

FFWPU Europe and the Middle East: 25 Years Ago: Amazing 1998 Blessing

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June 13, 2023



Father and Mother Moon fill Madison Square Garden for 1998 Blessing

Congratulations to all the couples who participated in the 1998 [Blessing of Marriage](#) in Madison Square Garden, New York, and at other locations, 13th June 1998 - 25 years ago. [Father](#) and [Mother Moon](#) officiated at the ceremony. Other religious leaders also gave their blessings on the couples.

This was the third time [Father](#) and [Mother Moon](#) had filled the Madison Square Garden. They held a [large mass wedding](#) there for 2,075 couples in 1982. Before that, in 1974 [Sun Myung Moon](#) spoke there to an audience of 25,000 as part of an 8-city speaking tour throughout the USA.

For the 1998 [Blessing](#), according to the organisers, 523 buses helped to bring the 20,000 participants to the large indoor stadium in New York City. The [Marriage Blessing](#) event was preceded by a Pro-Family Rally with Rev. Dr. Wyatt Tee Walker, senior pastor of the Canaan Baptist Church of Christ in Harlem, New York as keynote speaker.

21 "Blessing 98 Family Awards" were presented, honouring individuals who had shown outstanding leadership in their churches and communities, affirming true [family values](#). A 2000-voice choir with singers from 75 different churches performed.



The main [Marriage Blessing](#) event represented the very culmination of a worldwide campaign to give [marriage](#) the central place in our lives that it deserves. Many of the couples [blessed](#) by [Father](#) and [Mother Moon](#) on this occasion came from other religions or beliefs.

They had all been "pre-blessed" and had declared their agreement to base their [marriage](#) on [true love](#), [God's ideal](#), faithfulness to each other, raising the children to abstain from pre-marital sex, contributing as a family to world peace. Members of the [Family Federation](#) had gone from door to door all over the world and given "pre-blessings" in the form of holy wine and holy water to couples who wanted a new start in their [marriage](#). This was a large campaign at the time, also in most European countries. However, such couples were not fully [blessed](#) without the [True Parents' Blessing](#) prayer at the main ceremony on 13th June 1998.

[Father Moon](#) confirmed that the many couples had been [blessed in marriage](#), saying,

"As heaven and Earth are watching, may [God's](#) eternal blessing be abundantly bestowed upon all the [Blessed](#) couples and the people of the world through this holy [Marriage Blessing](#) ceremony given by [God](#) and [True Parents](#)."

[Father](#) and [Mother Moon](#) sprinkled holy water on representative couples on the dais in front of the stage, while elders sprinkled it on the thousands of other couples.

All the couples shouted a loud "Yes, I do!" to the vows read out by [Father Moon](#),

Do you as mature men and women who are to consummate the ideal of the creation of [God](#), pledge to become an eternal husband and wife?

Do you pledge that you shall become a true husband and wife, and raise your children to live up to the

will of [God](#), and educate them to become responsible leaders in front of the Unification Family, all humanity and [God](#) Almighty?



Father Moon 13th June 1998

Do you pledge that, centering upon [True Parents](#), you shall inherit the tradition of the Unification Family, and pass this proud tradition down to the future generations of the Unification Family and to all humankind?

Do you pledge that, centering upon the ideal of creation, you will inherit the will of [God](#) and the [True Parents](#), establishing [God](#)'s traditions of the [four great realms of heart](#) and the three great kingships and loving the people of the world as [God](#) and [True Parents](#) do, and ultimately will consummate the ideal family, which is the building block of the [Kingdom of God](#) on earth and in Heaven?








Madison Square Garden

2824 couples had been matched by [Father Moon](#) for the 1998 [Blessing](#), including 65 second generation couples.

There was a satellite hookup to the rest of the world, including large events with thousands of participants in Seoul, Tokyo, Ivory Coast, Sao Paulo and other locations.

Here in Europe, the main event was held in Bratislava, Slovakia. It was led by the head of the [Family Federation for World Peace and Unification](#) in Europe, Kwang-kee Sa and his wife. They led the European movement from 1993 to 2003.

As mentioned, there were leaders from other religions giving their benediction to the couples. Sri Shrivatsa Goswami from India represented Hinduism, Rabbi Herzel Kranz from Maryland Judaism, the Venerable Seol-jeong Jeon from South Korea Buddhism, Archimandrite Vyacheslav Petrovich Miskov from the Ukraine Orthodox Christianity, Professor Paul Swanson from Chicago Lutheran Christianity, Dr. Hycel Taylor from Illinois Baptist Christianity, Sri Sarabjit Singh Gobindpuri from the USA Sikhism, Grand Mufti Cheikh Becaye Kounta from Senegal Islam.

		
<i>Sri Shrivatsa Goswami</i>	<i>Rabbi Herzel Kranz</i>	<i>Seol-jeong Jeon</i>
		
<i>Vyacheslav Petrovich Miskov</i>	<i>Paul Swanson</i>	<i>Hycel Taylor</i>
		
<i>Sri Sarabjit Singh Gobindpuri</i>	<i>Cheikh Becaye Kounta</i>	
		
<i>Dr. Aziz Sedki</i>	<i>Kenneth Kaunda</i>	

There were congratulatory addresses by Dr. Aziz Sedki (1920-2008), Prime Minister of Egypt 1972-1973, and Kenneth Kaunda (1924-2021), the first President of Zambia from 1964 to 1991. He said, "We are all human beings, beyond colour or religion. We have come here from all points to hear your powerful message of true family love, [Rev. Moon](#), and we thank the Lord for this example."

