

Central America-Caribbean Celebrates International Day of Peace

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Guadalupe, Costa Rica—UPF celebrated the International Day of Peace 2015 with events in four countries in the Central America-Caribbean region: Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, Haiti, and Jamaica.

Jamaica

UPF-Jamaica commemorated the International Day of Peace by organizing a discussion on how sustainable peace can be achieved, at the Stella Maris Pastoral Centre on September 20. Presentations were given on this year's theme for the Day, "Partnerships for Peace—Dignity for All."

Mr. Dennis Salmon, president of UPF-Jamaica, West Indies, said that UPF uses a "soft power" approach to peace. It mobilizes leaders and grassroots organizations to dialogue on peace, and promotes character education, as "people of a mature character will have love for all, hatred for none. [By practicing] living for the sake of others and passing these values to [our] children, [we create] strong, healthy families," he said.

Mr. Horace Matthews, who is a Lay Magistrate, and deputy director of UPF-Jamaica, said that family values, and a willingness to break down barriers whether real or imagined, are essential to establishing peace. He recalled growing up in an environment surrounded by violence and credits strong parental guidance for his choice to stay away from involvement with gangs. "I was in it, but not a part of it," he said. Mr. Matthews also admitted that he had resentment towards white people based on racial issues of the past. However, one act of kindness would open him up. While shivering in the cold, standing at a bus stop in New York one day, a car pulled up to him. Driving it was a white man, who offered him a lift, and gave him his coat and some cash to reach his destination.

Costa Rica

UPF-Costa Rica celebrated the International Day of Peace on September 20 and 21 with a program on the theme, "Respect and Love for All," that included a walk for peace and seminar, which was attended by local leaders and Christian pastors.

Haiti

The International Day of Peace in Haiti was celebrated in Port-au-Prince with a program on how local leaders can help their community achieve sustainable human development and shape the life of their population, now, and for future generations.

More than 100 people attended the event, including representatives of government and NGOs; members of the Coalition for the Promotion of Peace and Ambassadors for Peace.

Participants recognized the importance and the place of God in leadership and how to advance peace within the nation, in the region and in the world.

The program concluded with the appointment of twenty new Ambassadors for Peace and a singing of a song of peace.

Dominican Republic

UPF-Dominican Republic celebrated the International Day of Peace on September 23.