

## Dr. Sun Myung Moon Proclaims Nigeria's New Hope for Peace

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*Father Moon described a vision of peace for Nigeria based on stable families that love God.*

The International Conference Center in Abuja, Nigeria, has hosted many prestigious events in the twenty years since the new federal capital was founded in 1991, but the July 17, 2011 stop on the Universal Peace Federation (UPF) Founder's Peace Tour 2011 was surely one of the most memorable. A crowd of around 3,000, including more than 700 from overseas, were on hand to hear the UPF Founder Rev. Dr. Sun Myung Moon (affectionately known as Father Moon) speak at length of God's hope that Nigeria will become a model nation of peace and a beacon of light to all of Africa.

Africa's largest nation is surely in need of a new vision, and many challenges face newly re-elected President Goodluck Jonathan, who is currently negotiating the difficult task of assembling a cabinet and government that can embrace all of Nigeria's cultural, religious and ethnic diversity. That work has been made even more difficult both by human and natural disasters, including a recent outbreak of terrorist bombings in Abuja and in northern Nigeria, and widespread flooding in Lagos, the former capital and biggest city.



*Leaders of five faiths offered prayers of peace to open the International Leadership Conference in Nigeria.*

Despite all this turmoil, President Jonathan earlier had taken precious time away from his other duties for a substantive meeting with Father and Mother Moon and members of their family and tour party. During this meeting, Dr. Moon offered the President three suggestions for the future of Nigeria.

First, he strongly urged President Jonathan to honor God and God's laws and traditions at the center of his government and to channel Nigeria's national passion for religion toward being an asset for peace instead of a source of division. Second, he emphasized the importance of supporting strong marriages and families, so that Nigeria's traditional family tradition shall not be eroded by a tide of secular and humanistic values threatening to sweep the country. Third, he voiced the hope that Nigeria shall emerge as a model nation for all of Africa, and for the world.

These three themes formed the focus of a three-day International Leadership Conference hosted by the Universal Peace Federation, drawing more than 700 participants from Nigeria and 69 other nations. A total of 34 speakers addressed topics such as Agriculture and Food; Health and Development; Interfaith Peace-building; and Good Governance.

At the opening plenary of the UPF Conference, Dr. Thomas Walsh, UPF President, said that the leadership conference and the peace tour demonstrated the "commitment of UPF in Nigeria and in Africa at large to promote interfaith cooperation, good governance, strong marriage and family, and character education for youth."

Dr. Hyung Jin Moon, UPF International Chairman, said that true and lasting peace cannot come from a secular, human origin. "Lasting solutions to the critical problems faced by the people of this region call for a spiritual awakening and the full participation of those who affirm and practice spiritual principles," he said.

Yet, religious passion alone is not enough, he concluded. "As religious leaders or believers, we must be ever vigilant in preventing the corruption of religion that can lead to narrow fanaticism and even violence."

These realities were clearly acknowledged by the Hon. Ibrahim Nasiru Mantu, former deputy president of the Nigerian Senate, in his welcoming remarks. "Nigeria was once a home of peace," said Mantu. "But today, leaders engage in corrupt practices, because they don't have the fear of God in them. That is why the fundamental teachings of Father Moon are so important, both for Nigeria and the world."



*3,000 people gathered to hear Rev. Sun Myung Moon, the founder of the Universal Peace Federation, give his address in Abuja, Nigeria.*

The depth of Nigeria's religious commitment could be seen by the way the busy streets of its capital fall quiet on Sunday, and the stores are all closed. Throughout the afternoon, a good-natured crowd made its way into the Convention Center for the Peace Tour program.

The Universal Peace Orchestra, which had travelled many hundreds of miles from the city of Port Harcourt in the south of the country, offered a stirring rendition of the Nigerian national anthem, and religious leaders of five faiths offered invocations and prayers for peace. More sounds of praise came from the rock band, Sonic Cult, from the United States, and Ms. Patti Boulaye, a Nigerian who left her country as a victim of Nigeria's bitter civil war, sang "Amazing Grace."

At last, Father and Mother Moon came to the stage, introduced by two of their children, Rev. In Jin Moon, the President and CEO of the Unification Church USA, and Rev. Hyung Jin Moon, International President of the Unification Church.

"I have felt very welcome here in Nigeria," Father Moon said before beginning to read his peace message. "This country has a great potential, not just for itself but for all of Africa and the world." Yet, he went on to explain, the real resources of a nation are not external things such as oil, minerals and water. Even Nigeria's vast human resources — one in four Africans is a Nigerian — have little meaning if not centered on God. "What use is even a Nobel prize," he continued "If it is not used for the sake of peace?"

"The tradition of peace that God wants to see in Africa must be firmly established in the family," he said. "Every family must establish a pure tradition. Then, even if the family's fortunes go up and down, even as far as the sun falling below the horizon, eventually the light will return."



*Rev. Hyung Jin Moon, with his parents, Rev. Sun Myung Moon and Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon, offered their blessings to the people of Nigeria.*

As the evening hours advanced and the large international audience sat patiently, Father Moon set aside his prepared text again and again to elaborate on the direction that Nigeria and Africa should take. "To attend God, and to enjoy life with God, you have to understand the path I have taken, and walk the same way with me," he said. "If all the countries of Africa can unite, then this continent will rise."

Despite the lateness of the hour, most in the audience were genuinely enthusiastic about the message they had heard. "This is a wonderful opportunity for all Africans," said Gabriel Messan Kodjo, a former prime minister of Togo. "Of course, we can read the texts any time, but to have Father and Mother Moon here in person is a once-in-a-lifetime event."

"Father Moon offers some very innovative ideas towards the universal concept of peace that forms the pillars of UPF," said Madhav Kumar Nepal, until a few months ago prime minister of Nepal. "In this era of global crisis, these ideas need to be given serious consideration."

*Contributed by Dr. Michael Balcomb, Director of Communications for the Universal Peace Federation.*