

UPF Manila, Philippines - Asia-Pacific Clergy Leadership Conference - Memorial Festival

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Manila, Philippines - The Asia-Pacific Clergy Leadership Conference, in partnership with UPF, held a Christian Online Fellowship with the theme, "Celebrating the Legacy of Peace," on June 3, 2021. The event was attended by 234 people via Zoom and garnered around 500 viewers on social media.



The Legacy of Peace program, also called a Memorial Festival of Ascension and Unity, commemorates and celebrates the life and work of notable Ambassadors for Peace and initiated at the United Nations headquarters in New York in March 2010 with UPF founders, Rev. Sun Myung Moon and Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon. This program honored the lives of two Ambassadors for Peace from the Asia Pacific region who contributed significantly towards achieving sustainable peace. These Ambassadors for Peace, Rev. Fr. Eliseo Mercado Jr., a Roman Catholic priest from the Philippines, and Pastor Ganesh Shrestha of the Pratigya Church and a lawyer from Nepal, were actively involved in UPF initiatives and participated in the inauguration of the World Clergy Leadership Conference (WCLC) in the U.S. in December 2019.

The program started with singing of a peace anthem and was followed by the lighting of three candles, by Rev. Leo Angelo T. Halog, president of the Family Federation for World Peace and Unification (FFWPU)-Philippines, an affiliated organization. This candlelight ceremony was also dedicated to all the victims of the COVID-19 pandemic. Msgr. Joseph P. Lalo, priest of Neo Monastic of St. Thomas

(NMST) Eastern Catholic Church in the Philippines, blessed the program with a prayer of remembrance. Selected Bible verses and a speech by Rev. Moon was read by Bishop Rene Ballenas, president of ACE International, and Mrs. Ursula McLackland, coordinator of the International Association for Peace and Development (IAPD)-Asia Pacific.

In his opening message, Dr. Julius B. Malicdem, regional vice president of FFWPU-Asia Pacific 2, emphasized the meaning of the Legacy of Peace celebration: to honor the lives of amazing heroes in this physical world. Afterwards, Hon. Ek Nath Dhakal, chairman of UPF-Asia Pacific, and Dr. Robert S. Kittel, senior advisor and director for education of UPF-Asia Pacific, expressed words of appreciation to and reminisced of the experiences they had with Fr. Mercado and Pastor Shrestha in the U.S. in December 2019. Ms. Celine Deapera from the Philippines offered a beautiful rendition of the song "Amazing Grace."



The most awaited part of the program, the tribute to the two religious leaders, then began. A video presentation of Pastor Shrestha's life was shown first and was followed by a testimony given by Rev. Santosh Paudel, deputy sub-regional director of FFWPU-Asia Pacific 1. He also read condolence messages from people who were very close to Pastor Shrestha. Pastor Shrestha's wife Mrs. Suju Shrestha and their entire family attended the program. Next was the tribute to Fr. Mercado. A video honoring his life and dedication to peace, especially his commitment to UPF, was shown. Fr. Amador M. Castillo, OMI, superior of Bolduc Residence, Oblates of Mary Immaculate Missionary, who was a dear friend of Fr. Mercado, gave a testimony. Archbishop Soria then read condolence messages for Fr. Mercado. These messages were from Bishop Ki Hoon Kim, chairman of the World Clergy Leadership Conference; Archbishop George Augustus Stallings Jr., executive member of the National Executive Committee of ACLC; and Fr. Edgardo De Jesus, priest of the Holy Cross Parish from the Philippines. Fr. Mercado's direct family were present during the program, including his sister, Rachel Mercado, and his nieces, Jovy, Noel and Elinita Crisostomo. They extended their appreciation to everyone who organized the program and especially to UPF and the Asia-Pacific Clergy Leadership Conference.

The final part of the program was the presentation of flowers. Dr. Venus Agustin, vice chairman of UPF-Asia Pacific, presented a basket of flowers for Pastor Shrestha, and Msgr. Joseph P. Lalo presented another basket of flowers for Fr. Mercado. Also, Mrs. Mary Grace A. Carumba, deputy secretary-general of UPF-Asia Pacific Region 2, offered flowers for all those who passed away due to COVID-19. Rev. Gregory Stone, coordinator of WCLC-Asia Pacific, gave the closing message and prayer. Finally, Rev. John Adamedes, president of FFWPU-Australia, led cheers of the Korean phrase "Eok Mansei" - which means literally "10,000 years of happiness and peace." The program was moderated by Archbishop Elias Soria, D.D., president of ACLC and the IAPD in the Philippines.