

My memories from when I joined the Unification Church of Japan - Part 3

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September 1991

Republished by FFWPU International Headquarters November 17, 2020



I went to my boss, Mr. Koyoma, and told him I wanted to leave my position at the school. He, a powerful man there, was shocked. He didn't answer my request. Time passed. I went back to Mr. Koyoma and asked for a three-week leave, which was granted. I said goodbye to my students while in my heart I pledged, "Someday I will come back to you and bring you a great message." They did not know that I was not planning to return. After a couple of days, I took a train to Tokyo carrying a heart mixed with new hope, dreams and anxiety.

When I finally arrived, I was pleasantly surprised to see Mr. Nishikawa surrounded by ten other people, all smiling and waiting for me. They were members of the Unification Church's Tokyo headquarters. At that time, there were only 28 members in the Unification Church. I was the 29th. As soon as I stepped off the train, they rushed to greet me. While I shook hands with members I had not formerly met, they said, "Welcome home." Having strangers greet me with such words was a little unusual, but inside I was happy. We came to Mabashi Center located on the second floor, above a shop.

At the Mabashi Center, I met many people: Mr. Sawaura from Chuo University; also Mr. Komiyama, a young charismatic philosophical aspirant who came from Rishokosekai and introduced the Unification Church to Mr. Osami Kuboki, who later became the president of the Unification Church of Japan. There was Ms. Tomiko Abe, a secretary to Mr. Choi and mother figure of the church. These people appeared to be the leaders. Among the others, there was a spiritualist named Mr. Mitsugi Tanaka who could communicate with the spirit world and could see into our hearts. I was afraid of him.

The night I arrived, these people were discussing how to solve the racial problems of the world. One was saying that in the kingdom of heaven, some special medicine would be developed and the color of one's skin could be made to change. Another person was saying that love was the solution. If one only had love, one wouldn't care what color skin a person had. Still others were saying that "inter-cultural marriage" was the solution. I was astounded to find out the kinds of things being discussed in the attic room above the little shop.

The next day was Sunday. I don't remember exactly where this occasion took place. It was either at the Mabashi Center or some other second-story room. I attended my first Unification Church Sunday service. Mr. Choi began to preach. Although he began softly, his voice caught on fire and was soon resounding with strength. He began to pound on the pulpit and stamp on the floor. His face was perspiring but his shining eyes pierced us.

When he was finished, he was soaking wet with sweat underneath his ill-fitted suit. How incredibly different the sermon was compared to others given by the ministers of my former Baptist church. My concept of sermons was turned completely upside-down.

That week, I was able to hear Mr. Choi give a two-day Divine Principle lecture series. It was better than the previous lectures I had heard in Osaka; but during the lectures, I remained relatively unimpressed. After the lectures were completed, however, I was deeply moved. I didn't understand why my tears were flowing. I then realized that something deep and fundamental had changed within me.

The next afternoon, Mr. Komiyama came to me and said, "Let's go." I didn't know where he was taking me or what would happen. A thirty or forty-minute bus ride took us to the Shinjuku Station, a place famous for its traffic. Dinner? A movie? Instead, he took me to the busiest corner of the sidewalk and pulled out a street preaching sign from his brief case and set it up. He then proceeded to raise his arms and preach. His voice was tremendously loud. Later we were to find out from a visitor that Mr. Komiyama's preaching was not understandable. The visitor came to us saying that Mr. Komiyama's preaching sounded so desperate that he wanted to know what Mr. Komiyama had been talking about. Apparently, the visitor hadn't understood a word of his speech.

At the time, I thought that Mr. Komiyama was just going to show me how to street preach, but soon, he stopped. With sweat running down his face, he said, "Now you do it!" I wanted to drop dead, or at least run away. I felt cornered, with no way out. I was desperate. But I stood on the spot and shouted as he had done, "Dear brothers and sisters of Shinjuku ... " And words began to flow from my mouth. I didn't even know what I was saying. What I did know was that I felt great. I was so happy that from that day on, I street-preached practically every day.



Rev. Sudo and early Japanese members during a workshop at Rittai Cultural Center in December 1962

Heavenly vocation

Next, I was told that every new member must fast for seven days, but that we could divide the period into three and four-day periods. Each time a member finished a fasting condition, all the members would come together, pray and bless him. It wasn't until much later that we were expected to fast the full seven days continuously.

Fasting, however, did not exempt us from our responsibilities. I can't forget my death-like struggle on the way back from street-preaching during one fast. I was told to think of Moses who had fasted twice when he was eighty years old and of Jesus who fasted forty days before being tempted.

Then I was asked to go fundraising. We pushed a cart around door to door asking for old newspapers, magazines and metals we could recycle. It was strenuous work but the main struggle was not the physical strain but the internal struggle to overcome myself -- my pride, my reluctance, and my hesitation. We called this type of fundraising "heavenly vocation." But when we had to do it every day, and especially while we were fasting, it was miserable work. We encouraged ourselves by chanting the words, "No problem with the restoration of heaven and earth." Soon I began to feel closer and closer to the brothers and sisters. We were like new babies, reborn. Mr. Choi was our father-figure, so we called him, "Papa-san."

I heard that when the centers were small and there was no room to sleep, the brothers and sisters were

divided and slept on either side of Papa-san. I also had a similar experience. Once, I was asked to visit the family of a labor union leader. I stayed at his house, where our pioneer sister in that city was staying. After finishing my lecture, we realized there was no room for me to sleep other than the pioneer sister's room. Arrangements were made and we slept together like a baby boy and baby girl. We had such a pure spirit.

After coming back from heavenly vocation, all the money was offered and put into an open safe. Mr. Choi trusted us 100 percent. We were allowed to use any amount of money; no one was keeping track of it. Not spending money unnecessarily was a practice that came very naturally to us. Later, upon retrospect, I find it amazing that we could create such a pure and innocent atmosphere -- loving, serving and caring while we toiled and shed tears together.

Divine Principle is germinal

I was educated not so much by the teaching of the Divine Principle as by the activities -- the so-called "on-the-job training of heavenly vocation" and street preaching. Inspired by Mr. Choi's teachings, I was excited and happy on the one hand, but a certain anxiety arose from inside. I wondered if it was really possible to save the world, or even make the slightest change with just a handful of common people. No one had a Ph.D.; no one was a professor at a university, a theologian, a minister or a priest, or even a scientist. The Divine Principle looked so trivial at times: How would the plus/minus lecture stand up to the criticism of a scientist? How could the Jesus lecture convince the priests and theologians? How could such simple historical parallels (which were not so clear at the time) withstand the scrutiny of historians? I was so worried that I lost my spirit. I sat down and thought about what could be done, but my thinking was inconclusive. When I recalled the love and unity of the brothers and sisters centered on Mr. Choi, I felt that this was unmistakably Heaven. Even though we were so few, the seed of the kingdom of heaven had sprouted. As long as we had life, the seed would grow and become the greatest tree of life in the world under which millions and tens of millions of people would find rest and peace. Other churches and religious organizations were large in size but they missed one thing -- life. When something is lifeless, the only road that remains is the road of disintegration.

I realized then, that the Divine Principle was germinal but that once it started to grow -- and for as long as we were alive, it would grow and grow -- it would eventually digest science, history, theology and so on. Upon gaining that understanding, I became my normal self once again.