

FFWPU Europe and the Middle East: 2075 and 6,000 Couples Blessing celebrate their 52nd Anniversary

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The ruby wedding celebration denotes forty years of marriage; in this case the couples had been wed in one of two 'mass wedding' celebrations in 1982: the 2075 couple Blessing in New York on 1 July, or the 6,000 couple Blessing in Seoul, Korea on 14 October of the same year.

One of the aims of the Blessing is to foster international and interracial harmony and the wide range of nationalities of the cruise participants certainly reflected this. Although this celebration was primarily intended for couples living in Germany, we were happy to welcome several

participants from Holland, Luxembourg, Belgium and the UK.

Reports in the press about the discontinuation of Rhine traffic due to the low water level made many, including the organizers, very uncertain as to whether the event could take place at all. But thankfully the only outcome of the drought was that the location of the shore sightseeing stop had to be changed.

From Koblenz, in the German state of Rhineland-Palatinate, at the convergence point of the rivers Rhine and Mosel the Augusta would carry the celebrants up the Rhine to the legendary Loreley before the return sail, an excursion of eight hours.

There was an excellent balance between time allocated for chatting with old friends and making new acquaintances, for soaking in the magnificent scenery and castles on the banks of the Rhine, for enjoying the plentiful and tasty lunch buffet and later coffee and cake, and for enjoying the varied entertainment program.

After wonderful introductory background music from our band, Sarah Z. officially opened the event and guided us through the morning program. She referred to True Father's comments at the Blessing in New York when he told the couples that they had graduated from being 'Moonies' who reflect light, to 'Sunnies' who radiate light.

Dieter and Ana Schmidt (German National Leaders), blessed in New York, and Michael and Fumiko Balcomb (European Continental Leaders), blessed in Korea, then offered congratulatory remarks. Michael, Fumiko and Dieter had returned only the previous day from the Seonghwa festival marking the tenth anniversary of the Holy Ascension of True Father in Korea, and Dieter commented that he again was struck by what has been established internationally and how much this is a testimony to how far we, as blessed couples have developed. Ana, happy to see her husband again remarked how important it was to look into the eyes the other.

As we have come to expect from Michael and Fumiko, we were given some 'homework', demonstrated by them, to kiss our spouse! We were truly happy that both couples could participate in the celebration, after such a strenuous trip to Korea.

We then reminisced with short video clips from the original ceremonies in New York and Seoul, accompanied by pictures of the couples, many of whom had submitted 'then and now' photos. The appearance of each couple on the screen was received with enthusiastic and sincere applause.

Several people were inspired to share short and sometimes amusing testimonies, but Claus D. divulged a real thriller: he read an excerpt from Gerhard Peemoeller's book 'Bodyguard for Christ'. On the day of the July 1 Blessing, those responsible for the event were warned by the New York Police Department of a possible attack on Rev. Moon. The ingenious measure taken: True Parents were not driven as usual in a VIP vehicle to the main entrance of the venue but in a camouflaged dirty electrician's van to a back entrance.



After time to enjoy the background music, to chat, or simply to marvel at the scenery, the sumptuous lunch buffet was opened to be savored on a location of choice on the ship. Those on the top deck had the best view of the famous Loreley; shortly afterwards the ship turned to make its return journey, with a short stop in St Goar. There most took the opportunity to stretch their legs and briefly explore the town.

Back on the ship, the afternoon program, led by emcee Catriona V., was opened with ceremonial cake cutting. This honor was determined by lottery

and fell to a German / American couple, Lothar and Marcia S. But coffee and cake did not signal the start of a relaxed afternoon; the emcee encouraged active participation from the audience, several of whom volunteered to sing (Fumiko J., Hubert and Yoshiko A., Brigitte M., and Margaret S.), or perform a sketch (Gudrun M. and Monique S.). And then the couples were encouraged to get up on the dance floor - which resulted in much chaos and hilarity and occasionally successful dance steps!

But we were approaching Koblenz and there was still an important program point: the lottery draw. The whole event was made so much richer and more enjoyable by the music provided by the talented trio of Stefan (percussion), Hans Campman (piano) and Taka Wakayama (bass guitar).

Oivind H. was called on to bring out his guitar and accompanied by his wife, Magda, inspired a further mixture of impromptu singing and dancing. The final task of the band was to accompany a heartfelt rendition of 'Saranghae' which was sung by all in a circle, followed by a moving prayer offered by Sarah and three manseis led by Dieter.

We, the organizers, want to express our deepest gratitude to all who supported and contributed in whatever way. Special thanks to the European Blessed Family Department and German Family Federation for financial support, including the unexpected contribution of the lottery prizes. Thanks also to Ben and Joyce Baron for photography and miscellaneous support, and to Peter V. who provided months of invaluable behind the scenes practical support and advice.