

Outstanding Parents Awards and Gala Celebrates Families in Elizabeth, NJ

Barbara Robertson
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ELIZABETH, N.J. - The 9th Outstanding Parents Awards and Gala (OPAG) was successfully held at the Elizabeth Family Church on July 26, 2026, bringing together more than 70 participants to celebrate exemplary parents whose lives reflect love, commitment, sacrifice, and faithful dedication to family.



The annual celebration was co-hosted by the Family Federation for World Peace and Unification (FFWPU) Elizabeth, Universal Peace Federation (UPF) Elizabeth, Women's Federation for World Peace (WFWP) Elizabeth, and the Filipino International Community of America (FICA). The event recognizes parents who serve as role models within their families and communities, inspiring younger generations through their enduring commitment to marriage, parenting, and family life.

This year's OPAG honored three outstanding couples whose marriages have become testimonies of perseverance, faith, and unconditional love: Leonardo and Watcharee Combair, married for 22 years and blessed with five children; Mario and Patsaraporn Bolhano, married for 22 years and blessed with two daughters; and Jessie and Noriko Tenepre, married for 21 years and blessed with three children. The Tenepres have also demonstrated extraordinary generosity by helping two couples who were unable to have children experience the joy of parenthood.

Each couple was recognized for their steadfast dedication to building loving families, raising their children with strong moral values, and contributing meaningfully to their church and local community. Their stories demonstrate how perseverance through hardship, sacrificial love, and commitment to family can create a lasting legacy for future generations. In particular, the Combair family has faced significant challenges with their eldest son's debilitating illness and temporary disability. His recovery and recent internship at NASA stand as an encouraging testimony to his perseverance and the support of his family.



The program was coordinated by Rev. Crispin Lumbay, Assistant Pastor of Elizabeth Family Church and Vice President for Internal Affairs of FICA. Through thoughtful planning and meaningful presentations, the celebration highlighted the essential role parents play in nurturing future generations and strengthening the fabric of their communities.



A special message was delivered by Mark Dale Tero, President of Youth and Students for Peace (YSP) Elizabeth. Speaking from the perspective of the younger generation, he offered a heartfelt and down-to-earth reflection on the importance of honoring parents. He emphasized that the daily sacrifices parents make often go unnoticed, yet they deserve sincere appreciation and gratitude. He encouraged participants to cherish their parents not only through words, but also through acts of respect, service, and love while they are still present in their lives.

The celebration also featured musical entertainment from the PSWM Elizabeth Choir, directed by Maestro David Eaton, together with Ms. Hannah Alvarez. Their performance added a joyful and uplifting dimension to the evening.

The program concluded with a call to action from Maestro David Eaton, encouraging participants to carry the spirit of the celebration beyond the gala by continuing to strengthen families, honor parents, and contribute to peaceful communities.

The Outstanding Parents Awards and Gala continues to be one of the signature family celebrations of Elizabeth Family Church and its partner organizations. By recognizing mothers and fathers who exemplify devotion, sacrifice, and perseverance, the annual event reinforces a timeless message: strong and loving families are the foundation of peaceful communities and a more compassionate society.