

Rev. Reiner Vincenz: My Life and Mission

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FFWPU USA: *Our beloved brother, Reiner Vincenz, ascended to the spirit world early on Sunday, January 18, 2015. This story is Reiner Vincenz's personal account of becoming a Unificationist and working closely with True Parents on their mission.*

I would like to write my own legacy and testimony about the greatness of our True Parents, in order to give glory and a thousand thanks to our True Parents for the life they have given to me through their Holy Marriage Blessing in 1969 with my wife, Barbara, and then through my daughter's Marriage Blessing in 2007.

My wife, Barbara, was the fifth member in the United States to join, in 1963. She was Barbara Koch then. She is from Germany, but she had been studying in San Francisco. One day some friends invited her and many other young people over for a fun evening. Her brother Peter was studying engineering in Berkeley and he also came along. That evening, a German girl started talking about the Divine Principle, the core text of the Unification Church. Barbara and Peter both began to study. Over the next few days, Peter especially was desperate to hear more. He studied with Young Oon Kim, one of the first Korean Unification Church missionaries in America. Peter had many visions and dreams about True Parents. Barbara said he was gone every evening and would come home having learned so much more. He became a full-time member after 14 days. It was Peter who introduced me to the Unification Church and Divine Principle. So we were a spiritual family before we became a physical one.

Barbara and Peter came back to Germany with four other missionaries to teach Divine Principle in Europe. I had escaped to West Germany from East Germany at age 17. I worked at a machine building car dealership where I met Peter Koch, who also was working there. I asked Peter, "What did you learn in America?" Peter said he had found something new in America. I thought it was some new invention or machine; I was really excited. When I found out it was the Divine Principle, I began to study it with him.

I wanted to meet with Peter every day, but Peter seemed to have no time. Peter was actually preparing for three months to teach me the Divine Principle. He was fasting and taking cold showers as conditions for preparing his heart. After three months he said, "On Saturday you can come see me." He said it would take all day to teach me the Divine Principle. There was no book at the time; it wasn't printed yet. Peter actually translated it into German later. He used stories and discussion to share the teachings. One evening, we studied the Parallels of History three times, and that's when I knew this was the truth. The Parallels of History really got me hooked.

It took years to get the ball rolling as far as membership in Germany. It wasn't easy. Father Moon came to Germany in 1965, and he said that to develop Germany, he had to send three missionaries out to Spain, Austria and France. The late Paul Werner was the missionary sent to Austria. Ursula Schumann went to Spain. They needed one more person to go to France. I volunteered, but I had been in the church for only six months and at 25 I was the youngest member there. Peter did not want me to go; he thought that if I went to France I would lose my faith. I asked Peter, "Can I write to Father Moon and ask him?" So I wrote a letter to Father Moon, and when he saw it, Father got excited and said, "Yes, of course he can go to France." When I got the news that I could go to France, I jumped almost to the ceiling! I was so excited. I wanted to go to France because it was the enemy country of Germany. I didn't know one word of French when I went. I spoke only German, and I had no money.

I had many enemies when I came, but I made up my mind that even if it would take 21 years to find one French person, I would not give up. I worked at a hotel during the day and taught German lessons. That's how I started to meet people. My salary was \$10 a month, so I ate bread and President cheese [an inexpensive brand of cheese] every day. Brie is still my favorite.

At the time, I was fasting every other day to set a condition to make a connection with someone, to make a relationship. After three years, I finally did. I had met many people, but no one was willing to listen to the Divine Principle, but one night when I was on my way home, as the train left the station, my spiritual eyes opened and I saw little lights on the map indicating that I should go in the opposite direction. I followed the lights and got off the train.

There was a man there, and he promised to come visit me. When he did, I experienced for the first time a French person arriving on time! This man was Henri Blanchard. Divine Principle had not yet been translated into French, so I drew diagrams. I made three diagrams: one to teach him the Three Stages of Growth, one to teach the Four-Position Foundation, and one to teach the Parallels of History. When Henri walked in and saw the images, he said, “Oh, this isn’t really a German lesson.” He was interested in learning, though, and later went to Germany to meet a French-speaking member who could teach him the Divine Principle. When he came back to France, he was a member. After three years of witnessing in France, including a six-month preparation period before leaving for France, I finally made a successful connection.

I was very happy when I met Henri; for ten months I didn’t focus on anything else, just on Henri and building our relationship. I told Father Moon that I wouldn’t see him again until I had one member, so I didn’t know when I would see Father Moon again. It ended up being in 1969 at the Holy Marriage Blessing Ceremony.

Barbara and I were blessed in 1969 in the 43 Couples Blessing, after which she came to France to support the mission there. She did not speak French and so witnessing was very difficult, so she stayed in the center in a supportive role. Everyone was asked to teach Divine Principle, though, whether or not we were good at it. This was our course until 1972, when Father called us to America to support the International One World Crusade (IOWC).

In 1968, I had one member, but promised to establish 120 members in France. Barbara and I planted seven church centers in France. The mission in America was hugely different. We were put into teams for the Day of Hope Tour campaign and had to travel. We were on the road every day. We supported Father Moon at his speeches. We traveled and lived in vans and centers. We were on the road all the time, while also having to take care of our teams at centers. Barbara chose to stay at the centers and do housework, while I went out with the team and did outreach work. Barbara did many little thoughtful things in the background. She sewed everyone’s names on their socks so that they wouldn’t lose them.



I would often say, “Okay, now we have to go to the next city,” while Barbara would say, “Wait, we have to do their laundry first.” She kept in mind the necessary earthly matters, while I was always thinking of the spiritual.

At first, all the IOWC teams were all-German or all-French. Our team volunteered to take on a mixed team of people from different nations. That is what Father Moon really wanted, international teams, not one-nation teams. It was very well organized, though it was intense traveling. We went on a 31-city tour and then an 8-city tour.

