



The first CheonIlGuk Peace Embassy in the World Opens in Albania

The grand opening for the CheonIlGuk Peace Embassy in Tirana, Albania took place on Sunday, November 21st. The ribbon cutting was attended by five former Presidents and Prime Ministers from Albania, Montenegro, Croatia Kosovo and Bosnia & Herzegovina and several hundred local Ambassadors for Peace. FFWPU and UPF leaders from all over Europe were in attendance.

The keynote speaker was the Mayor of Tirana, Elion Veliaj, who spoke both in Albanian and flawless English. He said he was proud to see the Peace Embassy built so quickly, and just in time because next year Tirana will be the European City of Youth. This will be a great opportunity for to develop the work of Youth and Service for Peace in partnership with the city, and the new CheonIlGuk Embassy will be a central place for education. Veliaj immediately posted a 7-minute video on his social media account which has already been seen all over Albania. "There are many Embassies in Tirana," he said "but I think that this one, the Embassy of Peace, is the most important of all."

"This Peace Embassy is a precious gift from God," FFWPU Albania President Mrs. Manjola Vasmatics, who served as MC for the program. "It is not just for us, but for all the people of Albania and the Balkans." Several other speakers echoed this sentiment, including UPF Balkans chair President Alfred Moisiu. True Mother sent a special message for the occasion which was presented on her behalf by Dr. Balcomb.

"I am convinced that the nations of the Balkans, which have suffered so much in recent generations, have a great destiny, to be a model of peace and cooperation that the whole world can follow," she said. "Here is my own homeland I am working to bring about the long-delayed peaceful reunification of the Korean peninsula as a Heavenly Unified Korea. Peace is never an easy task, however, because it always means that we must live for the sake of others more than we live for our own selves.

“But, I know you can do it. I have been inspired by the energy and courage of the Albanian people ever since I first visited the country in 2000 and again in 2005 with my late husband, the Rev. Sun Myung Moon. It is my lifelong goal to see all the nations of the world join together in loving cooperation so that we may at last become true brothers and sisters, one family under God.”

The Peace Embassy, which is our first purpose-built building in Europe, extends over seven floors from the sub-basement parking all the way up to the roof terrace with spectacular views of Tirana and the mountains surrounding the city. There is a state-of-the art auditorium for 250 people, smaller conference rooms, offices, rooms for children and a kitchen and café. The upper four floors will be rented out to high level tenants and already several embassies have made inquiries.

The Peace Embassy is truly beautiful both inside and outside. We have some very nice trees and plants around the Embassy, and pride of place goes to two fine Magnolia Trees representing True Parents which stand guard over the entrance. Then there are five healthy olive trees and many other bushes and flowers. It all makes for a beautiful contrast with the glass and ceramic of the building’s modern exterior, a good balance of yin and yang.

Despite earthquakes, the Covid-19 pandemic and many other obstacles, the ceremony took place just 755 days after the ground-breaking ceremony on October 28, 2019. Still, there were many difficulties along the way. “Behind the scenes, it was a spiritual battle,” said Dr. Balcomb, who oversaw the project in his capacity as the Regional President of FFWPU Europe and the Middle East, “There was plenty of drama up to the last minute. Two days before the ceremony, a water tank on the roof burst just as night was falling. Luckily, we happened to be on the roof terrace for prayer and we noticed immediately and were able to call the engineers before too much damage was done.”

Project Director Gani Rroshi, the President of UPF Albania who guided the project on a daily basis agreed. “At the consecration and holy salting ceremony the day before the opening, there was a power spike in the neighbourhood and electrical power was lost for several hours. It seemed impossible that everything could be ready on time,” he said. “Despite the challenges, the construction team found way to keep going right up to the last minute, and the final result is wonderful.”

Everyone is encouraged to come and visit!