

## Fishing with Father at the Unification Theological Seminary 1977-79

J. Harford  
August 14, 2020



*Father and I circa 1978*

When I was a student at the Unification Theological Seminary 1977-79 every Sunday we would visit local churches to worship with them and develop relationships with the pastors. My senior year at UTS I was the Church Visitation Coordinator. That year we also started doing Home Church in the local communities.

One particular Sunday after visiting the Dutch Reformed Church and the Italian lady who always fixed me something to eat, I returned to the seminary. As I arrived, I was informed that True Father was fishing at "Fathers Rock" down at the Hudson River.

I quickly changed clothes and rushed down to the river. There was a group of 20-30 students standing around watching Father fish. I squeezed through the crowd and just at that time Father pulled in a fish, swung it around and it landed near my feet. I picked up the fish, removed the hook from it's mouth, and Father pointed to a large plastic trash can for me to put the fish in. Then Father pointed to his bait box, I baited the hook, and Father cast back into the Hudson River. Suddenly, I was Father's fishing assistant.

This continued for quite a while and Father landed several species of fish that all went into the water filled trash container, hook rebaited, and line cast into the river. After a while, Father pulled in an eel. It was between two and three feet long and very lively. The eel twisted itself around the line and was really a mess. Father gave me a look that was something like . . . "just take care of it." So, I proceeded to untangle the slimy and still active eel. After a while, the eel was untangled, but as I started to remove the hook it was obvious that the eel had deeply swallowed the hook.

At this point I happened to glance at Father's tackle box and noticed a hook remover tool that I had used to remove swallowed hooks from catfish caught in our local creek. It was a simple tool, red plastic with a

ball on each end, one large and one small. I picked up the tool ran it down the line into the eel's mouth till it reached the hook, gave it a little twist and pulled the hook out.

Then Father looked at me, made a little grunt to get my attention and pointed to the little red tool. Evidently this was not a common tool in Korea, but someone had put it in Father's tackle box. I took the tool over to Father and showed him how it was used to remove the hook. Father was curious about how it worked and received my explanation very naturally. He smiled and pointed to his bait and we were fishing again.

A couple weeks later, I was studying at the library when someone reported, "Father is fishing down at the third bridge." The third bridge was one of the railroad bridges that allowed water from the Hudson to flow in and out of the lagoon. I quietly slipped out of the library, changed clothes and headed to the Amtrak rails that led to the third bridge. About the time I passed the first bridge, one of Father's security was coming from the other direction. He stopped me and said, "I have to put gas in Father's car, can you take care of Father while I am gone." I was a bit floored, but also excited about the opportunity. Evidently, he had been there the previous time when I assisted Father with fishing and trusted me for this mission.

I walked to the third bridge and was watching Father when he pulled in a nice fish. Like before, he swung the rod around and the fish landed near my feet. Once again, I unhooked the fish, baited the hook, and Father cast the line into the Lagoon. Looking back now with a little more fishing knowledge, Father was landing White Bass which can be abundant in springtime. His line was setup with two hooks and often Father would catch two fish at the same time.

As Father fished and I assisted, I thought a couple of times, I am here alone with Father, is there something I should ask him? He had a very focused expression on his face like it was something more than that fish that he was fishing for. I decided to just be quiet and savor the time I could spend with my Messiah.

Nowadays, my hobby is fly-fishing. I often think of these experiences when I am out fishing or tying flies.