

## Memories of the 2,075 couples 1982 Blessing in Madison Square Garden

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On July 2, 2017, the Louisiana Family Church celebrated the 35th anniversary of the 2,075 couples Holy Marriage Blessing Ceremony with Sunday Service, heartfelt testimonies from the participants, and wonderful international food and fellowship.

Those who participated in the 1982 Blessing of 2,075 couples shared their fondest memories before, during, and after the Blessing: the high spiritual atmosphere at the New Yorker Hotel and Madison Square Garden, eating KFC with True Parents just before the 2,075 couples tied the knot, and the early struggles and growth to love and cherish their spouse. There were laughs and there were tears as the longtime Unificationists shared their testimonies, but most of all, there was gratitude to the Heavenly Parent and True Parents.

As we celebrate the 2,075 couples' 35th anniversary, Andrea Higashibaba remembers her experience at Madison Square Garden in the testimony below.

My husband and I were married as one of the 2,075 couples of the 1982 Blessing in Madison Square Garden. My family, particularly my mother, had adamantly rejected all my efforts to have them attend, refusing to have anything to do with the event. Although I had realized the value and importance of family through True Parents, it appeared as if my own would not be attending my own wedding.

The Blessing took place on a Thursday -- the weekend after one of my brothers was married in North Carolina in a far more traditional church ceremony. My then husband-to-be and I decided to attend my brother's wedding, despite all the animosity.

There is an old English tradition from an Old English rhyme ("Something Olde, Something New, Something Borrowed, Something Blue, A Sixpence in your Shoe"), where the bride puts these four objects in her wedding outfit or carries them with her during her wedding ceremony as good luck charms. My mother's family had an actual sixpence that they passed from bride to bride in the family as the borrowed item. At my brother's wedding reception, my mother showed me the sixpence and declared, "You aren't going to get this!" This was followed by a litany of negativity against me and the Unification movement.

I responded -- quietly, but very firmly -- that she could do what she thought she had to do and accept us or reject us, but to never speak negatively to me about my marriage or my choices again. My mother was taken aback, and walked away.

My husband and I would return to New York on Sunday, with just three days remaining to prepare for our big day. On Tuesday evening, I received a phone call. It was my mother. "I've decided to come," she said, "And I'm bringing the sixpence."

Come Thursday, I walked and stood with 2074 other brides for over six hours through the Madison Square Garden Blessing preparations and ceremony. I was with my husband, and I was with five members of my family, including my mother. Representing generations of brides from my mother's family, was the sixpence, taped inside my shoe. Truly, the events of the cosmos can turn on a dime, or, for that matter, a sixpence.