

1st Anniversary Joint Service of the Sunchang Religious Conference

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Local clergymen and members of the Sunchang Religious Conference pose for a picture at the 1st Anniversary Joint Service.

[Segye Ilbo] Sunchang becomes a blossoming neighborhood of religion... '1st Anniversary Joint Service' of the Sunchang Religious Conference held at the Sunchang Catholic Church

If Confucius, Buddha and Jesus were all to present a prize together, surely the Sunchang Religious Conference, which brought about reconciliation and friendship between religions in Jeonbuk, Sunchang, would be worthy of such a prize.

The Sunchang Religious Conference celebrated its 1st anniversary at the Sunchang Catholic Church, with the "Interreligious Joint Service."

On the evening of the 15th, about 150 members and local clergy of the Sunchang Religious Conference from Buddhism, Confucianism, Catholicism, Won Buddhism and Unificationism gathered at the Sunchang Catholic Church to hold the Interreligious Joint Service commemorating the 1st anniversary of the Sunchang Religious Conference. Although some Christian circles still regard Unificationism as a cult, the local Catholic leaders and congregants showed tolerance and acceptance on this day.

The joint service began with an introduction to the presiding religions by Catholic priest Sang-Yong Lee.

Korean Buddhism Jogye Order Gangcheonsa Temple Head Monk Beop-Yeon was also introduced at this time. "Thanks to the Sunchang Religious Conference, I have been able to attend a Catholic service for the first time in my life," he said. "I am happy to make even a small contribution to tearing down the walls between religions."

Former Sunchang Confucian Missionary Byung-Moon Kang then spoke. "I have attended funerals and weddings, but this is the first time that I've attended a formal Mass. I hope that the Religious Conference can continue to develop and bring hope to local society."

"This is my second time visiting the Catholic Church, after a visit last November, together with Unification Church members," said Pastor Kyung-Woo Kang of the Unification Sunchang Family Church. "At that first encounter, I was a bit nervous to speak before Catholic Church members, but as I find myself attending Mass today, I feel very relaxed and warm." He attended the service that day along with about 50 other Unification Church members.

Members of the Unification Sunchang Family Church Multicultural True Love Choir sing a congratulatory song at the Sunchang Catholic Church.

After the introduction of religious leaders, the Unification Sunchang Family Church Multicultural True Love Choir stood up on a platform and performed two commemorative songs: “The Love of God” and “Unification Arirang.” The lyrics to “The Love of God” are written thus:

The love of God, that true love is eternally unchanging
Even when you are with Him
Even when you live with Him
Even when you see with Him
Even when you talk with Him
Even when you feel with Him
Even when you listen with Him
You want to be with Him, just like this
Oh, that’s the kind of love it is

As soon as the song began, one Catholic woman leader began to cry, and did not stop until the song was over. Her tears demonstrated the overwhelming reverence and excitement of the service that day.



As the song ended, thunderous applause rang throughout the building. “Our church’s choir is made up of multicultural families from Korea, Japan, the Philippines and Thailand, and carries out service work through their songs,” said Pastor Kang. “We will prepare many more songs to perform for you in the future.”

The Sunchang Religious Conference was established last year, and through regular meetings, the members learned about each other’s doctrines and visit holy grounds, broadening their understanding of each other’s religions.

Recently, many tensions between religions have been revealed around the world, but in Sunchang, religious people have been closing the gaps between religions. And this year, in the small village of Sunchang, with a population of just 30,000 people, the flowers of hope are blooming.