

World Peace Blessing Held in Switzerland

Chantal Chételat Komagata

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Biel/Bienne, Switzerland—Twenty couples, representing different faiths and cultural backgrounds, took part in an International Peace Blessing ceremony.

The event was organized by UPF-Switzerland together with the Swiss branches of the Family Federation for World Peace and Unification (FFWPU) and the Women's Federation for World Peace (WFWP), two organizations that are affiliated with UPF.

Mr. Mamadou Diop, a member of the Biel/Bienne city council, addressed the close to 80 persons who had gathered to attend the November 11, 2017 event. Mr. Diop spoke about the importance of marriage and family and also the need for mutual understanding in a multicultural society. He said he valued the Marriage Blessing ceremony as an important step toward peace and harmony among different faiths.

Mr. Heiner Handschin, the president of FFWPU-Switzerland, spoke about the current state of marriage and family in a society that has lost its values and is confused about this most fundamental institution. Mr. Handschin emphasized the need for religious communities to unite around marriage and family in order to uphold good family values and protect the family, especially children, from a reckless sociocultural revolution that would like to turn everything upside down.

To close the first part, Ms. Chantal Chételat Komagata, secretary general of UPF-Switzerland and a citizen of the city of Biel/Bienne, introduced the concept of true family values and the purpose of the International Peace Blessing ceremony. Mrs. Komagata's presentation set the stage for the next part of the program, the ceremony itself.

After a short break, the International Peace Blessing ceremony started with a water ceremony in which representatives of seven faiths offered either a prayer, words of wisdom or a poem while pouring water from a container, symbolizing their faith, into a large jar.



Next, a small glass of holy juice was given to each of the couples participating in the ceremony. As beautiful music played in the background, each couple—or, in some cases, individuals thinking of their absent spouse—shared the cup. The diversity of the couples brought a very rich atmosphere of interreligious and intercultural peace and harmony.

After the officiators, Mr. Heiner Handschin and his wife, Carolyn, offered a prayer and meditation, they sprinkled holy water on the couples. The water had come from the containers of the seven faith representatives, symbolizing all faiths coming together into one.

After the couples read vows reaffirming their commitment to marital fidelity and harmony, the completion of the International Peace Blessing ceremony was proclaimed. A handmade cake appeared as a five-story work of art that had taken hours to prepare. The whole audience admired and applauded it and sang “Happy Blessing” together.

The atmosphere was joyful, and the banquet that followed the ceremony included musical and cultural performances. All the participants, at that time around 100, shared a warm fellowship, enjoyed the banquet’s delicious food and offered additional artistic contributions for the enjoyment of the whole audience. The event concluded at around 9 p.m., and the organizers felt that it had been a very successful celebration of both marriage and family.