

Sam Nishio, Japan, 1969



I joined the Unification Church in the spring of 1969. It was one of the most difficult decisions I have ever made. I had to leave behind everything that my parents invested and worked for so that I could go to college, get a good job, and be able to support them when they got old. My decision to join the Unification Church caused a lot of trouble not only for my parents but for my relatives. The year after I joined the church, my father got into a serious accident causing him to be hospitalized for over six months. In addition, my younger brother was hospitalized for more than a year because of an infection he received after surgery. It was as if misfortune or misery had come all at once to my family after I had joined the church.

Soon after joining, I was asked to be a part of the Mobile Fundraising Team (MFT). We worked from morning until late at night selling flowers out of the back of a modified pickup truck. The canvas covering the back of the truck was 6 ft. high, 6 ft. wide and 10 ft. long; the upper half of our truck stored flower buckets, and we slept in the lower half, since we were constantly moving from place to place. In the mornings, we all would go to the bathroom of the nearest train station to wash our faces and clean up. Then during the day we would go from door to door or to busy shopping malls selling flowers, and then late at night we would fundraise at bars.

Every day we worked very hard, and it was a miracle that our gross sales for each day tended to be almost equal to the amount of the monthly income of the average Japanese worker. When we went to the Cheong Pyeong Lake base in Korea (there were no buildings, just a small tent in 1971), True Father explained that all the money we had

fundraised was used to purchase the land for the church's future training site. I was very impressed by his dream and vision, and that my small effort of raising money was used for such a big project, although it was a bit difficult for me to grasp his vision. But at the same time, I felt that even if my offering was small, God would multiply my offering many more times.

In addition to our fundraising money being used for purchasing a training ground in Korea, our money was used to purchase the Belvedere Estate in New York, which also was to be used as an international training center. Then in February of 1973, during the middle of winter, I (along with 36 other Japanese members) came to New York. It was so cold, and there was a lot of snow everywhere when we arrived. We had a one-week workshop training, and at the end of the workshop, Father told us that we hadn't come to America for sightseeing, but our mission now was to go witnessing. There was a big problem though: None of us spoke English. We all stayed at the church center located on 73rd street, and we went out every day to witness at Times Square and the at the New York Public Library on Fifth Avenue. And since none of us spoke English, we invited people to the center to attend one of the church lectures. Many of our guests did not understand what we were talking about, but they came anyway to visit the center. Our zeal to persuade them had piqued their interest. Many people promised they would come, but they didn't show up, and it would make me so sad. I did not understand how people could break their promises so easily, whereas in Japan, when someone made a promise, it was taken seriously.

Whatever I saw and experienced in New York during my first three months was culture shock and surprise. People were driving beat-up cars; there was much graffiti on subway trains and bridges. (Thank you New Yorkers! New York is very clean now.) The rich were so rich, the poor were so poor and hopeless. I was surprised to know that most

Americans believed in God, and some of them were very generous to help others.

Father often came to see us quietly to see how we were doing. When we were discouraged and struggled in witnessing, his visits and concern were a great inspiration. I remember that Father was speaking to us in Korean, and the interpreter spoke in English; I was sitting at the right in front of him, and I understood neither language, but the vibration of the speech helped me to grasp the content of his speech.