

Testimonies from STF Europe members 2017 - 2018

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J. Santoro **USA, 1st year in STF**

To summarize a year of STF into a short testimony is hard to do. There was so much I could discover and learn in this one year. I saw more of the world than I could imagine, and I had the opportunity to gain friends – family- that I'll treasure for a long time.

STF was about discovering my fears and limits and trying to go beyond them. My biggest challenge was manmulbokki (fund raising).

For a girl who likes to lay low and avoid confrontations at all cost, manmulbokki required me to be quite vulnerable in front of strangers. It was tough to let go of my rationality, concepts and even of myself, but when I could, I found the kindness there is in the world. By meeting random strangers, I could see how many people are willing to help others. It's thanks to these people that I learned what generosity and sincerity looks like. I felt so much love from them. Manmulbokki opened my eyes and showed me that no matter how small, God's heart is alive in the people around me, but if I never found the courage to meet people, to overcome myself- I would've never realized it.

Through this year of manmulbokki, witnessing and events, I kept trying to strengthen my faith and trust in God, only to discover that what I was really missing was confidence in myself, the confidence that God has in me. Before I came to STF, I had a solid faith in God and True Parents. I knew God could work and I believed it, but somehow, I didn't have faith that it could be through me. I believed in True Parent's dream, but I couldn't envision how I could help it come true. This year has repeatedly shown me how God and True Parents have faith in me, but for me to truly offer something, I need to believe in myself too. But it's more than just believing that God can work through me, but it is believing that I can contribute to True Parent's vision. Someone once said that faith is not believing in something but is being able to see what is not yet there. I'm learning to practically envision the Providence and what impact I can have in it. I'm preparing to make this impact.

F. Babi **Andorra, 1st year in STF**

It is amazing to see how one's heart is able to grow without even noticing it. I still remember the day I arrived in Gaflenz, the beginning of the most valuable experience I could embark. I consider STF as an adventure through God's heart and my own as well. It is one's decision to embrace this experience and discover your true self. I guess this is the essential purpose of STF, to establish our identity as God's children and to take ownership of God's dream.

What does it mean to find our identity as God's children? I could maybe answer with some simple words, but it won't be the same as the feeling you get when you can experience it. I can say that a feeling is what will make you be attached to this identity. As God's sons and daughters, we often lose our identity and we devalue our potential. Furthermore, this is the most painful feeling for God.

In STF you have the perfect instruments for young people to acknowledge their true value and identity. Because, at the end, every single person on earth is a son and daughter of God, and He does care about you. If we can't even know who we are, what are we doing, where do we want to go, then, what is the purpose of our life? One of my deepest realizations was to know that no matter what we do, the only thing God will care of is how much have we grown our heart.

Why? Heart is the only thing that connects us with God, his only wish is to experience joy through our love. Moreover, the only way to experience this love is by opening our hearts, allowing it to get hurt, be embraced and be cured so it can grow. I'll always keep in my heart to never lose the opportunity to love.

My main purpose in STF was to somehow "rejoin the church", to make my decision on following True Parents path. One year ago, I was still dependent on my parents, I didn't really feel like I was leading my life of faith. The 1st proper decision I took on my life of faith was to join STF. I never did something by my own, I would just follow my parents "blindly". However, during my year I started to take ownership over my faith and opened my eyes. Now that I look back, I can say that is the greatest feeling I could ever have, to see what our purpose in life is, to be able to create a life I love and I desire!

At the end, STF has given me the opportunity to discover my true self which could only be done by understanding True Parents and God's heart... It made every single experience much valuable because I know I have a clear purpose and I could come to a deeper understanding about life, the most precious thing we have... Sometimes, even to live is an act of courage.

H. Gomez **Brazil, 1st year in STF**

I don't know where to start. This year has been a great and unique opportunity for me.

Before STF, I was in a difficult moment, when I started walking my own steps and choosing my ways. In this moment I didn't want to relate with the church because somehow for me church means suffering. With this kind of thinking I was going far from God and from my own family. So I decided to come to STF to give a chance for my faith, to search for it and develop it until the point that I can walk by myself.

In the beginning everything was completely new, the environment, the people, the culture, everything was a challenge for me but somehow I could understand much more about other people and about our movement in general. When I came I thought that everyone was holy and that they have no struggles, but it is completely the opposite, I realize that everyone has struggles and difficulties. With this I could understand how valuable we are and how important it is for us to grow in a good way. This realization gave me a lot of motivation to keep going forward always independent of the situation.

This year I could experience MMBK(fundraising) and Witnessing, two things that I never did before. We had a total of 4 conditions of MMBK and this time was very challenging for me. In the beginning I couldn't understand why we did MMBK, I couldn't really connect with God or the main purpose of it so for me it was very difficult to go out every day with a good heart. It took some time until I could finally connect with God and feel Him during MMBK. Since then my relationship with God and True Parents started to grow and I could have many more experiences and realizations during the MMBK time.

After MMBK we had 3 conditions of Witnessing they were really precious for me. I could go much more deeper in the study of DP and understanding of The Word at the same time that we have the opportunity to go out and talk with people. For me it was a very new experience to go out and talk deeply with people. During witnessing I could realize how important is this time, when we can go out to talk with people about True Parents. It was also the moment when I could really feel God's heart of sorrow when you invest everything for someone and this person just keeps denying you. But also the heart of joy when you meet the person that God prepares and have a give and take with this object partner.

