

## FICA hosts its third annual Outstanding Parents Awards and Gala - HTM Blessing

Edner Pierre-Louis  
August 3, 2019



The Filipino International Community of America (FICA) recently hosted the third annual Outstanding Parents Awards and Gala (OPAG) in Newark, NJ on August 3. The event honored 21 outstanding couples for their excellence in parenting.

Since its inception in 2017 by the former FICA President, Rev. Emiljun Rapada, the organization has recognized dozens of parents who have dedicated their lives "to fulfill the uniquely special and God-given role of being a father and mother." This year, FICA partnered with Family Federation for World Peace and Unification (FFWPU) USA and Universal Peace Federation (UPF) USA, as well as local community organizations. Also, FICA President Mrs. Elena Bahian included candidates from out of state and of different ethnicities.

The celebration opened with an invocation from FICA Board Secretary Dr. Greg Agulan, followed by a few words from Bishop Giovanni Paquit, chairman of FICA. After a luncheon, young Unificationists entertained the audience of more than 250 guests with musical and dance performances.

Next, Bishop Rene Ballenas and Ms. Ria Serrano introduced and recognized the honorees, presenting each of them with a beautiful plaque and colorful bouquet. "We are truly grateful for being recognized for this award and for promoting good marriages," said Dr. Artemio Eugenio and Pastor Nida Eugenio, who have been married for 52 years. "May your work continue to thrive for more years."

Rev. Edner Pierre-Louis, district leader of FFWPU-NY, led a toast to peace and the Marriage Blessing. He asked participants to "continue to become upstanding husbands and wives who promote family unity, live up to the will of God, support families of every race, religion and culture, and who pass these values

to future generations."

Then, Rev. Alain Tamelessio, executive director of UPF-NJ, gave his congratulatory remarks, emphasizing the necessity of good parenting. The gala concluded with Rev. Rapada acknowledging all the honorees, organizers, supporters and guests for making the event memorable.



"The program was very organized and impressive," said Mr. Rodante Beltejar and Mrs. Flor Beltejar, honorees and founders of the St. John Foundation. "We are so humbled by this honor and we thank Dr. Zal and Josie Velez for recommending our couple. We will surely invite other outstanding couples for next year."

In a letter, U.S. Senator Robert Menendez said that he is pleased to join FICA in honoring those who are working tirelessly to improve their communities. He also congratulated the honorees and organizers for their commitment to creating happy families and building peaceful societies.