I always hoped to go back to France, but missionary life in the early days of the church in America was never ending, so Father Moon permitted me to go only once in a while. When we first reached Seattle, Washington, Father Moon said, “Reiner, we have two more cities to go— San Francisco and Los

Angeles—and then we need to go to Japan.” Father needed many members to organize a 45-city tour in Japan over the course of four to five months, so I had to wait to go back to France. I led a team of 300 people to Japan. By the time we got to Japan, the team had grown to 600.

I wasn’t sure how to approach outreach work in Asia as a Western member, so I asked Father Moon what was the best approach in Japan. He said, “You should work in Japan the same way you did in America.” I knew Father Moon had confidence in me, but I didn’t have full confidence in myself. At least we had a translator. When we completed the grueling 45-city tour in Japan, Father Moon said, “Now we need to go to Korea.”

When we arrived in Korea, we learned Father was waiting for us in Pusan. The next morning, we had 3,000 members waiting to join a 9-city tour campaign. The team kept expanding. The tour took two months. I wanted to go back to Japan, but Father Moon had one more mission for me in Korea.

True Father invited me to climb a small mountain near Seoul with two or three members. The reason why True Father wanted to climb this mountain with me was in order to talk with me regarding the upcoming Yoido Rally. He was explaining to me the vision of the rally. I was very distracted that day, and Father Moon noticed this. Finally he turned to me and asked, “Why are you so distracted?” and I said, “I dropped my camera somewhere.” I always had with me a small camera and a small tape recorder. For some reason I had misplaced my camera and all my worries had been about the camera and not on True Father’s speech. True Father knew my mind and decided that he would look for my camera. After a short while he came back and had found it. I was so overwhelmed. “Okay, now you can pay attention to me,” he said.

Now True Father could speak with me freely. Here I was worrying about my little camera and True Father was worrying about the success of his biggest rally yet! I had other moments like this as well. One time later when I came to Belvedere to visit True Parents, I could not find them and I left my suitcase at the main building. Then, looking all over the Belvedere area, I finally found Father and he walked with me all over the land. Then returning to the main house, suddenly True Father took my suitcase and brought it up to my room. I was so choked up—here is our Lord and he carried my suitcase to my room. I remember that in that moment I was speechless.

On the mountain in Korea, Father said, “I want you to lead the Yeouido rally campaign, and I want you to find more than 1 million people to come to this rally, because Billy Graham just came to South Korea and 900,000 people came to his rally. I need to surpass that.”

He gave me 18 days. We worked day and night. On the day of the rally it was raining all over Korea except at the Yeouido rally location. One of the main goals of the rally was to show that the Unification Church members would support South Korea in the reunification of North and South Korea, so it was a patriotic rally. Many people were really stirred up.

We were used to being on the move, it was the life we knew, but we did have a lot of problems in the background with the team. Food was especially a big challenge. The Japanese members on our team didn’t think we would need meat, and so we would eat only rice and something to go with it. I told them we needed to change the diet to include meat. There was a big argument about this matter. It was just so difficult for our Japanese members to understand that we could not make it without meat, and for us to understand how they could go without it.

From Korea we went back to Japan. A little while later, Colonel Bo Hi Pak telephoned and told me, “Father is beside me, and he wants you to come back to America.” I was unhappy about this. I wanted to stay in Japan a little longer for witnessing and follow-up, but the next mission was the Yankee Stadium Garden rally.

It was exciting to see so many new faces coming every day, especially since I began as the only member in France and just one of six in Germany. But it was also discouraging because many people came, but many left. We were going too fast for the newcomers to establish a foundation.

After that I was sent to Germany as national leader in 1978. True Father came to England for Home Church in 1978. I was called to England. In 1976, True Father bought the New Yorker Hotel and made me responsible for its restoration. That was at the same time that I was one of the leaders responsible for the Washington Monument Rally.

It was actually difficult going back to Germany after being in foreign countries for so long. While I was in England, I went back to Germany every month for three days. I also spent time in France and at one point went all over South America.

The nature of the movement in South America was very good. Father sent me as his ambassador in 1988 to 10 countries in South America, particularly in Uruguay. When I was young, I always dreamed of going to South America one day to dig and find gold. That was my plan right before I met the church. So when

Father asked me to go to South America, I was very excited to finally get to go. I visited ten countries in South America as Father's ambassador.



I traveled so much, I even spent time in North Korea in 1994. In North Korea they had people who would show us around. They were our tour guides, and one person was assigned to each of us. These people were actually security for the North Koreans who wanted to monitor us at every moment. Before we went to bed each night, the North Koreans would check through all our belongings to make sure that we didn't have any special recordings and weren't taking anything. Having grown up under communism in East Germany, I was very aware of their tactics. They had bugs, or listening devices, in the phones and in all the rooms. We always had to be worried about what we were saying, even in our own room. Also, everywhere we went they made it look like North Korea was so prosperous; they showed only what they wanted us to see. They put us in a nice hotel, but it was actually an empty hotel, just there to show foreigners, "Look how great our North Korea is."

The church has changed and grown a lot since the time I joined. Right now this is the time of a new age. It's the next generation of Unificationists that is really blooming, and they all should take care of our church. But the next generation has to come forward and want to do that. We can't do it anymore. We had our time. This is a big challenge for them, but I am very hopeful that the next generation will develop strongly and take over soon. This is a completely different age.

I have seen many different styles of witnessing—such as big campaigns—and what I have found most valuable from among all the varieties of witnessing was at the very beginning, when I focused for ten months on my first member in France. I really liked building the personal relationship and studying one on one with a person. That's what I feel works best. I think now what will help us is this kind of Tribal Messiahship and Home Church.