

Human Value and Dignity

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Cecilia Fortune, WFP South London regional director, chairing the seventh session of the conference, began by expressing the necessity for a common understanding of value, especially that of human value. Jack Corley, Chairman of UPF in the UK and an adviser to UPF Europe, explored this topic whilst sharing the perspectives on human value and dignity based on the core principles of UPF. He challenged that if one man's meat is another man's poison, then how can value be determined? The value of a material object, he explains, is determined by the respect you have for the person who gave it to you – a piece of paper with writing on it gains value if, for example, it is adorned with the Queen's signature and handed to you by her yourself. Alternatively value can be attributed to an object based on its purpose. If the object fulfils the role for which it was created it can be considered meaningful, and therefore valuable. Indeed, the question of 'what is value' must be addressed on every level. In terms of the value of human beings, UPF advocates family to be of utmost importance. Within it there are four spheres of love – that experienced by a helpless baby, the relationship between siblings, the love between a husband and wife, and perhaps the most selfless experience of love, parental love. The family is the space in which we should 'perfect love' by living for the sake of others. Ultimately it is through this we find our own value.



Dr Antonion Stango, Secretary General of the Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in Italy, reiterated this message saying that devoting one's life for the sake of others was the most important issue UPF rose. 'By learning this single thing, we have learnt the majority of what we need to know... In doing this we can give value and dignity to every single being'.

The next speaker of the session was Timothy Miller, Vice-Chair of UPF Europe. The focus of his talk was to provide insight into the history and origins of UPF and its founder, Reverend Sung-Myung Moon.

He began by quoting the famous Canon White, the Vicar of Baghdad: ‘When you really hear the other person’s story, such that you know it in a personal way that is the beginning of the end of enmity.’ Father Moon’s life is a story of turning trials into adversity. Early religious experiences lead him to commit to taking responsibility to bring about a world of peace and he has gone about this by truly living for the sake of others. From his humble origins in North Korea, he has become an international figure of peace. Amongst other things, he has built a relationship with the North Korean communist ruling family in an effort to create a pathway of peace in which the Hermit Kingdom can be reached by the world.

“I have lived my life with just one thought – I wanted to bring about a world of peace.”

This is the central precept that has motivated the life of Father Moon, the founder of UPF and the source of inspiration behind the dedicated UPF staff who organize the European Leadership Conferences. In a deeply moving presentation on the life of Father Moon, European Vice-chair Mr Timothy Miller drew extensively on the recently published autobiography of the UPF Founder, tracing his origins from his birth in a rural location in Japanese-occupied Korea in 1920 through unspeakable hardships as he sought to fulfill his profound spiritual mission.

At 16 years of age, a life-changing experience occurred on Easter morning, when Jesus appeared to Father Moon as he greeted Easter morning with prayer on a hilltop. Realizing the predicament of God's situation as He witnesses the terrible suffering of His children on Earth, Father Moon tearfully committed himself to the path of resolving His sorrow by reconciling His people to him. Even from a young age he recognized the challenges and betrayal of his trust and love that this course would bring but he never wavered in his commitment. Imprisoned numerous times as he taught the spiritual truth that God had revealed to him after his intense religious search, he resolved to never pray from weakness and instead comfort God, even as he endured the terrible conditions in the North Korean labour camp for nearly 3 years until his release by United Nations forces.

The church he founded in humble beginnings in 1954 grew worldwide as missionaries were sent to other countries. In 1960 he married Hak Ja Han, which was then followed with larger weddings for his followers, and he became known for holding Mass Weddings, whose purpose was to resolve the problems of history by bringing couples together in God-centred marriages, often from enemy nations.

Father Moon's work for world peace has taken many different forms. The World Media Association which he founded started exchanges between US and Soviet journalists. He created the Summit Council for World Peace for leading statesmen and this led to a ground-breaking meeting with President Gorbachev. He also met Kim Il Sung in North Korea in 1991 expressing his desire to open a channel for peaceful Korean reunification. Father Moon did not bear any hatred for the North Korean leader and demonstrated the heart of forgiveness for one's enemies – a fundamental condition for peace building.

Final words were given by Sheik Dr. Ramzy, Chairmen of the Education Committee for the Muslim Council of Britain, in which he testified to the magnanimity of Father Moon. ‘I find this man amazing, a citizen of 90 years old, a man who goes all over the world, country to country, city to city, house to house, why, to bring a message of peace to all... He is a man of God, and a man of peace. He sacrificed his life, and his money, for the people. I hope that the world can come to peace in his life. I hope that North and South Korea can come together – if anyone can bring them together, he can.’

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