

European Parents Matching Convocation

Neumühle, Bad Camberg, Germany, 7.- 9. October 2016



By Dr David Hanna

More than fifty parents gathered at the seminar centre in Camberg, Germany, for a Parents Matching Convocation (PMC) on the weekend of 7-9 October.

Organised by the Blessed Family Department (BFD) with European Second Generation Department (ESGD) support, these events offer practical and spiritual support to parents who are working to find a spouse for their son or daughter.

The tradition in our Unification Movement is one of 'assisted marriage', not 'arranged marriage' (there is an important difference here) and this type of gathering brings together parents who are just embarking on the process and also provides for those who may have a child whose initial matching or blessing



David Hanna, Lisa Janssen, Jane Toresen

has not worked out. We are there to help each other.

For much of the formal programme we sat seven to a table, in 'families' (a style borrowed from the Top Gun workshops). People can easily face the front to listen to a presenter and then

turn to others on their table for a group discussion. The first evening was a 'get to know you' session, introducing everybody and getting people talking. The next morning we had a study session by table using the booklet produced for the PMC containing True Parents' and other useful words on the matching and blessing. After breakfast, BFD Director, David Hanna, gave a talk on the background and meaning of The Blessing. That was followed by an explanation from Jane Toresen, the Matching Support Co-ordinator, about the process of parents matching: how to set about it, who to go to for help and many practical suggestions about what to do and what not to do.

After lunch there was some table work in groups followed by a moving talk from Lisa Janssen where, as well as introducing her work in the 'Treasures





of Heaven' area (helping blessed children with disabilities and their families), she spoke movingly about her own family and lessons learned from handling challenging situations. Breaking into four separate groups we held deeper discussions about a variety of concerns. All this happened in the beautiful environment of the Neumuhle, with excellent catering from the Camberg staff.

In the evening we listened to testimonies. This involved two young

couples being interviewed by Jane and Bert (Janssen) – Anja and Rafael, and Guglielmo and Azusena. To hear the young person's perspective on things was immensely helpful, and the interview style (adopted from the Blessing Information Days in the UK) meant that the answers were focused and relevant. To cap off the day, Ellen van Kampen gave a concise summary of lessons she had learnt in the matching process – all in her usual, entertaining way.

On the final morning we had a morning talk from our Continental Director, Mr Jack Corley, who was attending the event as the parent of a matching candidate. He spoke very movingly about his own personal family history. After breakfast we had a panel up front to answer a number of questions that had been submitted over the weekend, closing after some more networking time with a 'mini-service' from David Hanna.

A special feature of the convocation is the 'profile room', where matching profiles of candidates (more than sixty this time) are respectfully displayed. There was plenty of time in the schedule for parent to visit the profile room and to simply network with other parents or talk one-to-one with staff.

If you are a parent with children of, or approaching, matching age, please do consider coming to the next Convocation. For some parents this was their third or fourth time to attend – so first-timers or old-hands, all are welcome. To my mind, it is a wonderful example of our community in action.