

Pacific Christian Leadership Conference: Philippine Clergy Nation-Building Seminar

Masaichi Hori
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This seminar was a call to Christian leaders of the Philippines to work together on pressing issues to address the moral crisis destroying the lives of young people and fracturing families. The Philippine Clergy Nation-Building Seminar was a 1-day event held October 5, 2023, with the theme: "Together: Solving Youth and Family Problems." It was organized by the Pacific Christian Leadership Conference (PCLC) in collaboration with the Association of Christian Evangelists (ACE) and held at the UPF Peace Embassy in Metro Manila. There was a total of 59 participants, including religious leaders, government officials, and civic leaders from various Christian churches and denominations.

The event commenced with a vibrant opening song of praise coming from the "Singing Bishops," followed by an opening prayer and the singing of the Philippine National Anthem. Archbp. Elias T. Soria, National Coordinator of PCLC - Philippines, gave a profound welcome to all guests present in the seminar and emphasized the importance of the gathering especially the need to address the moral crisis of youth and family. A video message from Supreme Bishop Rene Ballenas, President of the Association of Christian Evangelists (ACE) - International based in New Jersey, USA, followed. He appreciated the efforts of PCLC in organizing this initiative and was grateful that ACE played a contributing role.

The PCLC introductory video showcased its work and vision as well as the activities they have conducted since its launch two years ago. The founder of the PCLC is Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon, the wife of the late Rev. Dr. Sun Myung Moon. Following that, Pres. Masaichi Hori, Chairman, PCLC - Asia Pacific, and Rev. Fr. Edgardo "Egai" De Jesus, Chaplain, Our Lady of Piat Shrine Camachile, Bulacan, Philippines, gave special messages.

President Masaichi Hori described the Philippines as a country blessed by heaven. Aside from the bounty of natural resources, most Filipinos are Christians. They need to recognize the gravity of the Christian providence that has now come to the East and be more responsible by taking ownership of their God-given destiny.

Rev. Fr. Egai De Jesus shared that many Christians are losing sight of the importance of the family. Recently, he attended the World Christian Leadership Conference event in Las Vegas, USA representing the Philippines and the PCLC. He was especially grateful to Mrs. Moon for giving biblically-based value to the family. The role of religious leaders in society to help heal families was emphasized.

The program then proceeded to the education session with the presentations of Dr. Robert S. Kittel, Co-Chairman, PCLC Asia Pacific, highlighting two topics: "Understanding the Heart and Nature of God" and "The Fall: Two Tragedies."

The first presentation offered profound insights into the nature of God, an open door for a deeper relationship of love and heart with our Creator and Heavenly Parent. The second presentation examined biblical details on the causes of the fall of our first human ancestors and how these consequences still impact us today. Together these topics highlighted the necessity for fidelity in marriage and explained

why the family was the school of love. It was as if marriage was part of God's DNA. The only way to solve our modern moral crisis was for everyone to work together to create a family-friendly, God-centered culture.



The third educational session focused on initiatives in the Philippines where two case studies were shared. First, Dr. Leo Angelo Halog, National President, FFWPU - Philippines, gave an overview of the family-building activities carried on nationally. Then Rev. Ronnie Sodusta, Regional President, International Association of Youth and Students for Peace (IAYSP) - Asia Pacific, complemented this by showcasing numerous youth programs. Finally, a personal testimony was shared by Ms. Leong Sil Rose Panuelos, who underscored the success of the Sun Hwa International Academy where there have not been any teen pregnancies or sexual diseases at the school since its founding in 2002.

The next part of the program was the discussion and planning session led by Dr. Julius B. Malicdem, Vice Chair, PCLC - Asia Pacific. He emphasized the importance of each and everyone's role, especially the religious leaders, in realizing the vision of PCLC toward young people and families. This was followed by a group discussion with the subsequent sharing of outputs.

The adoption and signing of the PCLC Statement on Marriage and Family followed. Then a call to action was heard from Bishop Joseph Lalo, the PCLC Senior Adviser and District Superintendent in Southern Luzon for ACE Philippines. Representing both the PCLC and ACE, he challenged the religious leaders to continue this good work and 43 new pastors signed membership. At the end of the program, everyone joined in a circle and sang, "Lord, Heal the Land." Rev. John Rhodbert Gregorio, the Regional Director of PCLC in the National Capital Region, moderated well the entire event.

In a world divided by differences, this gathering demonstrated that people of various faith traditions can come together with a shared purpose while bringing comfort and hope to a nation in need. The religious leaders who attended are now better equipped to address the pressing issues affecting youth and families. They are committed to working together to create a brighter future for the Philippines as clergy seminars are already planned for regions throughout the country.

Bishop Christopher M. Canopen, Catholic Church of the East

Today's seminar gave me so much which I did not expect. There's so much that we have to do to strengthen our families, keep our youth safe, and let them be aware of their role in society. As our Philippine national hero, Dr. Jose Rizal once said, "The Youth is the Hope of the Fatherland." They should be well guided and taught the importance of the family in the light of the scriptures.