

Hometown Witnessing

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After nearly forty years away from home, Barbara (right) reconnecting with her cousins in Austria.

I spend most of the year in Bratislava, in the birthplace and hometown of my husband Milos Klas. We spend the school holidays in my parents' house in a village south of Salzburg, Austria. When my mother died in 2005, we started to care for the house, which our son Laurenc inherited. While there, we visit my relatives, with whom I have had little contact since I joined the church in 1976. They all live in villages more or less distant from my parents' home. I searched continuously for possibilities how to witness to them.

Mountain hiking has proved a good means to build up some level of relationship. Though there has been considerable help from my liberated ancestors, the interest of my cousins is limited either because they are devout Catholics or simply suspicious of any new teachings. A few of them drank the holy wine, some accepted True Father's autobiography. The book has been a real blessing. My uncle Georg, the only one of my mother's sibling still living, was so touched that he wrote an e-mail praising True Father after Father's ascension -- a true miracle, since Uncle Georg supported my mother's attempts to get me out of the movement when I joined.

Unexpected possibilities arise



After a few years and several trials, I became desperate. I doubted the purpose of witnessing in this rich and beautiful environment, where people seemed to lack nothing. Suddenly good spirits opened a gate. During the summer of 2012, some friends repeatedly asked me, "Have you visited the Tannhauser Museum?" The museum, which documents rural life, was founded by Inge Pichler, the author of a nice book about local history. My mother had donated a spinning wheel and my baby carriage to the museum.

I was hesitant, but since there few other people I could witness to, I challenged good luck and went with my Laurenc to visit the museum and speak to her. We met.

Her dark eyes were sparkling and she had a lot to say. A short time later, I gave her *As a Peace-Loving Global Citizen*. That was in August 2012. True Father was already in the hospital. I explained a bit about his spiritual capacities and mission to her. At first glance, she liked the expression of his face on the cover and said, "He seems to have a very good character." I lacked the courage to visit her again soon. What would she say about the book's message?

A year later, in the summer of 2013, I mustered enough courage to visit her again. Inge was sitting with a guest on a bench in front of her house.

She welcomed me warmly. She spoke in a friendly manner about True Father -- how he had suffered and what he achieved, so that her visitor wanted to buy the book on the spot. Fortunately, I had some copies with me. He paid the double the price. My Uncle Georg leads a well-known civic movement. Both Inge

and Georg have been labelled by Catholic circles as "sectarians," because they open their facilities to people with unorthodox views.

Inge volunteered to display the autobiography on her book table. Whenever there is a presentation and the lecturer seems to be open-minded, she gives him the book as a gift. Last November, my husband introduced to her to the Divine Principle chapter "Resurrection." Inge asked if we wanted to give a lecture at her museum. I agreed enthusiastically.

Among possible topics she selected "The Spirits of the Past -- Are They Still with Us?" She reserved July 22, as the date and advertised my lecture in the Tannhauser Museum calendar of events.



Barbara, who was spiritual even as a child, spoke on "The Spirits of the Past -- Are They Still with Us?"

Preparations for the event

I felt that this was a good opportunity to reach out to my cousins, and I hoped for the support of my liberated aunts and uncles in the spirit world.

At the end of June, I started to send them e-mail, and made phone calls to announce the event. Additionally, I started to make cycling tours of the surrounding area to invite friends from my childhood. I stopped on the road even for people I did not know but who seemed "special." Their response was surprisingly favorable -- a good topic surely, they said. I laid prayer and bowing conditions and hoped for the best. Inge told me that generally a dozen people attend such events. I fervently prayed to have at least twenty guests.

D-day came, a very rainy, gloomy day. I felt so sleepy. Only a few relatives had promised to come, among them the well-known and long-time mayor of Abtenau, 155 kilometers away. He drove me to the museum. My husband was in Bratislava because he had to welcome Mrs. Lan Young Moon, a Cheon Il Guk special emissary, who was visiting at that time. I had prepared well but I was nervous. From the Salzburg church community only our brother, Friedrich, had promised to come and bring some guests. My prayers intensified; I trembled as the people started to arrive at the Tannhauser Museum and began to sigh, "Oh, my God!"

The farmhouse kitchen where the lecture was to take place has a capacity of up to thirty seats. Fifteen minutes before starting time, the seats were taken. My son counted almost forty people at 8:00 pm. Inge was busy and appeared happy because people had to pay €5 entrance fee.

She introduced me briefly and warmly, and then I had to face the demanding audience. A carefully prepared draft of the lecture, which I had read aloud at home several times, gave me the confidence to speak freely. I showed some books related to my lecture, and then I talked about the influence of ancestors in our lives, genetically as well as through fortune or inherited sins. I explained restoration through indemnity and the meaning of karma and then I contrasted the concept of reincarnation and restoration through the return of spirits. I spoke a bit about the liberation of ancestors and purification of one's bloodline. I mixed all that with vivid examples from my life with my husband and our experiences.

Inge had warned me beforehand that guests usually interrupt the lecturer and start to debate among themselves. She described giving the lecture as a difficult business, but even after ninety minutes of lecturing, it was so quiet in the room; people just stared at me, a few smiled in a friendly way at points I had made or when they raised their heads. I became worried over whether or what they understood and whether they accepted anything I said. When I stopped and asked if they had questions, just a few raised their hands.

The heartwarming response

When my lecture finally finished, Inge stood up, applauded and hugged me saying that it was an excellent lecture. She hopes that next year I shall give another presentation at the museum. Some guests told me that they appreciated the explanations a lot and that they want me to visit them to explain things in more detail.

In the following days, I heard more encouraging responses. More guests had come than had attended any other event at the museum. Our brother Friedrich, who had brought three women, said that they were deeply impressed. One said that it was fascinating, and that she "could have listened for many more hours."

Among the guests were people with remarkable healing powers. My goal is to give them the autobiography, which is a tool to test if a person is narrow-minded or open to receive a message from True Parents. This is my condition for further cooperation.