Unificationist couple during their lunch break at the Blessing Workshop, Korea.

After the orientation, many of the couples broke into small groups and started happily conversing and connecting with one another, many meeting each other for the first time and becoming new friends.

Tomorrow we will have some education sessions in the morning and early afternoon. The rest of the day will be free for the couples to spend some quality time together and prepare to attend the Cosmic Blessing on Wednesday.

**The Big Day is Almost Here!
February 11, 2014**

After enjoying a Korean-American hybrid breakfast, and continuing to meet and chat with other couples from all over the world, the participants spent the morning hearing testimonies and guidance about how to prepare for the Cosmic Blessing Ceremony and married life, from various BFM and Youth Education Department staff.



Rev. David Hanna, of the European Blessed Family Ministry presents to the couples.

Myself and my husband, Leighton DeGoede, Jago Gavin of the Oceania Youth Education Department and Rev. David Hanna, of the European BFM, engaged couples in discussions and activities. At one point during presentations, Leighton and I asked the couples to write down 10 things they really appreciate about their match, and then share those 10 things with their match while looking into each other's eyes. The activity was meant to give them some practice at expressing "words of affirmation", one of the "5 Love Languages", identified by Dr. Gary Chapman. It was quite moving to see the warm and affectionate interactions of the couples. It quite literally brought me to tears during my presentation to see such bright and beautiful young couples about to start their married life.



Crescentia and her husband welcome couples to the blessing workshop.

Couples enjoyed lunch and some free time before meeting again for more education. The young couples heard lessons from Geros Kunkel of the European Youth Education Department, while Susan Croswaithe led the education for first generation Unificationist participants.

The evening was full of lots of excitement and nervousness. From 4:30pm on, the couples began preparing for the big day tomorrow...

The brides lined up to get coupons for professional hair and makeup appointments. Couples bought their Blessing rings and chatted over coffee. There were lots of pictures, and some participants enjoyed time at the sauna (bathhouse) to relax and get refreshed.



Geros and Astrid Kunkel of the European Youth Education Department

The preparations will go on long into the night—ironing and steaming suits and dresses. Hair and makeup appointments began at 8 pm and are still going on as I write this. The brides are planning to sleep with their hair done and makeup on. They'll be off to an early start tomorrow—the first buses will depart from the condo at 5:30 am to take the couples and family members to the stadium for the long awaited moment.



The brides gather to have their hair and make-up done