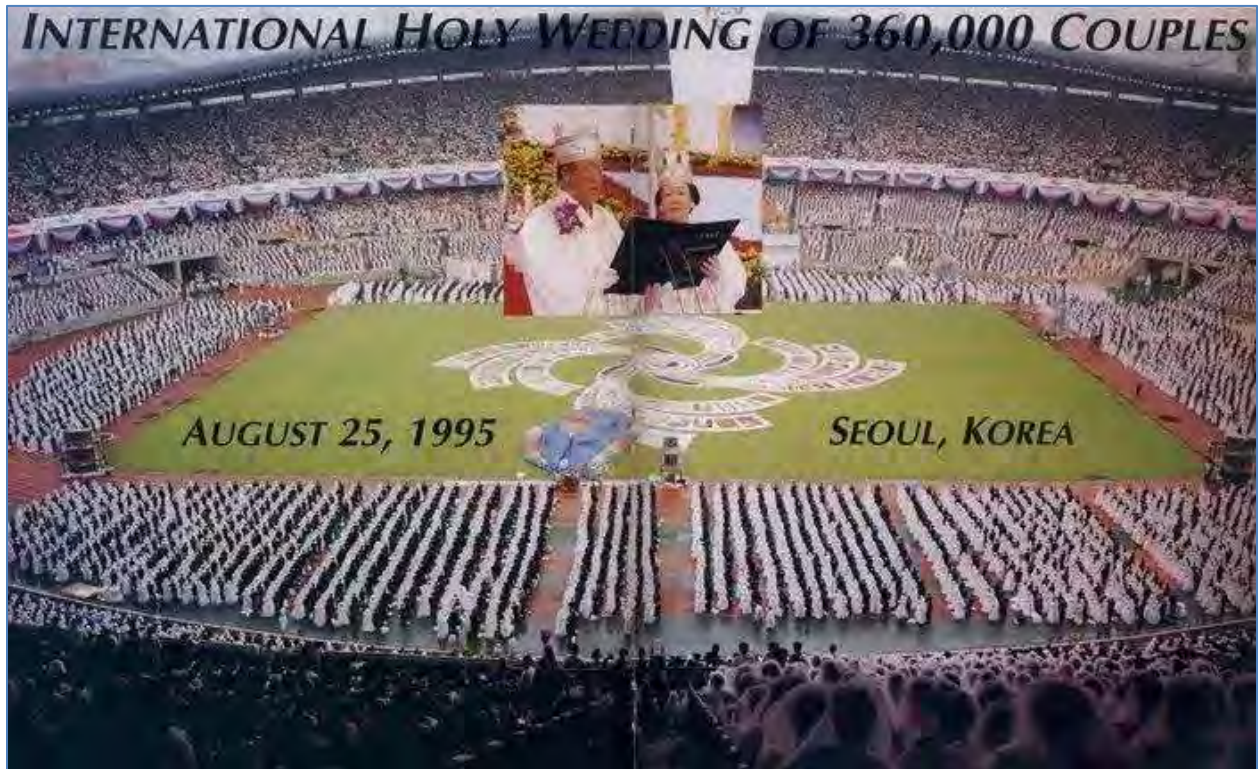


## FFWPU Europe and Middle East: 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of 360,000 Couples Blessing

Knut Holdhus  
August 25, 2025



The [Marriage Blessing](#) ceremony in Olympic Stadium in Seoul August 25, 1995

August 25, 1995 in Seoul's Olympic Stadium: Marking three decades since South Korea hosted one of the largest marriage blessings in history



[Father Moon](#) and [Mother Han](#) praying for all the couples in Seoul's Olympic Stadium August 25, 1995

August 25, 1995 remains one of the most unforgettable days in the history of the [Family Federation](#), then called the [Unification Church](#), and, indeed, in the modern history of interfaith peacebuilding. On that day, in Seoul's Olympic Stadium, [Father Moon](#) and [Mother Han](#) - the [True Parents](#) - officiated the Holy [Marriage Blessing](#) of 360,000 couples - an event that was not only the [largest marriage ceremony](#) ever held, but also a profound symbol of humanity's shared hope for peace, unity, and family love.



The main event in the [Blessing](#) of all these couples from around the world took place in Seoul. Beginning with this [Blessing](#) event, a much larger proportion of the couples were already married beforehand and thus had their existing marriages [blessed](#), rather than young unmarried people being matched and then receiving the [Blessing](#).



*The stage with [Father Moon](#) and [Mother Han](#) August 25, 1995*

The large number of couples who participated created significant practical challenges in many countries when it came to gathering the couples and [blessing](#) everyone simultaneously regardless of location. In Africa and in some countries of the former Soviet Union, the ceremony therefore had to be held at different times in many places.



