

Martin Porter, Rome, 1965



I joined the Holy Spirit Association for the Unification of World Christianity (HSA-UWC) in Rome soon after Father left Italy on his first world tour in 1965.

I was born and raised in England. I was a very sensitive child and began to have spiritual experiences from about eight years old. These would manifest particularly in the moment between sleeping and waking: the walls of my room would begin to dissolve, and I would go out to extraordinary places, experience astral flying, and meet people whom I had never seen before, but many of whom I would meet in the near future. At the time I did not know that these were spiritual experiences, but through talking to others, I realized that they did not have such experiences and they were not able to understand or believe these things: I kept them to myself.

At the time I did not know what any of it meant, nor why it happened; they continued for many years in different ways even till the present. However, these spiritual experiences changed after I was about 12 years old and became more religious in nature. Since I was about seven years old, I had been an acolyte in the local church. I can remember I really liked to be in the church: it was a good experience, but I could not articulate the reasons. Later as so many do, I began to question how I could really come to know more about Jesus and come closer to God. I had a deep desire not only to know God but also to experience a living relationship with him: Just to believe in God's existence was not sufficient for me. Also, I was eager to know what His plan was for my life: There had to be a reason for my life.

In the following period, I had some very clear visions which took

place in clear daylight while I was wide-awake. During my first experience I had with Jesus in St. Mary's Church, Woodbridge, I was kneeling in a pew in prayer, and at a certain point I looked up and looked at the east window (in front of me) and saw Jesus' face covering the whole end of the transept. It was a very warm, peaceful, embracing, life-giving meeting.

I was so surprised and in awe, but at the same time He made me feel so much at peace; I was happy to just be there with Him. Then he began to speak: The first thing He said was: "I am coming again in your lifetime" and that "you will serve me." I was so excited about this. This is surely the hope of all Christian people, but how would this happen and when? Then he said: "Many will be called, but few chosen." (Matt.22:14) This message worried me a great deal, and I became saddened as it seemed again that many might not believe in him at the Second Coming. This first experience with Jesus sent me on a lifetime quest of trying to develop this relationship.

After graduating from university in Britain, I entered Florence University in Italy and took language and sociology courses, after which I went to Rome to study at the Rome Film School, graduating in May 1965 with a degree in film making. Going to Italy, I really hoped that I could make a new start in life and find both meaning and purpose. However, I did not find God or any direction, and instead, I gradually became disillusioned and a bit agnostic.

In Rome I met Mrs. Doris (Walder) Orme and Marion Dougherty (Porter). A friend of mine called a meeting at his residence to discuss his concerns about a possible spiritual disturbance in his apartment. Doris had been invited, as she was known to understand something about the spirit world. My friend had explained to us that no matter how often he straightened his pictures, after a short while they would be crooked again. Doris talked to him about mischievous spirits, poltergeists, etc., but she seemed much more interested in talking with me about the Divine Principle.

The next evening, having some free time, I attended a talk by Mrs. Orme on the Ideal of Creation. It was held in a small, simply furnished apartment in an old part of Rome, Via Coloseo 2, high up on a small, dark, winding staircase not far from where I lived. From this apartment one could see the narrow, cobbled street and beyond, the Coliseum. The apartment was sparsely furnished, and I found a very colorful group of people present sitting round a long, austere, wooden table. Mrs. Orme's lecture inspired an intense discussion. I was extremely interested in everything said and came to hear more the next day.

I had met many famous teachers of other religions as well as many Christian preachers, particularly in Rome, but what struck me so much about hearing Mrs. Orme's talk was the extraordinary clarity of thought and her definite belief in what she was saying. I felt that Doris either was quite right or quite wrong; there was no possible room for any middle ground.

I was moved by the explanation of the Principle of Creation, which gives deep insight into the nature of God, and I could readily accept the explanation about the Fall of Man, because, although I had some understanding of the fall, this teaching amplified what I had felt and explained everything in such clear detail. However, the chapter on the Mission of Jesus was truly shocking to me, because even though I had experienced Jesus many times in my earlier days, he had never told me that he had not completed his mission. I was worried that this teaching was heresy and did not want to follow the Anti-Christ. At this point, I was in no way ready to hear any more until I had re-read the Bible and this chapter on the Mission of Jesus.

After the lecture on Jesus, Mrs. Orme shared her testimony of experiences with Jesus and also those of Miss Young Oon Kim, Doris' teacher. I realized that these two people, one whom I had met and one whom I had not yet met, though having many experiences in common with mine, had also many more and different experiences than I had.

Furthermore, I realized that Sun Myung Moon, who discovered these truths, had far deeper and more personal experiences with Jesus than anyone I had ever heard of. I recalled Jesus' statement to me that he would come again and the hope he imparted in the Bible about the blessedness of those who followed Christ in the end time, and the dire warning to those who would follow false Christs (Matt.7:15, Matt. 24:11, Mark 13:22) and lose their eternal lives.

With all this in mind, I went back to my apartment in Via Santissimi Quattro 61. I took the Divine Principle book, the Bible and began to pray and fast for three days. I felt that I was at a crisis point in my life and that I had to make the right decision. In addition to this, I had to have a direct answer from God about this new teaching. Having had already in the past other direct answers to prayer, I knew that God could answer prayer: This was truly an emergency situation. I resolved to pray until I got an answer, no matter how long it took and no matter what the answer might be.

I have to confess that I had a serious problem to resolve before I could even start praying, because several years earlier, I had made a conscious decision not to pray. I had a very hard time even contemplating receiving God's love after how I had behaved for the prior years. Why would he want to forgive me? I could not even forgive myself.

Encouraged by the idea that God can forgive if we repent, I did pray and repent just as if my life depended on it. I knew that if I made a total commitment in prayer, answers would come. I had experienced that many times in the past. God answered my prayer. I felt something I had not experienced before. For the first time, I felt personal love for me from God, as a forgiving parent, even though I had not gone in His direction at all for such a long time. I felt that He, the great, almighty God, had been looking for me, going out of his way for me, and so, I had a lot of repenting to do.

These thoughts brought me to a most humble state of heart. I felt

He really cared about me as an individual. Until this moment it was my understanding that God would love certain people because of their accomplishments, but why did he love me? I had done nothing that I recognized as being of great value for God, others, or even myself. But from this experience I realized He loves us because He is our parent, and He knows what we are capable of and that we have a unique position in his plan. I was truly born again, and I felt peace and worth as I had never felt before.

It was early in the morning when I experienced this rebirth. In the stillness I felt a vibrant vitality from everything surrounding me. I was aware that because of this message and my internal acceptance of it, something dramatic had changed in my life from that moment. I was truly born again: I was a new person with hope for the world and love for God. As I prayed and praised God, reading the Bible and the Divine Principle, I began to have deep insights into its meaning; when I prayed about Jesus' incomplete mission, he appeared to me in a vision together with True Father and told me that True Father was completing his mission on earth — something for which he was truly grateful. This was such an exciting and revealing experience; it changed the direction and purpose of my life and fulfilled Jesus' words to me in my youth.