

Middle East Ambassadors for Peace study Peace Principles in Rome, Italy

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Rome, Italy -- "I need a retreat," a recent government minister said. When he arrived at Colle Mattia, located in the hills overlooking Rome, he realized he had come to the right place. UPF-Middle East had invited Ambassadors for Peace from the region to a seminar on the principles underlying UPF's approach to peace. The participants traveled from Morocco and Malta, and from Jordan, Lebanon and the United Arab Emirates for the three-day event, which took place from June 30 to July 3, 2017.

This was the third in a series of UPF Ambassadors for Peace advanced seminars on "Applying the Principle: Practical Solutions for the Middle East" the chapter has organized. In contrast to UPF's larger conferences, this program offered an opportunity for discussion and reflection, which was helped by the warm and bright sunshine in Rome and the quiet of the vineyards that surround the area. The Ambassadors for Peace were doctors, parliamentarians, peace activists; but, above all, they are human beings. While we are determined and are involved in intense efforts to tackle the world's problems, we all know that peace starts with me -- with myself and my family. One current parliamentarian spoke of being like a "candle in the wind." He was referring to the constant effort required to maintain integrity and positive energy in the face of the moral confusion and multiple challenges that exist in public life.



UPF representatives presented principles and models of good relationships and healthy families and how to apply these principles to tackle conflict, to heal and to rebuild peace at all levels -- from the individual to the world, but, most importantly, in the family. A presentation was given on the life of UPF Founder Rev. Dr. Sun Myung Moon that provided striking examples of his devotion to God's work of building a peaceful world.

The presentations were interspersed with sessions where the participants could speak about their own approach to building peace. Some showed PowerPoint presentations on the work they have done and ideas they have, while others took a more personal approach. These sessions also allowed time to look together at ideas and plans for common projects, such as launching the International Association of Parliamentarians for Peace (IAPP) in different nations. As the hours passed, however, it became evident that the "advanced" element of this seminar is not so much a matter of breadth of information as of depth of heart.



Bringing Europeans and Middle Easterners together provided good opportunities for exchange and impetus for future cooperation. One evening was set aside for meetings between Italian and Middle Eastern Ambassadors for Peace.

In addition to the presentations there was time for a dinner together. The liveliest table was the Moroccan one, where Ambassadors for Peace who were invited from Morocco met with Moroccan residents in Italy who are active in public and political life. Parliamentarians from Morocco, Malta, Italy and Jordan took part in that evening's discussions. Before leaving, a Lebanese peace activist was able to visit the Italian parliament and discuss plans there.

At the end of the second full day, everyone visited nearby Frascati, a town located on the Alban Hills 12 miles (20 kilometers) southeast of Rome that has a magnificent view of the city.

The next day, those who had evening departures had the chance to enjoy a walk through Rome's historic center, followed by a final lunch back at the Colle Mattia.

As the following comments from the participants illustrate, the participants returned home enlightened and empowered, with clearer ideas on how to advance peace and a greater sense that we really can have a substantial impact in the Middle East:

"[This seminar] increased my enthusiasm for thinking about how to spread peace in my country."

"It was a really enlightening and empowering experience and...I will definitely do my best to achieve harmony in order to create peace around me and to spread it at both the micro and macro levels."

"The presentations and speeches...were very interesting and moving. Many times I had tears in my eyes...My participation in this seminar [inspires me] for the future. It gives me power to do more and to spread peace [every day]."