One revolutionary new aspect of the 1998 [Blessing](#) was that it included persons in the spirit world. Since [Father Moon](#) had his truly life-changing [encounter with Jesus](#) Christ in 1935, he communicated extensively with saints and others in the hereafter.

Based on that, it was decided to hold a "physical and spiritual world ceremony", presided over by International Director of Education of the [Family Federation](#) at the time, Cheong-hwan Kwak, and his wife. He declared that along with the couples in the stadium, also couples in the spirit world would be included in the 1998 [Blessing](#). That would help to bring down existing barriers in the eternal world, including the "wall of hell". Thus, many couples - invisible to us - received the [Marriage Blessing](#) that day.

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A new millennium has begun! We have the opportunity to create a new and better future for humanity. But such a future



depends entirely on a renewal of the family. A global renewal of the family is necessary if we are to have hope for peace in the world. Nevertheless, such a renewal is something that neither governments nor religious communities can achieve. That is why **God** has called **Father** and **Mother Moon** to arrange **large ceremonies** so that as many as possible may receive the Marriage Blessing. Since 1960, they have faithfully carried out this task. The ceremonies, which are open to people of all races, nationalities and religions, have only grown in scope. When thousands, even millions, of men and women begin to do their best to realize **God's ideal** of love in their **marriage** and family, this will eventually change the world.

During the wedding ceremony, each married couple promises that:

- Your family (the cornerstone of society) becomes a place where **God's true love** is found.
- Your children will be raised to live according to **God's** will.
- Your children will be raised to form pure **relationships** and not have sexual relations before **marriage**.
- Your family will be a support and inspiration for other families, regardless of skin colour, religion and nationality.



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Large Wedding Ceremonies



For more than 60 years, [Father](#) and [Mother Moon](#) have organized large wedding ceremonies in order to realize [God's](#) family ideal. People from all races, cultures, religions and nationalities participate. After [Sun Myung Moon's](#) death in 2012, his wife [Hak Ja Han](#) has officiated at the major international ceremonies.

Since 1960, millions of couples have been blessed in such ceremonies as a way to realize their desire to achieve the eternal ideal that true conjugal love represents, and at the same time raise their children with an absolute and unconditional parental love.

Among the many who have had their marriages blessed by [Father](#) and [Mother Moon](#), there are thousands who asked [Father Moon](#) to choose a spouse for them. He had received from [God](#) the ability to see the individual's spiritual character and inherited qualities. This enabled him to suggest with whom a person was best suited, and what kind of partner one would need for his or her spiritual growth. That tradition came to an end some years before [Sun Myung Moon](#) left this world in 2012.



"While marriage counselors and parish priests are wringing their hands over the breakdown of family life, the [Unification Church](#) is doing something about it. The [God](#)-centered family is not merely a nice slogan or a spiritual ideal suggested by the church leaders. It is the essential core of community among the faithful of the church. It is also a deeply motivated system for restoring marital fidelity and family stability to modern society."
(*Marriage, Family and Sun Myung Moon*, article by Father Joseph H. Fichter (1908-1994), Jesuit and sociologist of religion, published in the Jesuit magazine *America* 27th Oct. 1979.)

Couples who are already married within the framework of their own religion also participate in these ceremonies. They do not need to change their religion, but on the contrary find that such an experience gives them the opportunity to deepen their marriage and sacrifice it to [God](#), as they renew and strengthen their faith. At the same time, they also decide to realize [God's](#) ideal in their family.





There are many who have come to positive conclusions after closely studying the life of families of believers who base their marriage on [Father Moon's](#) teachings and tradition. In the above mentioned article, Jesuit sociologist Father Joseph H. Fichter (1908-1994) writes about the impressions he got when he studied the couples who have chosen this path. He says that a pragmatic sociologist might very well have concluded that the [Family Federation](#):

"has discovered an effective family plan. [...] one has to recognize its systematic program for the restoration of 'old-fashioned' morality, its emphasis on chastity before marriage, prayerful preparation for marriage, a readiness to accept guidance in the choice of a partner, marital love reflective of love of [God](#), transmission of spiritual perfection to children." (Fichter)

The New York Times writes that the [Family Federation's](#)

"teaching on marriage does not exalt the romantic, personal side of a marriage. Marriage, according to Mr. [Moon](#), is more than a man and a woman seeking the blessing of their church on their decision to live together. With as much fervor as other world religions stress celibacy as a means to a godly life, Mr. [Moon](#) writes that marriage is necessary to complete one's godly duty of seeking perfection in individual and communal life." ("Marriage Seen As Godly Duty", article by Charles Austin, The New York Times 2nd July 1982, section B, page 1.)

We hold seminars on the meaning of the marriage blessing. You do not have to be a member of the [Family Federation](#) to participate.



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