

Milingo: Rev. Moon's legacy is in religious unity

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GAPYEONG, South Korea — Unification Church founder Rev. Sun Myung Moon's work on behalf of harmony among the world's great faiths will be among his most lasting achievements, Emmanuel Milingo, the onetime Zambian Catholic archbishop defrocked for taking a wife in a ceremony presided over by Rev. Moon in 2001, said in an interview Thursday.

Archbishop Milingo, now the head of the advocacy group Married Priests Now, which is pressing the Vatican to accept the option of marriage for ordained Catholic priests, was among the thousands of mourners and foreign dignitaries who have traveled to this rural South Korean retreat to attend Saturday's "seonghwa," or ascension ceremony, for Rev. Moon, who died from complications of pneumonia Sept. 2 at the age of 92.

The ex-Catholic prelate praised the Korean spiritual leader for what he said was Rev. Moon's understanding of the centrality of marriage in human life and his sympathy for those facing persecution for their beliefs.



Archbishop Milingo and his wife, Maria

"Reverend Moon always persevered in his belief in the unity of all religions, even when other people wanted to raise up the flag of their own religion against all others," Archbishop Milingo said, his South

Korean wife, Maria, sitting nearby. “Without a doubt, he understood the will of God that His people should be one.”



Archbishop Milingo and his wife, Maria

The prelate said he was totally convinced of the reality of Rev. Moon’s account of his vision, as a boy of 16, of Jesus, who, believers say, charged him with a lifelong mission to establish the Kingdom of Heaven on earth.

“Yes, I believe it happened; otherwise, he would not have been able to push so hard for so long as he did, especially the way you consider he suffered for his principles, if it were not true,” Archbishop Milingo said.

The prelate said he did not feel concern about the future of the Unification Church as it makes the transition to a new generation of leaders, a subject of considerable speculation as church leaders and the faithful have gathered here to bid a final goodbye to the founder. Rev. Moon’s youngest son, the Rev. Hyung-jin Moon, has been designated his father’s spiritual successor, while another son, the Rev. Kook Jin Moon, will oversee the extensive commercial interests in South Korea and around the world linked to the church.

“If God is truly with the Unification Church, He will allow new leaders to be drawn out. There will be those who stand firm to carry out the mission of Rev. Moon,” he said.