

Marriage Blessing conducted by the American Clergy Leadership Conference

Michael Jenkins
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The Grand Ballroom of the New Yorker Hotel, where True Parents spoke many times over the years, was the setting for a landmark Marriage Blessing officiated and conducted by the American Clergy Leadership Conference on Saturday, August 18. Faith leaders from 10 states participated, and congregants from multiple churches in the New York metro area joined in a joyful celebration uplifting marriage and family. Blessed concelebrant clergy gave out holy wine and holy water, bringing alive True Parents' dream of Christianity extending God's lineage to humanity. Over 430 married couples received the Marriage Blessing, including couples who had received holy wine at their local church.



"The love of Jesus has no boundaries and it is with that understanding we believe God loves all beyond race, religion or national background. With that heart we have called upon esteemed leaders of important faith communities to share with us a prayerful display of unity. Water is a symbol of purity and life. Now,

the faith leaders will come forward and prayerfully pour the water from their vases into a common vessel with the prayer that 'All May Be One.'"

With these words Archbishop George Augustus Stallings Jr., National Co-Chairman of ACLC and Master of Ceremonies introduced an Interfaith Ceremony of Unity. Seven representatives of the Abrahamic faiths poured water into the common vessel, symbolizing the coming together of faith communities. Imam Dawud Assad (Islam), Rabbi Moise Abraham (Orthodox Judaism), Iman Souleiman Konate Masji Al-Aqsa, Father Lawrence Ventline (Roman Catholic), Rev. Rene Bellenas (Protestant), and Dr. Tanya Edwards (Pentecostal Family Church) were among those participating in a fitting opening to a Marriage Blessing celebrating oneness in God's love.

Imam Dawud Assad shared, "My wife and I were deeply moved by True Mother and the sacrifices she makes to bring the Marriage Blessing to all religions. As a Muslim, I went to the Middle East many times with ACLC. True Parents come from a Christian heritage but they have become the loving parents of all faiths as their family. As the founder of the United States Association of Mosques, I want to say how deeply moved I am for the love that True Parents show for the family and for all faiths, especially Islam. When I participated in the Water ceremony, I could feel the deep spirituality and meaning that we are all joining together as one -- the water becomes one and our hearts become one."



Archbishop Stallings continued, "This Blessing was begun in 1960 by True Parents and has now expanded to hundreds of millions and all major faiths globally. As couples we are not only representing our own family but symbolically representing all the faiths and races of humanity. Look around you -- what a beautiful sight to see all of God's children. Turn to your neighbor on both sides and say, 'God loves you and is going to give you and your family a big blessing today.' This blessing started with True Parents standing as the Only Begotten Son and the Only Begotten Daughter of God. You are now to become the first Only Begotten Son and Only Begotten Daughter in your family and church to stand as a blessed couple with no spot or wrinkle in your family and community.

The Marriage Blessing that we are about to receive today is a deeply meaningful anointing and blessing from heaven. My wife and hundreds of thousands of faith leaders have received this blessing and I want you to know that my marriage and my family has truly been blessed and filled with Life, Love and Lineage."



Dr. Michael Jenkins, Co-Chairman of ACLC was introduced to give a brief presentation called "Understanding the Blessing." It explained the profound meaning of the Marriage Blessing given by Heavenly Parent through True Father and True Mother, encouraging all those present to bring it to their communities of faith. He highlighted the significance of a couple sharing one cup, representing their eternal oneness in God's sight, and the biblical emphasis on purity and faithfulness. He explained how the Holy Wine ceremony reverses the condition of disobedience of Adam and Eve and engrafts the couple into Heaven's lineage and the Marriage Blessing seals the couple by extending the grace of Jesus from the Individual to the Couple. He emphasized True Parents were anointed by God to bring this grace to the family. Dr. Jenkins concluded by asking all participants to be "true parents" to their family, church, community, nation and world.



Dr. Ki Hoon Kim Regional Chairman of Family Federation North America gave welcoming remarks, reminding everyone of Heavenly Parent's delight at seeing Adam and Eve as children, anticipating their future in love. He continued, "Though now we hear painful stories every day from around the world, this day is a happy day before Heavenly Parent and True Parents. Their hope is that we each make our spouse the happiest on earth."

Following the holy wine and holy water ceremonies, Bishop Michael Sykes' voice boomed out over the ballroom as he read the Blessing Vows and the Blessing Prayer sealing the couples' blessing. The sparkling chandeliers reflected the light in the couples' eyes as they affirmed the Blessing vow.

After the recession of the officiators, ACLC Co-President Archbishop Lewis Rose and her husband Rev. Joseph Rose conducted a simple chastening ceremony reminding couples that the Marriage Blessing is a restoration of fallen human history, as well as a new beginning for their families.

At the conclusion of the ceremony a two-minute video was presented about the upcoming November 12 revival with True Mother at the Nassau Veterans Memorial Coliseum. In a sense, the ACLC Blessing event marked the beginning of preparation to receive True Mother later this year.

REFLECTIONS

"I want to begin by appreciating the sacred value of the Marriage Blessing, which is a global movement initiated by the late Rev. Dr. Sun Myung Moon and his wife Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon. Marriage is meant to be an eternal bond between a man and a woman. I congratulate all of who are reaffirming their vows. I want to thank True Mother especially, for her dedication to God and this ideal of bestowing the Holy Blessing on every couple in every country of the world." –Ambassador James Woolsey

"I am deeply moved by the blessing of True Parents. I can feel that True Father's spirit is here. Just as the Bible tells us that the family is central to God's plan, the Quran also says in Surah 30:21, 'And of His signs is that He created for you from yourselves mates that you may find tranquility in them; and He placed between you affection and mercy. Indeed in that are signs for a people who give thought.'" –Imam Souleiman Konate of Masji al-Aqsa

"For us this was a spiritually explosive experience! Love has no color, doesn't differentiate because of religion. This was a unique gathering of different ethnic groups and beliefs. When husband and wife meet peacefully, that peace spreads into the church and community. We want to see this continue." –Rev. Charles and Edith Agbaza, MD

