

Shin Won Moon graduates West Point - Ken Bates - May 28, 2011

I had an amazing experience this past weekend. I attended the graduation of cadets from West Point Military Academy. Among those graduating was the grandson of our True Parents, Shin Won Moon. He is now commissioned as a 2nd Lieutenant in the US Army. I think all who attended who consider themselves Americans were greatly moved by the ceremony. This is a place where the spirit of the founding fathers is always present, and is palpable in the proceedings. These young men and women have dedicated four years in the pursuit of the highest ideals in the American culture... Duty, Honor, and Country.

This year there were over 17,000 applicants for a West Point commission, and only 1,250 achieved that goal. There is a very selective process, and those who attend West Point are some of the brightest and most committed young people in the world. These are men and women who could have gotten into the best schools and found lucrative jobs, but instead felt called to live by these three virtues, and make a commitment to serve their country. They know that they will be asked to go to Iraq or Afghanistan, and lead other soldiers in harm's way. With this in mind, they stand straight and true and have a clarity of purpose and of mind that is rare to see in young people today.

There are many who feel that these virtues are old fashioned or outdated. They are quick to point out the problems and difficulties of our nation today. If any of those people could have seen the steadfast conviction and clear resolve in Shin Won Nim's eyes as he received this commission, I think they would reconsider. They would recognize that honor still exists in this broken and troubled world. Honor means doing the right thing when all the pressures and forces around you may say it's not worth it. Honor means keeping your word in the face of insincerity, and following through on your commitments when it seems impossible to achieve. Some give up on honor because of mistakes made in the past, or difficulties of the present. Those who know honor see beyond that and know that it is worth believing in; for when we lose honor, we lose much more. We lose integrity and faith, and we lose the power to live for the greater good. Shin Won Nim sees honor in this country of America. It was founded on the basic principles of trust in God, and God still finds the way to work through it. He sees honor in his family: his parents and grandparents. They continue to live absolutely by principle and honor no matter what comes against them, or what people say about them.

Duty is also a great virtue, and a great expression of the willing offering of service to one's country. Of course, Shin Won Nim sees the USA as the greatest country on Earth, and he also sees that "country" means more than that. The establishment of God's nation cannot be done without a sense of duty and determination in its citizens to live in service to that nation. Father lists "patriot" high on the list of steps toward becoming a holy son or daughter of God. Our own children gain a sense of duty and honor when they participate in building God's providence. Those who complete the STF course get a great sense of exposure to this. My own son Jacob completed three years of STF in '06 – '09. During that time, he realized that this is what he wants to do with his life... to lead other young men in giving their best for a higher purpose. He was so moved by the level of duty and honor that he perceived in Shin Won Nim, and the intensity of his leadership training, that he determined to get an appointment to West Point himself, and will start there next month.

There were very moving experiences: at the graduation ceremony, the bar pinning (where an officer pins the first bars on the graduate), and the family gathering afterwards. Jun Sook Nim spoke of how the mother's heart wants to protect her son from harm, but she understood that there were things her son would learn by risking his life on the battlefield in service to his country that he could never learn anywhere else. And she tearfully stated that she felt that God would always be with him, no matter the danger he faced.

Hyun Jin Nim shared that he had not been able to attend Shin Won Nim's high school graduation, even though he had won most of the awards and honors given that year. Hyun Jin Nim had been on a speaking tour with True Mother, and couldn't abandon that responsibility. But in that case he felt that the mission was more important. High school graduation was a milestone, but Shin Won Nim had still been a boy and it was a boy's accomplishment. Now, this graduation from West Point was the fulfillment of a challenging course *as a man*, and Shin Won Nim had succeeded in his own right as a committed man of conviction. Now he is rightfully taking his place as True Parents' grandson, and as a true patriot. Shin Won Nim responded by presenting Hyun Jin Nim with a ceremonial sword from West Point with the inscription "To my Father, the most Principled man I have ever met". Hyun Jin Nim could not hold back the tears, as he said "I've never been more proud" and a moment of pride and gratitude was expressed in their embrace.



Rev. and Mrs. Kwak also attended, and we celebrated their 50th Blessing anniversary as a 36 Blessed couple. He carried such a sense of humility and wisdom as he bowed together with his wife, who he introduced with a smile as "my eternal mate from True Parents". Though Shin Won Nim was young and strong, and Rev Kwak is getting on in years, they both shared a sense of courage in the face of adversity, and honor to the higher purpose. Rev Kwak's total focus is still on supporting and protecting the honor of True Parents. He speaks rarely these days, as he would rather have others believe the false accusations against him than say anything which might cause pain or shame to True Parents. There is a deep and wise honor in that way of life. His words at this occasion: "I could never feel proud of myself, for I never did as much as I wanted to for our True Parents. But now I can truly feel pride, when I see that my children and grandchildren are so much better than me!"

All of us who were there were bursting with pride and gratitude. We were reminded what principles and values this country was founded on, and felt that we had made a pilgrimage to the temple of America's founding spirit. It was a moment that I will always treasure as an experience of duty, honor, and God.

I expect that there may be some who will want to disparage this simple testimony as somehow false or disingenuous. If you feel called to do so, I cannot stop you, but I will not respond to it. I have tried to share a simple, beautiful experience with a beautiful, faithful family, who I have known very personally for almost 20 years. If you seek to diminish or disparage that based on something you have read on the internet, or heard through the grapevine, then you are making a statement about yourself, not about me or this family. I saw this same honor and duty expressed in this family 10 and 15 years ago, and I still see it today. What a beautiful experience to see those values upheld and treasured and even magnified by the younger generation! May God's blessings and protection be with Shin Won Nim as he embarks on his journey of service to our nation.

Sincerely, -Ken Bates-