*August 25, 1995 was a wet day in Seoul. Here, some of the couples with raincoat*

In addition, instead of a satellite connection, people had to make do with a video recording of the ceremony in Seoul with [Father Moon](#) and [Mother Han](#). As in 1992, couples from other religions were not asked to change their faith, but rather to become better practitioners of their own religion after the [Blessing](#).



Now, thirty years later, as we commemorate the anniversary of Blessing '95, we look back with both awe and gratitude at a moment that linked nations, cultures, and generations in a single worldwide celebration of commitment and faith.

The Unification News, the monthly newsletter of the [Unification Church/Family Federation](#) 1982-2010, reports from September 1995 capture both the drama and the beauty of that day. Joy Garratt described the scene of extraordinary global coordination. From Papua New Guinea to Europe, from Africa to the Americas, satellite hookups connected more than 500 sites across 20 time zones. For a few precious hours, hundreds of thousands of couples - and millions of relatives, friends, and observers - were united in real time, participating in the same holy vows, the same songs, and the same tears of joy.

Yet Blessing '95 was not without its challenges. Korea was battered by days of heavy rains, flooding, and even warnings of a typhoon. Many couples arrived at the stadium drenched, navigating closed roads and traffic jams. Yet instead of diminishing the spirit of the day, the rain became part of its meaning. As media officer Michael Brazil commented to reporters, "If [God](#) wishes it to be a downpour of holy water, well..." When the [True Parents](#) finally entered the stadium, the rain stopped, the clouds lifted, and participants experienced what felt like nature's own benediction.

The ceremony itself was at once majestic and deeply personal. Thousands of couples removed their pastel-colored raincoats, filling the arena with a sea of white and navy blue. A special orchestral prelude composed by Kevin Pickard set the tone of reverence, while the sprinkling of holy water by the [True Parents](#) and elder [blessed](#) couples marked a new beginning for each bride and groom. The resounding "YES" that thundered through the stadium as vows were proclaimed was echoed in living rooms, churches, and stadiums across the world. Fireworks, balloons, and cheers of manseis capped the day with jubilant energy, sending forth a vision of lasting hope.



*Seoul Olympic Stadium. Photo (2020)*

As Garratt reminds us, behind the staggering number of 360,000 couples were individual stories - heartwarming, surprising, and even miraculous. A former Catholic seminarian who found new purpose in family life; a New Zealander and Samoan who discovered they were newly matched on the very day of the [Blessing](#); students, professors, parents, and grandparents, all weaving their lives into the same tapestry of faith.

Marie Ang, writing from Seoul, offered another lens. For her, the rain was a baptism, a washing clean of the earth for the birth of new families. She recalled her own small [Blessing](#) decades earlier in Washington, D.C., marveling at how that humble beginning had grown into a global phenomenon. She reminded participants that "marriage does not mean a mere coming together of man and woman but creates the basis to determine all humankind's peace and happiness." To Ang, this was the essence of the [Blessing](#): couples grafted into [God](#)'s lineage, beginning their lives anew as true families centered on love.

Three decades on, the world has changed in countless ways, yet the meaning of Blessing '95 endures. It was a visible declaration that love, when rooted in [God](#) and offered selflessly, has the power to transcend barriers of race, religion, and nation. It was a reminder that peace does not begin in governments or institutions, but in the sacred bonds of marriage and family.

As we mark the thirtieth anniversary, we honor not only the grandeur of that day but also the countless couples who have lived faithfully to their vows, raising families with the hope of building a world of [true love](#). Blessing '95 was never just a moment in history - it was a seed planted in the hearts of people everywhere, a seed that continues to grow toward the dream of one family under [God](#).

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# 20th Anniversary Of 2003 Blessing

- July 13, 2023
- Knut Holdhus

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## 3550 couples at 2003 Blessing in South Korea, 30,000 globally

We congratulate all the couples who took part in the 2003 Blessing ceremony 13<sup>th</sup> July 2003 in South Korea and other locations around the world, organised by the Family Federation (FFWPU). The main event was held in the large indoor arena Yu Gwan-sun gymnasium in Cheonan, a city of about 700 000 inhabitants, 85 km south of the capital Seoul. Father and Mother Moon officiated in Cheonan, where 3550 couples from many different countries participated, the majority from South Korea and Japan. Simultaneous events in different corners of the world were connected to the main ceremony in South Korea via satellite and internet, so that according to the organizers altogether 30,000 couples received the Blessing on their marriage.

The Korean magazine Shisa News Monthly covered the 2003 Blessing in a large report in its



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large report in the August issue,

“The event showed how Rev. Moon actualized the unity of all different peoples through racial and religious



From the front page of August 2003 issue of Korean magazine Shisa News Monthly. Photo: FFWPU

reconciliation and the order of true love, as well as how FFWPU is taking the initiative to promote ideal families.

