

Thomas G. Walsh
November 27, 2024



HJ International
GRADUATE SCHOOL for PEACE and PUBLIC LEADERSHIP

NEWSLETTER

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Fall Convocation Report

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Imprisoned for Their Faith

Reflections on the 1974 Sentencing of Unification Missionaries in Czechoslovakia

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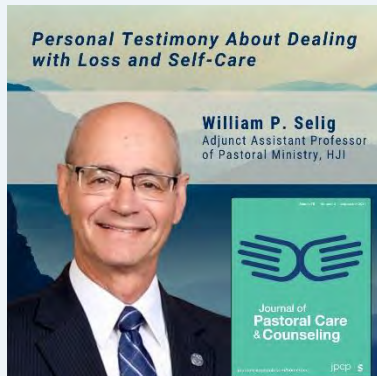


Dr. Thomas G. Walsh Speaks

at 7th International Conference on World Religions

On October 27, the 7th International Conference on World Religions (ICWR 2024) convened at Minhaj University Lahore, Pakistan, focused on "Politics and Violence in the Name of Religion."

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Dr. William P. Selig Published

in Journal of Pastoral Care & Counseling

"Personal Testimony About Dealing with Loss and Self-Care," by HJI Adjunct Assistant Professor Dr. William P. Selig, recently published in the Journal of Pastoral Care & Counseling, explores Dr. Selig's journey as a chaplain facing personal grief.

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Fall Convocation Report



Written by Associate Dean Mika Deshotel

Fall Convocation is an annual tradition at HJI, meant to bring together faculty, students, and staff for the purposes of welcoming and celebrating the incoming class. This year, Convocation took place on November 1st at 9AM EDT via Zoom. It was a short and succinct program, with various school administrators, faculty, and staff featured, along with our student body president. The overall message conveyed to our new and current students was the desire to see students be successful in their coursework as well as to invite students to reach out, share and even collaborate, as a school community this year.

Perhaps the most exciting and informative portion of Convocation is when we get to hear about the diversity and strengths that characterize our newest students, as reported to us by our Dean of Enrollment Management, Steven Boyd. In his report this time, it was shared that this new class hails from over 20 different countries and speaks 15 different languages in addition to English. Of those studying online from the US, students reside in over 10 different states, all outside of the New York and Tri-State area. This class ranges in age from 23 years old to 74 years old, and demonstrates professional skills in medicine, international relations, politics, business administration, sociology and anthropology, communications, social work, theology, education, criminal justice, history, creative writing, ecumenical work, and music. This class also includes full-time working students, and many have families to care for. This class also welcomes two cohorts who serve in leadership with Family Federation, which serves as the School's sponsoring Church: 12 students enrolled in Family Federation USA's 3-year Advanced Leadership Program and 29 Top-Gun Missionaries.

Another exciting aspect of Convocation is when we hear from our students, and this year's Graduate Student Council President, Felecia Dorbor, shared graciously with us on behalf of the student body. Felecia also happens to be new to HJI, and is a candidate for enrollment in the Masters of Religious Studies program. She is a wife and mother, and has taken her studies extremely seriously throughout her life, graduating from the University of Liberia, where she is also currently employed. Felecia shared a message of gratitude to all students, faculty and staff at HJI and reiterated the position of the Council in serving the school and collaborating with the administration.

Convocation concluded with words of encouragement and exciting updates from Dr. Walsh. Some of the items mentioned included the importance of 2025, which will herald the 50th anniversary of HJI. Dr. Walsh emphasized the importance of moving forward with our [new name](#), which has helped to broaden our reach towards peace-building, along with our Peace Studies program. He also revealed the launching of a new [International Journal for Peace and Public Leadership](#) in 2025 and new publications to look forward to with HJI Press. It was also announced that Dr. Theodore Shimmyo, HJI's President Emeritus, will also be publishing a new book on Unification Theology and Christian Tradition. The second HJ International conference, to be held in January, was also announced. Finally, Dr. Walsh reminded students to look out for course offerings for the Winter and Spring semester; he reminded students to make sure to meet with their advisor to stay up to date on their program requirements.