This year of STF really changed my life but after all this preparation and training, the big decisions and challenges come now. Here I could discover much more about the world, about God, True Parents and about myself but now it depends just on me to practice everything that I could learn and keep always growing and developing.

Thank You

S. Belliard
Dominican Republic, 1st year in STF

When my parents decided to send me to STF, I didn't have any deep reason to go to STF but before going, I took part in GTGY 2017 during which I understood how abstract and distant my relationship with God was, that is when I found my purpose for STF.

I came to STF to find my faith, to find a reason to believe in what I was doing, to build my experience, because as a second generation my parents would always tell me about true parents, divine principle, etc. I would believe in it but this faith was not coming from me but from my parents. I couldn't relate because I didn't have any experience of True parents and God as they had.

STF had a big impact in my life because I did things that I would never do in my daily life, face different challenges, go through difficulties and struggle with myself, experience part of true father's course thanks to True mother. For she gave us the opportunity to go to Korea and do a pilgrimage of the places where True parents invested their lives, which made me feel more connected them.

Manmulbokki was one of the biggest challenges. What I needed to face the most was how to keep going, to keep strong, believe in God and myself. The people would reject me strongly, telling me to go away, that I was only asking for money, "go and work" different things, sometimes I just wanted to stop, give up, asking myself "why am I doing this?" but just when I would do a blind step, trusting in God, I would feel God and things would change, it was very difficult to do it. I could experience God's love when the people gave me love and God's sadness because we need to go through this, when we suffer God also is going through this.

During witnessing time, I learned to grow my heart, because you need to take care and understand others, to sacrifice yourself, also to support each other and learn The Divine Principle because I realized so many things when I studied The Divine Principle. To teach it, you need to truly understand it.

I'm grateful for God, True parents and my parents that sacrificed so much to give me this opportunity.

F. Dirnhofer
England, 1st year in STF

If you want to find God on STF you can but you need to be willing to push on and do what is needed to be done to be able to find this something which in this case was God in some form. We had a few opportunities to see and attend True Mother this year and before STF I would only see True Parents or True Mother very rarely and being put into the position to see True Mother multiple times throughout the year was a privilege. To attend True Mother in whatever the task was and this made my time on STF even greater regardless of all the other moments we lived the ones with True Mother a some of the most memorable.

I am indebted to STF and what it has given me and I will always remember the time I sent my application because it was probably one of the better decisions I've made in my life.

S. Colleter
France, 2nd year in STF

Nothing could have prepared me for this second year of STF, for all its challenges, its depths and impact. I thought I was ready to sacrifice but I had to sacrifice a lot more than what I thought I could. The more I faced my fears, the more I could free my heart. From self-judgement, expectations and doubts. I was questioning: why would I want to free my heart? To be able to take care of them. To give to the people coming to STF the opportunity to feel and grow and cry and laugh as much as I did or even more. To help them find their ambition, their vision for themselves. And none of this is easy for sure, especially since this year STF was called for greater missions than what it is used to attend. The African summit, the Austrian rally, foundation day in Korea were the main ones, where my desire to live a life that goes beyond myself was tested. To overcome those tests was the most gratifying thing I could have expected from these events. I will never forget the way the ocean shone in Senegal, as Kathy Rigney raised her voice in the front seat of the car, in search of solutions, as my body was uncomfortably squeezed in between three other persons that nervously tried their best, as I realised that I was part of History, I was part of God's providence and my presence had an impact.

In a second year, there is not so much time to accept the leap of faith that is needed, if I truly want to take care of those people the way they deserve it, I need to believe in myself as much as I believe in God and True Parents, and I need to believe in them a lot more than my comfortable Ego wants to. And this is why it is an amazing adventure, who would and why would I ever question my heart, my love if i simply went to university ? How would I ever grow this heart of mine if I never met the amount of unique, beautiful and intricate people I could meet on STF in two years? Good thing I chose STF.

E. Horibe
USA, 2nd year in STF

It's already coming to a close of my second year here on STF. It has been a long journey since I started STF, with many ups and many downs but both coming together to help me to find my faith, to find my relationship with God and True Parents, to find a stronger and new me that I never knew existed, and a second family that I can call home wherever I go. I wouldn't exchange this experience for anything. Especially this second year has been more about being able to help people on their path to find God, being there as someone to encourage, guide, love and also to learn from people. Not just giving but also learning to receive and help me to give back even more. There are so many BC's in the world going through the same situations and struggles but seeing how we can help each other to overcome, grow and come closer to God, True Parents and our own parents has been amazing. Learning to be sometimes a parent, older sister, sister, friend. It is beautiful how deep these relationship can be. This year has also helped me to solidify my relationship and my faith with God and True Parents. I was in the Vienna team, doing mobilization and I remember this one instant where someone asked me if I was a 'Moonie.' I was so shocked that he even knew who we were but I didn't question I just replied 'yes I am.' And for me this was one of the biggest moments in my life of faith, in my life. Being able to say I am a Moonie to a complete stranger and have this confidence was a moment where I could really see how far I have come since the beginning of STF. It has been a long year with many experience that I will forever hold in my heart and I am so grateful to have been here. STF has given me a faith, a relationship with God and True Parents, a family, and has shown me the inner strength and power I have. These years have been an opportunity for me to build a foundation for my life and I hope to use this as I go back home to make it even stronger and to make a change with my brothers and sisters. Thank you to everyone for making this an amazing two years of my life. I hope we could all grow together and take a step closer to God and True Parents. Thank You.