

UPF Nigeria Celebrates International Women's Day at National Ecumenical Center

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Abuja, Nigeria -- On March 4, 2018, over 200 women and men gathered at the National Ecumenical Center, Abuja for the Special Women's Interdenominational Service to commence activities to mark the 2018 International Women's Day organized by the Universal Peace Federation – Nigeria and the Christian Association of Nigeria. Several UPF Ambassadors for Peace attended the event with their friends, well-wishers and family members.

Bishop Aaron Dauda, UPF Nigeria Director of Christian Affairs, opened the interdenominational service with opening a prayers which was followed by songs rendered performed by the Tabitha Arise choir group. The message focused on the historical role of women in nation building and was delivered by Bishop Dr. Peter Ogunmuyiwa, the Coordinating Chaplain of the National Ecumenical Center and an Ambassador for Peace. He called for the empowerment of women and realization of gender equality, emphasizing that since the fall of the first woman, women have been looked down upon and that the time has now come for women to take their place in the challenges that faces the world.

Dr. George C. Ikpot prayed for the nation and enjoined women to become more active in the rural and urban areas in bringing men and their children back to the world of peace. Her Excellency, Professor Aisha Audu Emeje, former first lady of Kogi state and a UPF Ambassador for Peace, prayed for women and the families with a call on the government to make all efforts to obtain the release of the over 100 school girls kidnapped recently by terrorists in Yobe State, North East Nigeria. A moment of silent meditation was observed in respect of the kidnapped girls with the wishes that they are be released soon.

UPF Nigeria Secretary General, Dr. Raphael Oko spoke on the significance of the International Women's Day and testified to the positive impact of the leadership of UPF Co-Founder, Dr. Mrs. Hak Ja Han Moon, and called on women to follow her lead in bringing about the a world of peace. He explained the emerging model of leadership where the passing away of a husband does not mean the end of the role of the wife and explained that Dr. Mrs Moon is pioneering a new era of leadership with the heart of a true mother with the hope that all women can be liberated at last.

The UPF Founder's message delivered in 2012 was shared with all the participants. Here are and the excerpts are below from the message:

"Women are not here merely to help or to be protected by men; rather, they are independent individuals who, as representatives of the feminine aspect of God's nature, are meant to make men more complete and manly. Centering on true love, women are men's precious love partners. Men and women are absolutely equal in terms of value.

Men and women who unite through the true love inherent in the original ideal share the same

position. Also, they attain the right to be with each other wherever they may be. Furthermore, they attain the ideal right of inheritance, where all their property belongs to each equally.

Thus, men and women, who are brought into oneness through the original love in God's ideal of true love, have been created to become completely equal beings, centered on true love, by sharing not only the same rank and the right of participation but also their possessions with one another.

Therefore, men and women do not need to confront or contend with each other, because they do not need to imitate the characteristics, dispositions or roles of the other or to covet those things and take them by force. Instead, by giving what they have to the other with true love and completing the other, they can become united as a greater whole and share in a relationship of joint ownership.

In the twenty-first century, women should play a major role in world history by serving, together with men, as one of the wheels of the engine pulling forward the construction of a peaceful world. Going beyond a century of power and technology, women will be the central axis in building a century characterized by its loving, peaceful culture, and their role will be more important than ever before.

I sincerely ask you to choose True Mother's path, the path of a true wife, the path of a true daughter, and the path of a true woman leader who will build a unified world where freedom, peace, and happiness in its truest sense, overflow." - Dr. Sun Myung Moon, July 16, 2012

The speech was followed by an explanation of the many activities of the UPF including the promotion of interfaith harmony, which has led to the opening of the National Ecumenical Center for interdenominational worship service every Sunday by the Christian Association of Nigeria in Abuja. Dr. Oko announced the special recognition and appreciation of some outstanding women for their commitment to the empowerment of women and gender equality.

Certificates of recognition as Outstanding Women 2018 by the UPF Nigeria were presented to the following women educators and leaders:

1. Her Excellency, Professor Aisha Audu – Emeje, former first lady of Kogi state
2. Professor Rosemary Udezor, University of Abuja Professor and Co-Chair, Professors World Peace Academy, Nigeria
3. Chief Dr. Gloria Laraba Shoda, mni, National President, National Council of Women's Societies
4. Amb. Sonia Diane Tony, ECOWAS Court of Justice, Abuja
5. High Chief Amb. Victoria Ogun, Special Adviser to Bayelsa State Governor
6. Amb. Mrs. Elizabeth Omini, Commandant General, Global Initiative for Harmony in Nigeria
7. Amb. Mrs. Saadat Abaji Shuaibu, Federal Ministry of Niger Delta Affairs
8. Amb. Mrs. Grace Kazalma-Mantey , a school proprietor principal
9. Dr. Ngozi P. Nwosu, Associate Professor, Nasarawa State University, Keffi
10. Mrs. Florence Okpe,. President, Catholic Women Organization, St. Paul's Catholic Church, Gwagwalada
11. Amb. Mrs. Asibi Omeri Ogabo, mni, Permanent Secretary in Nasarawa State

Responding on behalf of the women, Professor Rosemary Udezor thanked the UPF Founders for their commitment to the empowerment of women and the realization of world peace. She pledged their determination to continue to be associated with the UPF and support the several initiatives of the organization.

At the closing session, Bishop Dr. Peter Ogunmuyiwa, the Coordinating Chaplain of the National Ecumenical Center in Abuja, commended the UPF for inspiring the leadership of the Christian Association of Nigeria to work toward bringing all Christians in Nigeria together through the weekly interdenominational Sunday service at the center, which they have tried in the past without success.