

Hak Ja Han and Hyung Jin Moon give the Cosmic Blessing

Douglas Burton, with support by Krista Moon, Erika Hiromitsu and Sebastian Rinkema

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There was pomp and ceremony on Saturday, Feb. 16, 2013, confetti galore and press coverage by the TV networks and wire services about the inspired following of the late Rev. Sun Myung Moon who insisted on wedding bashes with a cast of thousands. The significance of this ceremony was that it was the first such event since the ascension of True Father on Sept. 3, 2012. At least 3,500 couples gathered for the marriage blessing in Gapyeong, Korea on Saturday, February 16, 2013 (February 17th by Korea's time). Of these, 1,000 couples were newly married, and 2,500 couples were rededicating their marriages. An additional 12,500 couples were wed by video link in dozens of countries, including 70 couples in the United States.

But the pomp did not obscure the personal, and reporters picked up on it. One handsome couple in the BBC clip is Taesun Krishnek, son of the Seattle District Pastor, Larry Krishnek. "I'm really excited," Taesun Krishnek told the BBC, adding, "Karisa (Karisa Morikawa, from New Jersey) is the most beautiful, lovely lady I ever met. So I feel really lucky to have a girl like her in my life."

The largest gathering of Unificationist couples stateside was at the elegant Grove wedding center in Cedar Grove, New Jersey, where 51 couples tied the knot. "The Blessing ceremony at The Grove was simply beautiful, a wonderful mixture of the traditional elements of a wedding with the formal blessing ceremony, including an exchange of vows, and a first dance. My favorite part of the program was when the couples were introduced. I felt so much love and support from my friends and family gathered." said Jana Iparraguirre, of Clifton, New Jersey. Jana and her groom, Kester Wilkening swept across the ballroom square with panache.



Elegance in New Jersey

Hyomi Carty, a lithe, second generation vocalist began the entertainment at The Grove with renditions of "If I Ain't Got You," by Alicia Keyes, "Stay Together," by Al Greene and "Endless Love" by Diana Ross. 520 participants dined on a feast of Korean spiced short rib and Porcini crusted breast of chicken that was given rave reviews by the diners. Each of the 51 couples got their own cheer as they descended

the curving staircase leading down to The Grove's main ballroom. Chris and Lena Yasutake served as the emcees.

"My most memorable experience at the Blessing was during the ceremony when I faced Jana and looked into her eyes. I thought of her depth of heart, her loyalty to her family, and as I thought about spending the rest of my life with this beautiful woman, I knew that our commitment to God was unique, eternal and most definitely exciting," Kester Wilkening texted to Unificationnews.com from his engineering class at Cornell University where his studies continue.

Satellite blessing ceremonies on a smaller, more intimate scale were held in more than a dozen cities in the United States, including Berkeley, CA. "Love was in the air as six couples participated in the Cosmic Blessing Ceremony 2013 via internet broadcast together with thousands of couples worldwide," wrote Rev. Kevin Thompson of the Cosmic Blessing in San Francisco area. He continued: "At the historic Hearst House in Berkeley 120 people gathered to celebrate the wedding of three couples and the re-dedication of marriage of three more. Even though we were physically thousands of miles from Korea, where the main ceremony took place, we were all one as we experienced the joy of young love and hope for a great future together. The brides looked beautiful and the grooms dashing and family and friends were there to support and enjoy the occasion. As couples from around the world simultaneously affirmed the wedding vows read by Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon our couples in California did so with enthusiasm and everyone felt connected across the oceans."

In Pasadena, California, where the Los Angeles congregation meets, there were five couples, three of whom were previously married, and two newly-married second-generation Unificationists. At least 110 people cheered the brides and grooms on.

"It was an elegant setting since it was in True Parents House. They catered a meal after the ceremony and had a smaller scale after party. They followed along with the Korea Blessing on a huge screen. I personally felt there was a lot of value in going to Korea for the blessing, but I also felt a different, unique value by having the ceremony locally with the local music and being together with the friends and family you love," Los Angeles Pastor George Kazakos emailed to Unificationnews.com.

"It's an honor to be a part of the creation of six new blessed couples. Overall it was happy and joyful; everyone seemed very happy," observed Pastor Jario Gavin of the Cosmic Blessing in Chicago, which went on smoothly and drew 100 participants.

The Blessing Message of Rev. Hyung Jin Moon

The Blessing address was given at the Korean Blessing venue by Rev. Hyung Jin Moon, as follows; "The True Parents of Heaven, Earth and Humankind has set this year of 2013 as the starting year of Cheon Il Guk and its Foundation Day. The ideal of Cheon Il Guk is a nation where two people become one centered on the Heavenly Parents and it is an ideal kingdom of peace where there is no conflict or struggle. And now we only have five days left until that so long awaited Foundation Day. "



He continued: "True Parents are presently offering tearful conditions to create a new environment centered on Foundation Day. Trying to encompass all the seven billion people in the world and not leaving one person out, True Parents are conducting this providence of love to bring about a vision to every single person till the very end. And so, I sincerely hope that every one of you receiving the Blessing today may live up to the sincere love and hope and expectations of the True Parents of Heaven, Earth and Humankind. And for this reason, all Blessing participants here today must realize the four position foundation and the three great kingships centered on the heavenly parent. And I also hope that you can establish *Hoon Dok Hwe*, the tradition of reading the words and always remember True Parents in your heart and always read the tradition of the words of eternal life from the holy textbooks and set that tradition within your family and your responsibility as a true teacher, true owner and true parent within your tribe and society.

“Blessing participants, this sacred blessing ceremony is being held under the blessings of your physical parents, close friends, and of course, ancestors within the spiritual world; they’re all supporting you. And so, if you can all firmly preserve and develop the heavenly tradition and absolute sex, the spiritual world will greatly and surely support you. I would like to congratulate you again upon your blessing marriage, and hope that the great love and grace of the Heavenly Parents and that the True Parents of Heaven, Earth and Humankind remain in your families for all of eternity.”



The master of ceremonies was Dr. Chang Shik Yang, president of the Family Federation for World Peace and Unification (FFWPU) -Korea. Rev. Dong Mo Shin, FFWPU Regional President for South America offered an invocation, and FFWPU International President Rev. Dr. Hyung Jin Moon gave the Blessing Address. Dr. Moon congratulated the couples who participated in the holy wedding ceremony and who received the sacrament of the Blessing upon their marriages. He encouraged each couple to resolve to establish an ideal family, to keep the tradition of purity in the future, and to cherish receiving the blessing from heaven, and from their families and relatives on this day.

Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon, the officiator of the Blessing ceremony, performed the “Holy Water Ceremony,” which represents a new beginning for the couples. This was followed by an affirmation of vows, in which the couples pledged to inherit the tradition of eternal love between husband and wife and to establish an ideal family.