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Campus:
4 West 43rd Street
New York, NY 10036
Phone: (212) 563-6647



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Imprisoned for Their Faith: Reflections on the 1974 Sentencing of Unification Missionaries in Czechoslovakia



IMPRISONED FOR THEIR FAITH:
Reflections on the 1974 Sentencing
of Unification Missionaries in Czechoslovakia

PANELIST
Dr. Juraj Ladja
President, UPF Czech Republic; Current MA of Arts Peace Studies, HJI
Imprisoned 1973-76

PANELIST
Mrs. Erika Lajdova
Former President, WFWP Czech Republic
Imprisoned 8 months in 1974

PANELIST
Dr. Anton Uhnak
Global Vice President, Sun Moon University; Global Consultant, World Peace Road Foundation
Imprisoned 1973-77

HOST
Dr. Thomas Walsh
President, HJI

SPEAKER
Dr. Thomas Ward
Director of Peace Studies Program, HJI

Thursday, October 24



On October 24, HJI held a webinar in special remembrance of the 50th anniversary of the 1974 imprisonment of Unification missionaries in Czechoslovakia. Three representatives of this courageous group of Unificationists, who answered the call to serve God's Providence in Eastern Europe, shared their reflections on their mission work and eventual imprisonment— Dr. Juraj Ladja, President of Universal Peace Federation Czech Republic and current student of the HJI MA in Peace Studies, Mrs. Erika Lajdova, Former President of Women's Federation for World Peace Czech Republic, and Dr. Anton Uhnak, Global Vice President of Sun Moon University and Global Consultant of World Peace Road Foundation.

Dr. Thomas Walsh, President of HJI, emphasized that these missionaries are “models of faithfulness and steadfast attendance,” and acknowledged the challenging circumstances of being imprisoned for their faith during the era of the Soviet Union.

Dr. Thomas Ward, HJI Professor of Peace and Development, provided context on the history of the Unification Church and the fight against communism. He shared powerful stories of Unification members who tragically lost their lives following the late 1960s.

Dr. Juraj Ladja was imprisoned from 1973-76. He highlighted that 1968-1989 was a very unique time for the Unification movement to send missionaries to Czechoslovakia. “It is a story that testifies to the incredible faith, hope and determination of young people who were searching for the meaning of life and at the same time had the ideals to change society for the better. [...] Their faith and conviction, but also their determination were so great that totalitarianism seemed like an insignificant obstacle compared to the ideals for which they lived.”

Mrs. Erika Lajdova was imprisoned for 8 months in 1974. During her moving reflection she shared that “God really lived with us behind the Iron Curtain. He was walking around us in our country at the time, looking for His people.”

Dr. Anton Uhnak was imprisoned from 1973-77. For him, the *Divine Principle* gave him hope which carried him through his difficulties: “When I read the Divine Principle, I could see that the Heavenly Kingdom is possible.” He shared about his time in prison from a theological perspective.

[Watch the Recording](#) to hear firsthand about the course of these brave missionaries and their important role in extending God's message to those living under totalitarianism.



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Dr. Thomas G. Walsh Speaks at 7th International Conference on World Religions



On October 27, the [7th International Conference on World Religions \(ICWR 2024\)](#) convened at Minhaj University Lahore, Pakistan, focused on “Politics and Violence in the Name of Religion.” Leading scholars, researchers, and practitioners discussed the misuse of religion for political and social purposes, often resulting in violence. As part of the conference, the inauguration of Faith-Based Organizations, Pakistan chapter, was held. The event resulted in over eighty-thousand views over the two day conference.

On Day 2, Session 5 “Historical, Philosophical and Psychological Perspectives,” Dr. Thomas G. Walsh, Co-Chair, Coalition of Faith-Based Organizations, and President, HJ International Graduate School gave an opening address. “Religions are expressions of humanity’s search for ultimate truth or goodness, and for peace. At the same time, we see that with all human institutions, however great our vision and our ideals are, [our] flaws and limitations [get in the way]. So there are gaps between our ideals. It’s important that we acknowledge that interreligious relations can be challenging. Interreligious dialogue aims to address that problem and is making enormous strides. There’s also a great need for intra-religious relations to also promote understanding, mutual respect and cooperation.” He went on to underscore how religion and religious ideals form the basis for all aspects of life, including culture, language, politics, morality and ethics in society. It can therefore be a challenge to differentiate the causes behind conflict and violence. Nevertheless, Dr. Walsh emphasized it is our responsibility to look for the good in our human nature and allow it to emerge in order to bring lasting peace and harmony. He concluded with the expressed hope for a future conference to be held in New York, along with HJ International.

[Watch 7th ICWR, Day 2, Session 5](#)



William Selig Published in Journal of Pastoral Care & Counseling



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