

Global Peace Convention, Manila, Philippines

December 10, 2009

Address

Your excellencies, distinguished participants, ladies and gentlemen. It is indeed an honor to be with you as we join together from around the world to convene this historic Global Peace Convention.

First of all I want to congratulate and thank our Philippine Host Committee for the outstanding job that they have done in preparing for our Convention. Could we just have Dr. Chua please stand? And where is Undersecretary Dominguez? On behalf of the international delegation, thank you very much for your dedication and effort! Could we give them another round of applause?

It is right and proper that we hold the first Global Peace Convention here in Manila, not only because the Philippines is a beautiful setting, but because it was in Manila exactly two years ago that we held the very first Global Peace Festival- whose amazing success provided the springboard for the many Global Peace Festivals throughout the globe in 2008.

Last year's Global Peace Festival 2008 tour exceeded all expectations and led to the solid foundation on which our Convention now stands. Indeed, the majority of our Convention participants today are the ones who took ownership in holding successful Global Peace Festivals of 2008 in their own nations. Could we give everyone who participated in the Global Peace Festivals of 2008 a round of applause?

Therefore, this meeting truly represents a "gathering of the eagles".....a coming together of seasoned peace leaders and dedicated activists. This is indeed a very hopeful occasion for the advancement of peace -primarily because you have already demonstrated that you are the vanguard leaders in this noble and crucial cause.

Our deliberations here in the Convention, and more importantly, our collective determination to take actions for peace that will surely follow, determine the future course of humanity in this century and this millennium.

Since the Manila Global Peace Festival of 2008, GPF has made tremendous impact around the world. We have tested the GPF model on every continent. From nations like Paraguay experiencing seismic political change, to the tribal complexities of Kenya and the challenges of a post-Communist Mongolia, the Global Peace Festivals have moved nations. The same power and potential of this model was also demonstrated in Washington DC, Tokyo, Seoul and London. And I'm sure that many of you from other nations as well have experienced the power of our festivals.

The Global Peace Festivals are continuing to make significant impact because they are guided by a simple yet powerful vision, rooted in practical plan of action. That vision can be summarized in one phrase that is full of meaning – and that phrase is One Family Under God. The profound truth is that all humanity is connected together in a most fundamental way, beyond the differences of race, religion or nationality. Because we all share a common Origin or Source, the Creator God, all people are part of the one human family.

Indeed, the essential principles of the world's great faith traditions lead us toward this conclusion. People everywhere understand deep relationships in familial terms, and thus can readily embrace the fact that humankind is one family- brothers and sisters, parents and children, husbands and wives. In the larger context, we are bound together as a human family because of our common spiritual heritage – in one God. Without recognizing God at the center, the human family will remain unable to find the cohesion and the harmony necessary for a world of everlasting peace.

The one who has taken on the mantle to champion this vision around the world, and the one who has inspired me in my life's work, is none other than my father, the Reverend Dr. Sun Myung Moon. Ever since being called by God on a cold Easter Sunday more than seventy years ago, he devoted his entire life, energy and resources to the fulfillment of that dream. My father explained in one of his recent peace messages:

God, the Creator of all things under the sun, is the true parent of all humanity. He is not a parent in the parochial sense, existing only for a certain religion, a certain race, or the residents of a certain region. You may call Him by any name, let it be Jehovah, Allah, or any other. What is important is that He certainly exists, lives as the true parent of all mankind, and is carrying on the great work of Creation.

To my father, the dream to build One Family Under God is not the dream of just one man, woman or family but belongs to all humanity and, most of all, belongs to God. It is that noble legacy that we seek to carry forward today.

The vision and action of the Global Peace Festivals are oriented around three pillars – interfaith, family and service. GPF advocates a new view of interfaith, calling on religious leaders to move beyond mere tolerance by affirming the universal principles common to all faiths. By focusing on shared principles and values, people of faith can join together in common cause, tapping in new ways the power of faith that has inspired the human spirit and motivated human endeavor.

The inherent potential of interreligious unity in solving conflicts is now being recognized in the “hot spots” of conflict around our globe. We will hear today about the cutting-edge work being done in Pakistan by the International Center for Religion and Diplomacy, founded by my good friend Dr. Douglass Johnston. We applaud the efforts of Dr. Douglas Johnston and his ICRD team, and we look forward to the presentations by Mr. Azhar Hussain, who is with us here today, in later sessions in this GPC.

Another example of applying this power is the Mindanao Peace Initiative here in the Philippines. I am pleased to announce that significant progress is being made there. When I visited with Governor Dimanporo in Lanao del Norte earlier this year, he called the Global Peace Festival in Mindanao a “turning point”. There is clearly much more to be done, yet still the Global Peace Festivals have inspired the young people of that region in the Philippines to hope once again. And therefore we are redoubling our commitment to achieving long-term impact through local interfaith partnerships and service initiatives there. I am very grateful to Dr. Babanao, Dr. Rizal and other Mindanao Peace Initiative leaders for taking ownership over this vital project. If they are here, could they rise? Could we give them a round of applause?

