

World Interfaith Harmony Week in the Philippines

Juluis Malicdem
February 5, 2016



Mindanao, Philippines—UPF-Philippines co-organized a seminar and brotherhood/sisterhood ceremony with the Interfaith Council* of the provincial government of Lanao del Norte in observance of UN World Interfaith Harmony Week 2016, from February 4 to 5.

Among the participants were government officials; faith leaders, including four representatives from the Muslim faith and 51 Christian pastors; and representatives of an indigenous group.

The theme of the two-day program was “Building Lanao del Norte Interfaith Council’s Cultural Competence with Increased Cultural Knowledge, Awareness and Sensitivity.”

The event began with an interfaith water ceremony. Prayers were then offered by representatives from the Jewish, Buddhist and Hindu faiths, which were followed by a reading of UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon’s message for World Interfaith Harmony Week 2015.

Several government officials and faith representatives, including Mrs. Grecille I. Matalines, a board member and chairperson of Lanao del Norte’s Committee on Culture, Arts, and Interfaith Relations, and Fr. Dave Ditucalan and Mr. Donato Calica, representatives of the province’s Interfaith Council, then shared their experiences on interfaith. In the afternoon, Mr. Rahim Mirshahi presented UPF’s perspectives on finding common grounds for common good. In the evening, a very meaningful brotherhood/sisterhood ceremony between Muslims and Christians from neighboring provinces, led by Archbishop Elias E. Soria, took place. Many participants were moved by the experience.

On the second day, Archbishop Soria gave a presentation on creating a “Culture of Peace through Interfaith and Intercultural Cooperation.” After the presentation, the participants shared what they had learned during the program. They affirmed that the “family is a sacred institution created by God” and that “we need to live for the sake of others,” and emphasized that these teachings should be applied in one’s daily life.