

2,500 Couples Pronounce Vows Heard Round the World

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More than 20,000 Unificationists, representing 54 countries, gathered in the Cheongshim Peace World Center in Seoul, Korea to celebrate the “Holy Blessing Ceremony,” or mass-wedding event of the Unification Church on March 24, 2012. More than 2,500 couples participated as newlyweds and 1,100 couples participated to “re-affirm” their marital vows. Approximately 100 countries broadcast the ceremony live by satellite while another 92 held their own marriage-Blessing ceremonies with previously-recorded materials.

The full title of the ceremony was “Holy Blessing Ceremony in the Era to Open the Gates to the Victory, Liberation and Completion of the True Parents of Heaven, Earth and Humankind” and was officiated by Reverend and Mrs. Sun Myung Moon, founders of the Unification Church. Unificationists and non-Unificationists alike, including Robert Epstein, founder and Director Emeritus of the Cambridge Center for Behavioral Studies and former editor-in-chief of *Psychology Today*, praised the event.



Dr. Robert Epstein, a visitor at the Blessing, makes comments to a UK film crew preparing a documentary.

“I knew very little about either the Unification Church or its marriage blessing ceremony before attending the recent event in Korea,” said Epstein. “Because I conduct research on arranged marriage, I thought that attending the largest arranged-marriage event in the world would be a great opportunity. The experience turned out to be both fascinating and inspirational. I interviewed a number of happy, hopeful young people from the U.S., the U.K., Brazil, and elsewhere whose marriages had been arranged by their parents, whose own long-lived marriages had been arranged many years before by Rev. Sun Myung Moon, founder of the Church, and was impressed by how diligently they had prepared themselves for marriage and by how determined they were to make their marriages happy and loving. The event itself – more than 20,000 people in full wedding garb – turned out to be an exquisitely beautiful pageant celebrating new marriages, reaffirmations, and the institution of marriage itself – in all, an extraordinary event.”



The interreligious aspect of the Holy Blessing Ceremony was reinforced by the presence of four distinguished religious leaders from other faiths who each offered an invocation. Archbishop Emmanuel Milingo, a former Roman-Catholic Archbishop, Mr. Taj Hamad, chairman of a committee of the World Summit of Muslim Leaders, Mr. Dae Bong Kang, president of the National Confucian Scholars Association, and Ms. Soon Kyung Sung, chief executive of the Korean Buddhist Beobsa Order, represented Christianity, Islam, Confucianism and Buddhism, respectively. Rev. Hyung Jin

Moon, international president of the Unification Church and youngest son of Rev. Sun Myung Moon offered a prayer as well.

“Officers” of the ceremony, Rev. and Mrs. Sun Myung Moon, conducted the Holy Water Ceremony, during which they sprinkled representative couples with water and read four marriage vows, to which their audience of several thousand answered with a resounding “Yes!” Brides and Grooms then exchanged wedding rings.



Kayeon Amaral, left, Tomeo Wise, and Naokimi Ushiroda, who was in Korea to support the Wongu Peace Cup team from the United States.

Rev. Moon proclaimed, “On this third day of the third month of 2012 by the Heavenly Calendar, I proclaim before God, True Parents, the world and cosmos, that the Holy Marriage Blessing of these good single men and women and couples participating in the ‘Holy Blessing Ceremony in the Era to Open the Gates to Victory, Liberation and Completion of the True Parents of Heaven, Earth and Humankind,’ officiated by the True Parents of Heaven, Earth and Humankind, the King of Kings, here at Cheongshim Peace World Center in Cheongpyeong, Korea, and in 192 nations of the world by internet webcast, is now accomplished.”



Testimonies from Newlyweds

“The Blessing was perfect – everything we really hoped it could be,” wrote newlyweds Leilani and Hyoyoung Lopiz of the United States in a joint email to familyfed.org. They added: “Since being in Korea brought a slight feeling of insecurity to us because of the culture difference, it was comforting to see that there were so many people we knew at the Blessing. We initially decided we wanted to attend the Blessing in Korea because we wanted to receive the full experience of the ‘mass wedding’ that our parents had received, as well as be blessed personally by True Parents.