The event showed the scope of the activities in which FFWPU has been involved, including those that aim to overcome the problems caused by sexual promiscuity and crises of sexual identity, which are threatening to families, nations and, moreover, world peace.”



Religious leaders in Cheonan 13th July 2003. Photo: FFWPU

Representatives of different religious traditions – Buddhism, Sikhism, the Druze faith, Islam, Hinduism, Christianity and native American spirituality – prayed for the couples.

Father and Mother Moon and their assistants in the arena and cities throughout the world sprinkled holy water on the all the couples. The blessing vows were read out by Sun Myung Moon, and everyone shouted a loud yes to each vow. He prayed for the thousands of men and women about to start their married life before the Holy Marriage Blessing was proclaimed.

In his benediction prayer, Father Moon said,



Father and Mother Moon 13th July 2003. Photo: FFWPU

“We know that this occasion, upon which the eyes of people throughout the whole cosmos are riveted, is the place of blessing You have so wished for – the occasion where we are establishing the basis to find Your nation, and the starting base upon which You can build Your family.

Therefore, please be present at this ceremony, and embrace everything here in its entirety, including the brides and bridegrooms, and the guests, surrounding them in Your bosom of grace.

Please allow the Kingdom of Heaven on earth – the liberated physical world of glory, and the Kingdom of Heaven in heaven – the liberated spiritual world, to become

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one in heart, in mindset and in body, and bestow on us the grace to enter the era of the kingship of love and Your liberated **Kingdom of Heaven** on earth and in heaven, by leading us in this ceremony in person."

Hamilton Green, prime minister of Guyana 1985-1992, said in his congratulatory address,

"My friends, from the dawn of our civilization, every society has upheld the practice of **marriage**, unions between a man and a woman blessed by the Creator and based on the religious beliefs of the contracting parties. Over time, we have brought a custom to this union, taking place between persons of similar race, religion, social and economic status.



Hamilton Green 13th July 2003 in Cheonan. Photo: FFWPU

Indeed, up until now, in many places, a union that crossed these artificial barriers of race or religions was not acceptable. Indeed, in colonial days, these marriages were not recognized. In my part of the world, it was difficult for a young Hindu to marry a Christian or a Muslim, or vice versa. Those who attempted to overrun these age-old tribal religious boundaries incurred the wrath of family, friends and the society of which they were a part.

Thanks to the perspicacity and the vision of Rev. **Sun Myung Moon**, together we have enjoyed a glorious journey beyond the narrow confines of those traditional boundaries. This wonderful and beautiful interreligious, world peace **blessing** ceremony is the manifestation of a goodness that is bringing us all together to share hope, fellowship and love.

This great leap



Some of the couples 13th July 2003 in Cheonan. Photo: FFWPU

forward demonstrated by this ceremony is like a bright beacon of glorious light that will lead us to a world of peace and contentment and so fulfill the prophecies of all the great prophets.

We need to recall that for centuries, religion has been the basis for violent conflict, hate and the wanton waste of life and destruction of property. Religious bigotry allowed one group to believe that their way, and their way alone, was the only correct and authorized road to salvation—any other had to be wrong and unacceptable. Today, we assembled here are part of a dynamic and pervasive change.

[...] The family unit is the foundation upon which the



modern society is built. **Marriage** is the beginning of the family unit. It is therefore important that **marriage** and **marriages** do not suffer from the defect of fetteredness of or the quirks of history.

That we, as we did a moment ago, witness marriages, some mixed but all blessed by a variety of religious leaders, is a wonderful and rewarding experience—clearly the start for a safer world. These couples happily vowed to be true husbands and wives. Our modern-day apostle, the Rev. **Sun Myung Moon** has made this possible. These **marriages**, with their attendant **blessing** represent our hope to fulfill our dream for a happy and a peaceful world."

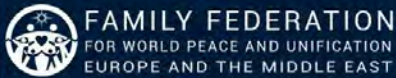
Part of the two hours long program of the 2003 **Blessing** was performances by Korean, Japanese and Filipino singers, including Hyun Chul [a popular middle-aged Korean singer].

The spectacular **Marriage Blessing** Ceremony was the main event of World Culture and Sports Festival 2003.

*Featured image above: Father and Mother Moon officiating at the 2003 Blessing 13th July in Cheonan, South Korea. Photo: Ogawa, Kogensha, Japan / **Family Federation***

*"20th Anniversary of 2003 Blessing" – text: Knut Holdhus, written based on report in the July 2003 issue of "Today's World", a monthly magazine published by the **Family Federation** 1980-2013.*

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