The second pillar of the GPF vision and action is centered on the family as the most fundamental human institution. The family has been called the “school of love and peace”, because it is in the family that individuals learn lessons of love and interdependence. We all know of this from our personal experience. My wife and I have nine children, and we marvel at how unique each and every one of them is. Sometimes we ask ourselves, “How is it that this child has this kind of personality? Because it doesn’t seem like it represents your personality or my personality.” And we can only be thankful to God that He has presented us with this unique bit of humanity that we can cherish, love and adore. We believe that each of our children reflects a unique dimension of God’s character, and the unique dimension of humanity that we should be able to absorb, to digest and to embrace. And it is those lessons that are personalized within our family experience that we need to cultivate as leaders, as we engage the world in this work for peace.

The natural love for brothers and sisters, for parents, for grandparents, and other relatives can easily be extended further to the people of one’s society and ultimately to all societies. GPF supports efforts to strengthen families, to promote family-friendly policies, and to address critical needs of families in duress.

The third pillar of the GPF movement is service. Promoting a culture of service is the most practical way to substantiate the vision of “One Family Under God.” When we practice a lifestyle of service, truly living for others, we exemplify the highest ideals of human character.

The excitement and buzz of our festivals last year can be found in several initiatives. Just to cite just a few examples:

In Paraguay, more than 10,000 high school and college students spent several weeks cleaning every park in the capital city of Asunción. Senators, congressmen, priests and community leaders were astonished, saying this level of public service had never been part of their culture, especially among the young. I am glad to say that we have changed that.

In Nairobi, Kenya, the Global Peace Festival spearheaded a remarkable service effort where thousands of Kenyan youths, mostly students, cleaned the polluted banks of the Nairobi River right after the post-election violence, bringing once again hope to not only the young people of that nation but to political leaders of the different factions.

Likewise in Mongolia, volunteers from Service for Peace and a dozen other agencies worked together harmoniously to clean and make the city of Ulaanbaatar a place of beauty and harmony for all its residents. I myself truly enjoyed working with thousands of young Mongolians in a project to clean the Peace Bell Park at the center of Ulaanbaatar. And I am pleased to say that through those efforts, the then sitting president of Mongolia, who happened to be a former communist, told me that looking upon the faces of those young people and speaking to those young people, he realized that the message of “One Family Under God” was a spiritual message that was needed to give a renaissance of rebirth to that nation of Mongolia.

In Malaysia, college and high school students initiated an initiative all by themselves called the “Power of 10 cents” inspired by the vision of One Family Under God. It was an effort to support of the UN Millennium Development Goals, but more importantly it was an effort to take ownership over this vision as young people inspired by a vision to not only change their communities, but to change the world in which they live.

In Albania, the Global Peace Festival inspired young people to create a program called “One Student One Tree” where they planted trees all around that nation in aligning to the vision of building a world of peace through the substantiation of One Family Under God. And there are countless numerous other examples that I’m sure all of you participated in and have anecdotes of, but this is just a snapshot of what was accomplished last year.

More importantly, the dynamic interplay of GPF’s interfaith, family and service initiatives brought about major advances for peace and reconciliation. For example, the Global Peace Festival in Paraguay helped smooth the first democratic transfer of power between civilian governments in that South American nation.

During the Global Peace Festival in Kenya, Prime Minister Raila Odinga said that our efforts had played an important role in ending violence after disputed elections brought tribal rivalries and moved that nation to the brink of civil war.

And of course I mentioned in Mongolia that the president said the people of that nation needed the vision of One Family Under God as a source of spiritual life and development for that country.

We can see that the Global Peace Festivals are collectively achieving “tipping points for peace” in these nations and is rapidly amassing a global force for good. Each of you is helping to shape that worldwide force for peace and goodness through your participation in this historic convention.

To further this exciting momentum around the world, I have called upon the Global Peace Festival nations to build a Global Peace Corps. Today I am pleased to announce that this Global Peace Corps is rapidly taking shape through the Global Peace Service Alliance. GPSA, as it is called, is the action alliance arm of the GPF, advancing key partnerships in the service arena. I’d like to thank Dr. Manu Chandaria for agreeing to serve as chairman of our Private Sector Advisory Council, and I invite other business leaders and philanthropists to join this cause. Could you just stand Dr. Chandaria? We also welcome Dr. Markandey Rai of the United Nations Habitat Program, who was a speaker on this forum, and other partners who have joined us from throughout the world. Along with service, we are incorporating youth sports, character education and a bevy of impact initiatives furthering the Global Peace Festival clarion call to mount a global peace force.

Young leaders are the future of this initiative. Those who are owners of the dream of One Family Under God are the ones that will make this happen. We have with us today many young leaders from around the world who are committed to the vision of GPF as the vanguard of these nations. Could you give them a round of applause?

We will discuss important topics and share best practices in this Global Peace Convention. Throughout our deliberations, let us keep in mind that the objective of the Global Peace Convention is to be a springboard for action in 2010.

But more than anything else, let us each remember the passion for peace that has brought us here together. In the end, it is our commitment, our determination and our passion that will enable us to fulfill the dream of God to build “One Family Under God”.

I charge you to be the real owners of that vision in bringing forth the Global Peace Festivals in 2010 and start a new revolution of heart rooted in the dream of “One Family Under God”.

Thank you very much