

My Unificationist Memoirs - Chapter 3

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The photo: Washington DC fundraising, 1973.

My earliest days in the church blend together in a swirl of events. On the one hand, I recall the process of separating myself from worldly attachments and attitudes, as I settled into the center routine. Despite having lived a relatively disciplined life by most standards, the brilliant light of the new truth disclosed so much more of my hidden self, exposing my arrogance and selfish inclinations. In the monastery, the abbot had not let me fast. In contrast to the abbot's caution, very soon after I joined the church, Michael Beard suggested I begin a three day fast. Evidently, I had much to clean up. I also remember the marvel of reading True Father's words.

My spiritual mother, Felice Hart, gave me a copy of *New Hope*, the collection of 12 talks by Father. Although I had been nurtured on scripture, the writings of the Church Fathers, and other "mystics and Zen masters," I had

never encountered words so filled with power and life. Father's speeches went straight to my heart, brought me to tears of repentance, and resurrected me. When I was still in the monastery, I used to look at the magnificent skies of a rising or setting sun and think to myself, "when Jesus returns, this is how it will be!" And I was correct. Reading True Father's words opened magnificent skies and enlightened the most recessed regions of my mind. Moreover, his words bore the fruit of the deepest Christian and human desire, to have a relationship of heart with a loving God through Jesus. From the earliest moments of my encounter with the new truth, I felt that I had been blessed to experience the fulfillment of centuries of a suffering faith and unmet human longing. I could taste what had only been a promise. John Henry Newman's words, "cor ad cor loquitur," (heart speaking to heart) come to mind. The spiritual intimacy Cardinal Newman longed for was the water in which we were immersed, the moving current of our daily lives.

Before I met the church, I attended daily mass. On Sundays, at the end of the service, I would often stand and announce that I was distributing the Catholic Worker newspaper in the back. This was not normal Catholic behavior. Once I met the church, I had a new message. The revelation that I stood in the position of "John the Baptist," became meaningful, my sense of responsibility suddenly had a theological and historical context. At the end of mass, I couldn't remain quiet. I would stand and announce that these were the last days, that there was a new truth, and that people needed to wake up and pray for God's guidance. The Feast of Christ the King is the conclusion of the Catholic liturgical year and was celebrated about two weeks after I joined the movement. The Archbishop of Washington DC, Cardinal Baum, was celebrating mass at the Cathedral of St. Matthew the Apostle near our Dupont Circle National Headquarters. I decided to attend. Immediately after his sermon, I stood up and announced that Christ had returned and the promise of the feast of Christ the King was in fact being realized. I had barely finished before two ushers reached me and escorted me from the cathedral, chastising me all the way down the aisle and out the door. No evidence exists that I had any effect on the cardinal.

I would sometimes visit my family in Annandale, Virginia and attend their parish mass on Sunday. Needless to say, I mortified them with my spontaneous pronouncements. They thought I was becoming unhinged. My parents requested that I see a psychiatrist, for whom they would pay. I agreed when they told me that the psychiatrist was a Jesuit priest, a professor at Georgetown University with an expertise in spirituality, who had given retreats at my monastery. My father had contacted Father Edward, my Trappist abbot, and he had been his recommendation. I held nothing back. We spoke about my dreams, prayer life, mystical experiences, how I met the movement, the Divine Principle, as well as my childhood, family life, and family relations. After several months, the psychiatrist asked me if he could have a meeting about me with my parents. I agreed. I wasn't present at the encounter but for years my father liked to tell the story. After speaking to my parents in general terms about our conversations, the psychiatrist said (as my father recounts the story), "Colonel Scharfen, Mrs. Scharfen, it just may be God's will for J. to be in the Unification Church." My mother heatedly responded, "Father, don't you tell me what you 'think' God's will is! I'm J.'s mother and I know God's will!" Well, the effect of this exchange was my father deciding that there in fact was nothing "wrong" with me and that I should be left to my spiritual pursuits. He only asked that I continue to check in with the Jesuit psychiatrist, which I did until I went on the Washington DC Center's Mobile Fundraising Team with Brad Bufkin.