

Being remembered for the right reasons

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April 14, 2015



I was maybe 14 or 15 years old when, participating on a UK HARP workshop at a scout camp in Oxford, I participated in an activity that invited everyone to imagine that they had died. The idea behind this exercise was to envision the eulogy that would be written about us upon our earthly expiration. At this stage of my life, the kind of things I wrote down referred to the famous intellect I presumed would be celebrated. The picture of myself I was trying to form had the appearance of a learned scholar, someone who knew a lot about everything, and was able to use this powerful intellect to accomplish great things, such as pioneering new discoveries or inventing a world-transforming product. Feeling rather smug, I was looking forward to being given the opportunity to read out my perceived eulogy to everyone else doing the exercise. Before I could, however, I listened to what some others had written, and then I didn't feel like reading mine out loud any more.

Many of the aspirational eulogies referred to how each individual hoped to be remembered for being a loving person, for being kind or caring. At first, I responded internally with cynicism, thinking that such qualities were not so important. All the warm and fuzzy language were just attempts to ornament what would otherwise be boring and insignificant lives. Such was my thinking back then. Nevertheless, as I listened to eulogy after eulogy about wanting to be a good person, somehow my attitude changed. My heart melted to the sincerity with which many of the eulogies had been written – albeit by the teenage authors for their future selves – and it dawned on me how shallow and self-centred my own eulogy had been. That one experience, as small as it may have been, profoundly changed my outlook on life and how I would go on to prioritise agenda in my life.

With that in mind, I want to reflect on the *Seonghwa* ceremony of Marva-Anne Sobambi, which took place today. The *Seonghwa*, or ascension, ceremony is the Unificationist funeral. Father Moon spoke about the importance of the *Seonghwa* ceremony particularly in the last few years of his life before his own passing. The emphasis in these ceremonies is to celebrate the life of the recently departed person, joyfully wishing the spirit of the deceased person to leave this realm and victoriously enter heaven with the love, gratitude and encouragement of the family and friends remaining in the physical world. Just like most other funerals, eulogies are told that shine a light on the good qualities of the ascended person. Those eulogies shared today, along with all the testimonies and stories, were exemplary.



I didn't know Aunty Marva very well. In recent years I only had the opportunity to bond more closely with her during residential programmes for all the pastors and community leaders that the UK FFWPU HQ hosts 3 or 4 times a year. She had a beautiful singing voice and a calm demeanour that always sought to serve. Such observations of her behaviour were elaborated on by the stories shared by various people who knew her. Indeed, what was illustrated was how loving and beloved Marva had become throughout her life. On more than one occasion, a list was recited to mention the various adjectives associated with Marva being a loving person.

It was suitable, then, that the Biblical reading delivered today quoted St. Paul's famous passage about love from 1. Cor 13. The message from St Paul, which was echoed by the homily delivered by the UK FFWPU director Mr. Jack Corley, hit home the fact that when our spirits leave our body to dwell in the

spirit world, everything is left behind, with the exception of love. The overwhelming consensus during today's *Seonghwa* ceremony was that Marva was a person who embodied true love, the love that lives for the sake of others. Stories from Marva's childhood in Guyana, where she was the oldest and most maternal sister in a large family, showed how she looked after her siblings as they lived deep in the rainforest. Fast forward to the present and Marva was still acting as a mother, looking after the members of the East London community as their pastor. Marva's line manager from Marva's workplace shared about the infants who can barely speak but who, sharing a deep bond with Marva due to her consistent love and care, wanted to know where she had gone. 'Where Mava?' was their question; 2 words which broke my heart thinking about them. Such was the emotional imprint left behind by Marva's personality.

Saying farewell to Marva today felt special. I feel honoured to have been able to join the celebration of her life and give her a victorious send-off. While I look forward to meeting her again some time in the future, what I can keep are memories of her. Those same memories are also what Marva has kept with her during her transition from this life to the next. In the spirit world, where the environment is that of love, the more one has love and is able to love within one's heart, the more free one would be in the spirit world. Since Marva's heart of love was so powerful, not only will many people remaining behind remember her fondly, but she will also be free to love in the spiritual dimension.

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<http://www.funeraldirectorschristchurch.co.nz/writing-a-eulogy/>

<http://uk.upf.org/ukupf/local-news/614-anniversary-of-the-ascension-of-upfs-founder-father-moon>