

## Mother hosts a Thanksgiving Banquet at East Garden for Unificationist Leaders

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November brought with it unexpected joys and a great feeling of hope for things to come. To close her time with the American Blessed families, True Mother hosted an intimate Thanksgiving Banquet at East Garden Estates, which turned into a very rambunctious and joyous celebration. Preparations produced a beautifully decorated gold and green celebration space topped with gold rimmed toasting goblets. Apple Heaven USA practiced a few upbeat song choices as family members made their way to their seats excited and thankful to be able to spend time with True Parents before True Mother departed for her next peace rally in Zimbabwe. Dr. Ki Hoon Kim, Regional Chairman of Family Federation North America, emceed the evening festivities and kept everyone laughing.



"We are very blessed to have our True Mother invite us to share Thanksgiving with her and have the opportunity to give her our thanks and have the opportunity for True Mother to show her heartfelt

appreciation to all those who worked so hard for the Nassau peace rally. She wants to share Thanksgiving Day with all the Blessed families throughout the nation. Thank you for your support and please offer prayers for True Mother's visit to Zimbabwe." Dr. Kim accompanied True Mother to Zimbabwe the following day.



When asked, those who attended shared their reactions to being invited.

Alexa Ward, President of Women's Federation for World Peace USA shared, "Thanksgiving is actually one of the main holidays in America, the only holiday that focuses on being grateful. It's the only time of year when more people get on the road to go home than any other time, more even than for Christmas. We have a chance to be home with our [True Mother] on Thanksgiving and that's really amazing. I'm very grateful."

"Thanksgiving is all about gratitude," said Denthew Leary, the Assistant Pastor at Belvedere Family Church. "I'm grateful to be here and I'm excited to just be in the room with our True Mother and with all the other people who worked so hard in the last few weeks. I was really honored to be asked to come to this as I'm low on the totem pole and I'm honored to represent second-generation Unificationists here. There are more young people leading and I hope we take on the responsibility of the peace movement and continue to create a good future." Denthew further shared, "I really feel True Mother's heart and love for the youth and I love her a lot. I feel that she wants to take care of me and it makes me want to do everything I can to give her the confidence that everything True Parents have built is in good hands and we're able to create and build Cheon Il Guk."

Demian Dunkley, Vice President of Family Federation for a Heavenly USA, summed up the heart of this gathering. "I feel like I'm riding this fast wave but I need to stop and take a look around and take in the beautiful surroundings. I feel like we're the most blessed people in the world and we don't know it, but True Mother knows it and if we could only fathom how lucky we are -- if I could go forward a thousand years and look back at this moment, what would I say to myself? Surely I would give myself a kick in the butt and I would say something like, 'Hey! Realize how lucky you are and how much True Parents have invested in you and loves you guys, giving you everything.' How could anyone doubt themselves with that sentiment? How can we doubt each other? I think everyone is great. How could we not have total faith?"

"It just feels like family. Every day True Mother wanted to invite more people and now we have 40 Blessed family members including all the New York borough pastors and the Apple Heaven Band. We have the ones here who made the Nassau peace rally happen. These are the ones who went out to the churches who have relationships with these people. So to me, this is a Harvest Festival, a thank you party for the Harvesters. You're looking at the farmers. Everybody's working hard -- whatever their position, but imagine we just harvested the farm and you're having everybody gather around to break bread. That's what this evening feels like."

Other's present shared similar sentiments about the evening being a family gathering.

Rev. Edner Pierre-Louis, District 2 Pastor for New York, said, "True Mother has a deep heart of love for her children and I feel like I'm one of them right now and I've been invited to her home to just enjoy this wonderful celebration with her along with my brothers and sisters and we're receiving mom's love."



Mari Curry, Director of Education of Family Federation for a Heavenly USA shared, "I'm overwhelmed. I feel so blessed. I just feel like I'm at home with my mom. I've been crying and laughing or smiling all week because I am just so happy and that's what I wrote on my Facebook post this week! This has been the best three days of my entire life and now with this, it's actually the best week of my entire life!"

Miilhan Stephens, Secretary General of Northeast Subregion for Family Federation for a Heavenly USA and operations director for the peace rally was able to experience a rare glimpse behind the scenes at the peace rally. "True Mother clearly is very happy with what we did at Nassau Coliseum and she appears relaxed. She's smiling a lot and I got the rare opportunity to see her laughing joyfully when she was off stage at the peace rally. I knew we were going to achieve our goal to bring Christianity to the rally even though we were understaffed. Everybody was doing more than one job but that wasn't the point; we were more united for it and I think True Mother felt it. I believe we built something that can last."

Dr. Michael Jenkins, Co-Chairman of the American Clergy Leadership Conference, shared one of the most interesting insights into the outcome of the Peace Starts With Me Rally sharing that more so than anything else, those present at the rally had never seen a "White pastor support a black pastor. Only True Mother could make that happen."

It was an evening to celebrate not only the efforts of the American Blessed families for this peace rally but another step forward in True Parents' relationship with Christianity and how their foundation paves the way toward unification.

A gift was presented to True Parents on behalf of all the families in America along with a Thank You card signed by many present. Dr. Kim also presented a gift to Shin-Bi nim, True Mother's newest granddaughter, Jeong Jin Moon and Joseph Mollica's first child. Dr. Kim welcomed all our New York pastors from all five boroughs and from the tri-state area: Pastor Tanya Edwards, Rev. John Kung, Rev. Tom Corley, Rev. Drissa Kone, Rev. Edner and Juanita Pierre-Louis, Rev. Desmond Green, Rev. Esteban Galvan, Rev. Daryll Clarke, Rev. Manoj Jacob, Rev. Greg Agulan and Rev. Chris Hempowicz, recognizing them publicly for all their dedication and hard work. Present also were Dr. Peter and Phyllis Kim, Mr. Masahisa and Yoko Kobayashi and Dr. Theodore and Sumie Shimmyo.

After a delicious Thanksgiving dinner, our very own Apple Heaven USA band performed several lively numbers while Luke Higuchi, our resident dancer, got the room up and dancing! True Mother was

enjoying the happy atmosphere. Even Dr. Kim took up a mic and joined the band. The whole room got up and danced. True Mother was serenaded by Demian Dunkley with his rendition of "What a Wonderful World" followed by several more Korean songs that had everyone hooting, cheering and moving, and, at one point, feeling free to crowd around True Mother and sing and dance around her! It was all so informal and intimate. The night really felt like family and friends gathered for a roof-raising party.



True Mother surprised everyone further with a gift.

*"I prepared gifts for this occasion for everyone. When True Father was with us, there was a necktie company that I really liked called Ferregamo Ties. I gave a lot of these neckties to Father because each tie has really fun nature characters printed on them such as birds and fish. So, with the heart of loving all things and nature I gave True Father these ties. Even though it's a little early to be celebrating Thanksgiving, I had such a great uplifting experience and I wanted to celebrate with you, but before I leave for my next trip, I wanted to give each of you a gift of this special necktie so I prepared them. When you receive your necktie, please change out your tie. Each tie has a different meaning. The color green is the symbol for peace. Wearing these ties will give you energy and power."*

True Mother also gifted magenta colored Coach brand scarves and a box of holiday Godiva chocolates for the sisters and then gifted a special gift for all the Generation Peace Academy sisters who served dinner. They later performed the Mujogeon "Unconditionally" dance to for True Mother and her guests.

True Mother ended the night by inviting everyone to sing "Sarang-Hae True Parents" with her.

