

Interview of UPF Ambassador for Peace Father Jacques Kabangu

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Question: We are here at ILC 2018. Would you please state your name and describe your activities?

I am Jacques Kabangu, a Roman Catholic priest from the Diocese of Ottawa. In the Diocese of Ottawa, I am the ecumenical and interfaith officer for the diocese. It was in that capacity that I had the opportunity to participate in this encounter.

Question: And may I ask, are you a Canadian native?

No. That's a good question, because I was born in Congo in the city of Lubumbashi. I've been in Ottawa for twenty-eight years. I've been involved there.

Question: Could you tell us something about the interfaith makeup of Ottawa?

In Ottawa, we're very involved in interfaith activities. Actually, we have a forum; it is called CRIC, Capital Region Interfaith Council. We gather once a month. We come from various faiths. Usually, when we gather, on the second Sunday of the month, we discuss around a topic we have chosen. Each faith group shares from their faith's perspective on the topic.

Question: What type of topics do you cover?

Recently, for example, we spoke about suicides and how those in each faith group react to a suicide; what their teachings say about that and how people respond to it. That was our last, recent topic.

Question: What has your experience been, here in Korea?

It is my first time coming here, and first of all, what I find amazing is the number of people who have come here from various backgrounds. People came from around the world and I have noticed that everyone here is preoccupied with peace in the world. Everybody wants to find a way to build peace all together.

I am impressed that they want the collaboration of religious leaders. This is important to me, too. We are here in the world to serve humanity. If we are called to build peace, I think churches, religions, have an important role. Some scholars, looking from a Christian perspective, say that if you are looking for peace in the world, look first for peace between religions. Religions have to come together first, reach a mutual understanding, find mutual support. From that point, we can educate our people to do the same thing -- to come together and find mutual appreciation. That is the way I see it.

Question: What did you think about this particular session where they spoke about Peace Road and had various speakers talk about their local activities?

Personally, I liked it very much, because I remember, I recalled for me that there are so many similar activities that are happening around the world. What UPF is doing, really, is to confirm that all those around the world should keep going in that way of doing things. On a social level to come together to help people to build a new world and not to consider the origin of the people, or the race of the people, just come together to start to build a new world, where everybody has a space, a role to play.

It's very important to see that on a local level, there are problems, all over. And the local people are fighting to find a way toward peace, a peaceful world, so it is enriching to see that these things are happening around the world and there are people who are deeply involved, who are challenging to find a way to build a peaceful world in their local region. That struck me.

Question: Are you new to UPF in Canada, or have you been involved with them for some time?

Well, in Canada, I have been in interfaith activities for ten years; so when I started my work with CRIC in Ottawa, there, I met people from UPF.

Question: Have you been to UPF events?

Yes, once I was invited and I received a certificate as a Peace Ambassador. That was three years ago.

Question: What do you think of the peace ambassador program?

What I think is that if you are recognized as a peace ambassador, you have to begin to play a role of starting to build peace in your heart -- that's for sure -- and in your surroundings with people you work with. First of all, it is a local thing. Where you are, you are called to build peace and to witness to peace. This is because if you are trying to talk with your congregation or other people who know you and if you want to set in motion an international program, you need to show the way of peace -- how people can come to reconcile, find a way to come back together and to be the new world. I think this is local and international, in your thinking and in sharing your life. It seems to me.

Question: So, in a sense, does being an ambassador for peace put pressure on you or does it confirm the fact in you?

It confirms. Because from my faith perspective, not only am I called to build peace, but if I have to follow my vocation as Jesus' disciple, actually, I am called to build that peace with my people in my organization and also around them, outside of my congregation. If from outside, I receive that call, it's just a confirmation and it tells the person, You have to be serious in what you are doing and bring peace among us.

Actually, as has been said, real peace starts in the mind and in the heart. When you are a peaceful man, you can share that peace with the people surrounding you. It seems to me.