“The actual Blessing ceremony exceeded our expectations! The preparations leading up to the ceremony were well organized, and the Blessing ceremony itself was beautiful, including high-quality entertainment, the physical presence of True Parents, a heart-felt prayer by True Father, and being surrounded by thousands of guests who supported our marriage as well as couples who strived for the same ideals as us through their marriage.

“Thousands of people, from many different parts of the world, came together in peace, love, joy, nervousness, excitement, and good spirits, to achieve the same ideals as us in our lives and faith. This is one of the many reasons why we are proud to be Unificationists and proud to have attended the Blessing.

“Through the Blessing ceremony, we became a part of something bigger – something greater than ourselves – in which we, along with the thousands of other couples that attended with us, pledged our commitment to each other as a couple.

Through this, we can become a blessing to our family, friends, community, and eventually society by continuing to strive to achieve the same goals and ideals that we have in our faith as a couple, and eventually as a family. Now that the Blessing has passed, we have started to focus on a life of marriage – of learning to live for each other – and we can say that we couldn't be happier.”



Newlyweds Leilani and Hyoyoung Lopiz of the United States said, “We initially decided we wanted to attend the Blessing in Korea because we wanted to receive the full experience of the ‘mass wedding’ that our parents had received, as well as be blessed personally by True Parents.

Joel Herd, a second-generation Unificationist from Redmond, Washington, participated in “True Parents’ Matching,” a process through which Unificationists are introduced to their spouses by Rev. Moon only days before the marriage Blessing.

Herd said: “It was an amazing experience to be married with so many of my brothers and sisters around the world,” said Herd, who was matched to Jeonwon Choi of Korea. “I really felt like bridges were being realized between nations and cultures. I feel empowered to be a Unificationist at this time, because of the reality of our vision of world peace, and the beauty of true love the Divine Principle teaches us. The Blessing Ceremony was incredibly holy and sacred, and my spouse and I were able to unite with our Heavenly Father as a common base.

“I was married to someone I had met four days prior to the Blessing Ceremony. I made this decision because I have a strong belief that true love comes from becoming the right person for our spouse and keeping their needs priority over my own to enable a connection through love. Our first steps together as a newlywed couple are to reunite with our Heavenly Father as our common base and then to begin growing our relationship.”

“Love Pinging Off the Walls...”



Participants of the satellite-broadcast Holy-Blessing Ceremony in the Manhattan Center in New York shared positive feelings as well.

Second-generation Unificationist Jamie Frisk said, “My husband and I had the most spectacular time at the Holy Blessing Ceremony. We couldn't have asked for a better atmosphere of celebration to kick off our married life together. There was an overwhelming feeling of support and love not only from our immediate families but also from those that participated alongside us in the Blessing. It was comforting to know that there were other couples who had been matched by their parents and were going through the same experience. Even my 90-year-old grandmother sensed a warm and uplifting spirit that seemed to fill the Grand Ballroom of the Manhattan Center. Both Justin and I are grateful and honored to follow in the steps of our parents who received the Blessing from Rev. Sun Myung Moon in 1982 right across the street at

Madison Square Garden.”

First-generation Unificationist Andrew Love, who married Uyanga Khuukhnee of Mongolia said, “This blessing was amazing! It was perfect actually. My parents came in from out of town, and even though they were somewhat skeptical about the Unification church prior to coming, they were so amazed by how much love they felt at the ceremony. There was love just ping-pong off the walls the entire time.

“This era of Unificationism seems so inclusive, I love it. I mean, we open the doors to people from all over to observe or even participate in our marriages – how amazing is that? Especially now that there is such a young, vibrant spirit in our community, I feel so blessed to have joined the church when I did, because it seems as though we have the best of all worlds. Unificationists now have the blessing of God and our job is to simply be inspired, joy-filled, thriving individuals – how amazing is that? The early members offered so much so that we could rest on their foundation, and now our own individual paths are much wider. We can really do so much for God and for this world to make a significant change.

“I had a great time. The schedule flowed nicely, and the whole event whizzed by. My eternity with Uyanga has begun, and I couldn't be more excited.”