

***Maria P. Kiely,  
New York City, 1968***



I was born in 1939 in Bohemia, Czechoslovakia. Because of the decision at the Yalta Conference to expel the German-speaking population from the country, our family needed to leave our home in 1946. I was then seven years old. My brother was eight; my sisters were four and three years old. My mother died in Czechoslovakia two months before we were moved. My father was a prisoner of war and was released because of my mother's death, so he could come with us to Germany. My grandmother was Czech and my grandfather German. They moved with us in order to take care of us.



Maria Kiely in 1968, the year she joined the Unification Church.

Although I was raised in a religious family, many people in my environment were convinced that God did not exist. So, I wanted to find out for myself. At the age of 19, I went to England, worked in a hospital, and studied the English language. After one year, I went to Paris, stayed with a French family, worked there and studied French. There was one professor who spoke passionately about the existence

of God, while so many others taught dialectical materialism. He had a profound influence in my life.

When I came to New York City in 1961, I was amazed that the churches were filled with people every day. Initially, I stayed with a family, and then worked as a trilingual secretary. The day I encountered Therese Stewart and Betsy Jones at St. Christopher Chapel at Washington Square, I heard them talking about a new movement founded by Sun Myung Moon which unifies all religions. I invited myself to their lecture, and my quest for God ended. Within three days, in September 1968, I knew that the Lord of the Second Advent was on earth, in the person of Rev. Sun Myung Moon, that he had completed Jesus' mission, and that since 1960, mankind had True Parents. That totally changed the direction of my life. I didn't need to search any more. When I was eleven years old, my grandfather, whom I loved very much, told me that a historical event would take place in 1960, changing the direction of human history, that a man would come who will unify all religions, that his name will be known more and more in the 1980s and that he will usher in a world of universal peace. This was an excellent preparation for my acceptance of the Divine Principle.

I had the blessing of meeting our True Parents for the first time in 1969, when they blessed the first Western couples in Holy Matrimony in Washington, D.C. I remember with gratitude helping sew the robes for the Blessing, staying up all night. Once, True Father walked by and stopped right in front of me, looked into my eyes and smiled. This was such a precious moment for me which I will never forget. Also, during this time True Parents came to New York City. We were invited to go sightseeing with them. At one point, we went to the Empire State Building, and True Mother went to a store together with Mrs. Won Pok Choi. True Mother came out of the store carrying a little bag. I was so curious to know what True Mother bought. Since I was standing in front of True Father, he took the little bag from True Mother

and showed me the contents and said “these are gifts for the children.” Also, at the end of our sightseeing, True Parents invited us to a Korean restaurant. Since we were so few, I had the chance to sit directly across from True Father. I did not know what to say to him, so I just kept quiet and treasured that awesome moment.

In the evening, True Parents wanted to stay overnight in our small center on 92nd Street and Riverside Drive. However, our center leader, Barbara Mikesell, rented two small rooms in a hotel in the Bronx, one for True Parents and one for Mrs. Choi. We were about four people going with them. After arrival in their room, True Parents sat on the bed and we sat on the floor. There was a bowl of fruit on a small table, and True Father asked us to take a fruit. So, we all took one apiece, and then we were just sitting on the floor saying nothing. It was an enormously precious moment.

My second chance to meet True Parents was in 1972 during Easter time in Paris, France. At that time I was studying for my Master’s in French literature at the Sorbonne in Paris thanks to a scholarship I received from New York City College. So, I was very fortunate to meet True Parents again. We had the opportunity to go sightseeing with them. When we arrived at the Arc de Triomphe, the guard in charge suddenly stopped in front of True Parents saying “no more tours.” Elizabeth Seidel then went to the guard and convinced him to let True Parents in. We all were so relieved. During summer of this year a life-long dream of mine also came true. I had the unique chance to go on a student trip to Czechoslovakia, the Soviet Union, and Poland, I experienced first-hand how people live in Communist countries. When we went to stores, no one was eager to sell merchandise. People’s faces gave me the impression of hopelessness, and a spirit of oppression hung over Leningrad and especially over Moscow. This trip more than anything else made me determined always to follow our True Parents, no matter how difficult, and at the cost of my life.

In February 1975, my husband and I were matched and blessed by

True Parents as part of the 1800 couples in Korea. My husband represented the affluent West and I the oppressed Eastern Europe. So, we had quite a gap to bridge. In addition, my husband is legally blind. I come from a background of great resentment toward America. But over the years I truly learned to love and appreciate America. Learning about its history and learning firsthand what enormous sacrifices some historical figures made to build this great nation, I sometimes stand in awe. We chose to live in Tunisia for a while where our three children, Inmay, Yung, and Kotun Cartha, were born. Our experience there was extremely rich, and we learned to love and appreciate people of the Moslem faith. They are truly a precious people. They loved us and our children so much.

In 1996 we started working in Nigeria. My husband lived there for several years, and I was teaching Social Studies in New York City Public Schools in Harlem and the Bronx to financially support our family and to take care of our teenage children. This was not an easy task, but we survived, thanks to our faith in True Parents and our Heavenly Father. Now my husband is working for Nigeria from our home and visiting Nigeria from time to time, for which I am so grateful.

Despite all the difficulties we faced, our life of faith is strong and stable. I am very grateful to True Parents and feel so privileged to be alive at the most historical time when God manifests His Will substantially. When I was 12-years-old, I so much wanted to live at the time of Jesus. I had then decided that I would have prevented Jesus from being crucified, at the cost of my life. When I learned that True Parents were on earth, I was determined to do the same.