

First anniversary of the God Bless America Festival at Washington Monument

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This is a very significant evening. It should be a day of celebration for everyone, when the reality of the spirit of the Washington Monument campaign is substantiated all throughout America.

You may have heard that September 18 is the first anniversary of the celebration of the Washington Monument campaign. But in the Unification Church, September 18 has been a special day in the mind of God for a long time. It was on September 18, in 1961, that the Unification Church of America was founded. The greatest of our first public rallies to be held in America was Madison Square Garden, on September 18 1974, which drew over 60,000 people -- a turn-away crowd. It could only have been the power of the spirit of God, calling out to the people that did this.

Last year on September 18, we celebrated the Bicentennial God Bless America Festival. This was a celebration dedicated to God. And over 300,000 people gathered in the name of God to celebrate His blessing to this country.

By now, everyone in America has heard of Reverend Moon. But how much do they really know about him? It is the responsibility of those of us who know him to bear witness to what his life has meant for us, our church, and our country. It has been my very great privilege to have been a member of the Unification Church for the last ten years. When I came to the Church, I was not looking for a religious group, or at least I didn't think so. I had other ideas of what I wanted to do. But when I heard the Divine Principle, my heart was deeply changed. It was as if something inside of me opened up and was clear for the first time. I experienced life in a completely different way.

I did not meet Reverend Moon for the first two years that I was a member. So I was not brainwashed by Reverend Moon! But I was completely captivated by his teachings. When I met Reverend Moon, the reality of his teaching impressed me, as it has for the five years that I have been working closely with him. More than anyone else, I feel responsible to stand up for what his life and teaching have meant for me.

Jesus said in Matthew that a tree can be known by its fruits. When I think of Reverend Moon, I think of two things: words and deeds. If we can understand these two things, then we know Reverend Moon. Some people have criticized Reverend Moon's teaching as being an unorthodox heresy, a contradiction to what other churches teach. But members of the Unification Church have not found that at all. I was raised in a Lutheran home. When I heard the teachings of the Divine Principle, I did not hear teachings that contradicted what I had heard when I was young; rather, I heard things that explained them for the first

time. At last I learned what the trinity was, what the relationship between God and man should have been like, who Jesus was, and how we could be saved from sin. I never learned anything in the Unification Church that in any way detracted from any church on the face of the earth. Instead I understand and appreciate them more. And I feel that I first really became a Christian *after* I joined the Unification Church.

I have lived and worked closely with Reverend Moon for the last five years. I have been with him around the clock from Maine to Florida to Hawaii, in many kinds of situations. What are the actions of Reverend Moon? They are the actions of a man who is completely dedicated to God and fulfilling His call. Throughout his first national tours, we began to understand through his actions that he came to speak a message from God to America.



Reverend Moon, realizing better than most the importance of this country, began as early as 1972 to awaken the people to understand the reasons for our great blessings in the past, in preparation for our Bicentennial.

What made America a great nation? Not a long history, a series of great generals or statesmen. Unique among the nations of the earth, America was formed from immigrants, coming together without a common language or religion. But with a common ideal -- that man is the child of God. The American Revolution established a nation based on the principle of liberty and on the premise that man was a creation of God. The revolution in America not only spread throughout the country but did not stop at our shores. The message of the American Revolution lit fires in the hearts of people throughout the world. The founding documents of so many new nations in Africa and Asia are patterned from our Declaration of Independence and Constitution.

This nation was founded by God to be the example for other nations. And in the beginning, Americans felt that responsibility. We sent our help everywhere, and we welcomed people from all continents. And America prospered.

Our forbearers knew what America meant because they had to fight for this country. Now we have a generation of Americans who have been born into peace and prosperity and take it for granted. People here no longer feel the threat of danger which people in other parts of the world live with. There is a great danger that this generation of Americans will lose any appreciation of what God has given us.

Someone must come to revive the true spirit of sacrifice and rebuild America's Christian spirit. Who is going to solve the problems of the poor who are dying in Africa, or of those who are enslaved in Communist countries? There is no one who is in a better position to do it than America. And yet we don't have that determination. Then why does God continue to bless us with the ability?

Someone had to come to rekindle the fire and determination of this nation. If there were an American who would do it, then God would never call someone from another land. Many people criticize Reverend Moon for coming here. Do they think that it was easy for him to come?

Like Moses, he knew that he could speak to the people only through an interpreter. Like many great prophets, he knew that he would be rejected by the establishments of the time. We pride ourselves on being a tolerant nation, but our history tells a different story. Maryland was founded by Catholics escaping persecution in Europe, but no Unitarians or Jews were allowed. The Mormons were pushed out of the country and given what no one else wanted. Their leader was murdered and their homes were

burned. The history of fear directed toward every new religious group is with us still. And this is what the Unification Church is experiencing today. Reverend Moon knew that he would be persecuted not only for bringing a new message and a new movement, but for the fact that he is an Oriental. We are not far removed from the early nineteen-forties, when all Japanese-Americans on the West coast were taken out of their homes and put into concentration camps because they were suspected of disloyalty. Were Americans of German or Italian extraction given the same treatment?

Then why did Reverend Moon come? He came because he had to come. God told him that someone had to come to bring His message. He came to lead this country to the principle of sacrifice so that God's blessing would continue and the mission of America could be fulfilled.

When he began here in 1972, even our members could hardly believe the dreams that he had. When he talked about filling up Madison Square Garden in the name of God, we wanted desperately to believe him, but it was difficult. We followed, and we prayed. If he had not been there to rebuild our faith every day, it is doubtful if we could have succeeded. Person to person throughout America, he raised each one of our members, teaching them what God wanted from America. And he did something more than that. He set the example. He showed us that a man who could not even speak the language could gather over 300,000 people to the Washington Monument grounds.

On the anniversary of this nation, all Americans should have gotten down on their knees to give thanks to God in order for God to continue to bless the people. But many Americans are far from that spirit. Thus Reverend Moon set the goal of gathering 200,000 people at the Washington Monument, symbolically representing all 200 million Americans. If they could give thanks to God for His blessing, then God could accept America's offering and continue His blessings.

On that night, as people came from every direction, as the streets were crowded, as all the buses on the east coast headed to the Monument, there were tears streaming down Reverend Moon's face because he knew that on the foundation of this offering, God would continue to give His blessing.

We did not conduct the Washington Monument campaign to make our church great. We did it because we knew that this was the offering that God needed to bring His blessing to America's anniversary.

The Washington Monument victory was a spiritual victory, and the spirit that was born then must grow until it encompasses the entire nation. On the foundation of the Washington Monument victory, the members of the Unification Church have pledged to live according to that standard. That spirit began on September 18, 1976. We are gathered here tonight in celebration and in commitment to bring a substantial victory.

Since September 18, 1976, Reverend Moon has been able to found a newspaper and see our first graduating class from the Unification Theological Seminary. We have opened a major new facility in Washington D.C. As a nation, we have been blessed to receive a president who speaks of man's religious ideals and of a commitment to human rights. We see a change in America. And we believe it came because the gates of heaven opened up on the foundation of the victory of September 18, 1976. Now we feel a responsibility to march to each quarter of this nation to make the spirit of Washington Monument a reality.

I ask all of you to join with us in heart. Let's all remember to appreciate the blessings God has given us and be willing to sacrifice at least a part of them to make sure that those same blessings can be given to people born in all parts of the world, many of the problems facing us today will disappear. The blessings that America can give to the world will melt down barriers wherever they stand. Let us do it -- in the name of God. Amen.

