

International Day of Peace Celebrated in Argentina

Carlos Varga
September 21, 2015

Buenos Aires, Argentina—UPF organized an artistic, cultural and interreligious event in celebration of the UN International Day of Peace, whose theme for this year is “Partnerships for Peace-Dignity for All.” It was held on September 21 at Club Español in Buenos Aires, where awards for the seventh annual International Poetry Contest, “Peace in Our Hearts and Light for the World,” were given, which had 391 participants from 34 countries.

Among the attendees were winners and participants of the contest—including Ana María Elizondo Gasperín, who came with her family from Mexico, and Yhudy Genoveva Muñoz Cedeño, a teacher from Ecuador—and representatives of civil society organizations.

The celebration was sponsored by the United Nations Information Centre for Argentina and Uruguay and the Ministry of Culture of the city of Buenos Aires, as well as supported by more than 20 governmental bodies, nonprofit organizations, universities, and media.

Light from the Soul

The celebration began with a reading of the UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon’s message for the Day, by Ambassador for Peace, Horacio Daboul, director of El Faro del Sur. This year’s Day comes at a time when the UN is celebrating its 70th anniversary and is adopting the 2030 agenda, a 15-year plan to achieve sustainable development, which is “fundamental to ushering in a life of dignity for all, where poverty is history and peace is paramount,” Ban Ki-moon said in his message.

Ariel Rozen and Diana Toblib, director and member of the Pardés Foundation Choir (of the Jewish community) then inaugurated the interreligious program. They highlighted the importance of cooperation for peace by reading Psalms 133: “How good and pleasant it is when brothers live together in unity!”; “Spread over us your canopy of peace” and “Peace will be over us.”

Afterwards, representatives of different faith communities offered songs. Senpo Oshiro, director of the Soto Zen Buddhist Association of Argentina Nanzenji, recited a sutra for peace, using Buddhist instruments. The New Apostolic Church choir, which was directed by Delia Del Valle Veliz, sang “Juntos aquí.” The Encounter of Communion and Liberation Choir (of the Catholic community), directed by María Cecilia Tejerina, sang “Reina de la paz,” a song composed after the 2004 Madrid train bombings that is dedicated to Holy Mary. The program concluded with the Institute of Religion Buenos Aires choir, directed by Marcelo Rodríguez, of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, singing, “Jehovah is with you.”

Carlos Varga, director of the Family Federation for World Peace and Unification (FFWPU) in Argentina also sang a song, “Luz del alma.”

The contest was declared to be of cultural and social interest by the city of Buenos Aires. Many writers participated from countries such as Ecuador, Cameroon, Germany, Greece, Italy, Israel, Nigeria, Switzerland, and the United States. The nations with the most entries after Argentina were Spain (38 participants), Mexico (21), Cuba (19), Peru (14), Chile (13), Colombia (13), Uruguay (11), Venezuela (8), Brazil (7), El Salvador (4), and Romania (4). This edition of the contest also featured, for the first time, a participant from the “peace white” continent, Antarctica—Rubén Darío Vázquez, who lives in Marambio

Base, a research base operated by Argentina. His poem “Antarctic Cry” was selected to be included in the anthology of winning poems. Also selected was “Desilusión,” from Kurdish poet Hussein Habasch, who currently lives in Bonn, Germany after being forced to emigrate from his homeland of Syria. The migrant crisis was addressed poetically by writer and poet, Nérida Pessagno, vice president of the Argentinean Writers Society (SADE), during her speech on behalf of the contest’s patrons.

Change Your Heart

There were two especially moving moments. The first was listening to Darío Vázquez read his poem, which was received with applause. Dr. Juan Carlos Luján, president of the Marambio Foundation, helped set-up the necessary equipment for Mr. Vázquez to communicate through the Internet. The second was UPF’s donation of an olive tree sprout that dates back to Jesuit missions in Paraná, the capital city of Entre Ríos province, to Sandra Villalba, director of the Inclusion Workshop Messengers of Francis, who wants to connect immigrants with the values and legacy of the Jesuit tradition. The olive tree, a symbol of peace and hope, was given to Mrs. Villalba by Eduardo Borri and Jackeline Giusti, coordinators of the Pacis Nuntii Movement and promoters of the Universal Peace Flag. Olive tree sprouts were also given the international winners and participants.

The event concluded with Germán Barceló singing two songs from his newest album, “Suelto las riendas,” as well as performing “Buscaré Señor tu voluntad” The audience cheered, clapped their hands and then sang along with Mr. Barceló.

The participants enjoyed one another’s company afterwards and could take with them the collection of winning and selected poems of the contest, which also included the jury’s decision for giving the shared first prize. The winners received a copy of “As a Peace-loving Global Citizen,” the autobiography of UPF founder, Rev. Sun Myung Moon.