

*Dietrich Seidel,
Vienna, Austria, 1968*



My origins go back to a small town, Pernitz, about 40 miles south of Vienna, Austria, where I was born in the middle of World War II. My Viennese mother and my German father divorced shortly after the end of the war, a painful event that reflected the confusion and hardships of the post-war era. Pernitz was known for creating what was to be a new beginning for humanity by raising babies that came from selected parents. My German father was part of the security forces that protected the life of Adolf Hitler, and together with my mother obviously fulfilled those needed conditions for making a new “human race.”

Among my early childhood memories, I recall the sound of sirens warning the population of bombing raids on Vienna and huddling in shelters hoping for survival. In another instance, I remember seeing a soldier pointing a gun at my mother, my sister, and I, in an open field in the middle of the night, and with the voice of a three-year-old I shouted, “Please do not shoot.” These experiences may have been the roots for my yearning to do something for the sake of bringing about world peace. After the war, my mother remarried, thus sharing child-rearing tasks for my older sister and I with a very conscientious and loving stepfather.

One memory stayed with me from my elementary school time. That was when my best friend told me that he wanted to become a priest. I remember that in my heart I wanted to apply his future plan for my own life, as close friends often do. Based on my belief in God, I respected the commitment of his family to the Catholic faith, but hesitated to share his plans for the future. On the one hand, I felt the

desire, as an eight-year-old, to dedicate my life to God in response to the gratitude I felt for being alive. On the other hand, all my hope and joy about life was rooted in the experience of a loving family, and I knew already as a youngster that priests were not permitted to marry. From that time on, I repeatedly asked myself why Jesus could not marry and have his own family.

Within my Catholic upbringing, I experienced God's presence increasingly through the wonders of nature. My interests as a teenager then turned to science, and later I studied electrical engineering at the university level. During these formative years as a student, I soon realized that science has its limitations in answering the important questions of life. Even if I would be lucky and make a great scientific discovery, how could I be sure that it would be used for the benefit of humanity?

I realized that we all as human beings need first to develop our character in order to attain the goal of becoming loving and responsible persons. I also understood that we need God's guidance in order to accomplish this task.

During my mid-twenties, I was indeed guided towards opening my heart for a spiritual vocation. I vividly remember a conversation I had with a Catholic priest who served at St. Stephen's Cathedral in Vienna. I showed him an invitation I had received to learn about a new spiritual movement that was dedicated to bringing unity to Christianity and to advancing interfaith dialogue. "Find out for yourself," he said. "If you find something good, take it; if it is not good, leave it behind." I met my spiritual father in the city park of Vienna, and that is how my study of the Divine Principle began in September 1968.

It became evident that I was personally responsible for my spiritual life and that prayer and self-examination were needed to advance in my spiritual quest. At that time, my studies focused on one question: How is God working today? It may be possible, with all the confusion and uncertainties of our time, that we are experiencing what the Bible

calls the “Last Days,” thus entering a new era in which God’s original ideal becomes substantial. As a practicing Catholic, I had a deep experience of God’s calling and the heart of Jesus. If God wanted to work through Jesus 2000 years ago to build His kingdom and Jesus was rejected, it was obvious to me that in our time, initially, the True Parents as God’s champions would also be rejected. They will also have bad press and be accused just like Jesus. I realized that Father Moon fulfilled the mission of Jesus and, as I see it, he becomes, therefore, the second coming of Christ. After four weeks of Divine Principle study, a few sleepless nights, and against the wishes of my parents, I dedicated my life to the True Parents.

About two years later, I was called by Peter Koch, then the national leader of Austria, to present Divine Principle lectures at the University of Vienna together with a few students who were also in their last year of study. We formed the “New Center” (Neue Mitte), a new movement that showed the way towards building God’s kingdom and which later became CARP (Collegiate Association for the Research of Principles).

After several years, while working as a research assistant at the University of Technology in Vienna, I decided to move to the United States, pursuing missionary work and studies in theology. First, after witnessing on the West Coast, I became a “Mobile Unit Commander” in Utah and later a pioneer teaching the Divine Principle in the city of Worcester, Massachusetts.

At the end of a two-year education at the Unification Theological Seminary (UTS), graduating from its first class in 1977, I met my wife Elisabeth in New York through the matching of Father Moon. A few months after our Blessing in marriage, we moved to Toronto, Canada, where I continued my studies for a Ph.D. in theology. Both of our children, Christopher and Diesa, were born in Toronto, and our time in Canada brings back good memories experiencing God’s guidance while establishing our family and preparing for my teaching

mission. Building my marriage with Elisabeth and raising our children became for me the path of discovering the heart of God. Soon I realized that beyond all my theological studies, it is through the experience of loving human relationships, and in particular family life, that God wants to be present among us.



Dietrich and Elisabeth Seidel

My son, Christopher, finished his studies in computer science at Vassar College, Poughkeepsie, New York, and developed additional interests in spirituality and healing. He lives now in California. Diesa, who is two years younger than her brother, studied psychology and graduated from Marist College, also in the town of Poughkeepsie. She had a career playing professional basketball in Europe and is now interested to advance the education of young girls worldwide through her nonprofit organization “United Initiatives for Peace” (UIP).

During my graduate studies in Canada, I developed a keen interest in topics that were related to marriage and family, not just from a theological viewpoint but also in terms of practical skills of relationship building. Here were the roots for developing courses on marriage

and family and my activities of conducting relationship and marriage enrichment seminars together with my wife Elisabeth.

After finishing my graduate studies in theology, I moved with my family to Barrytown, New York, where I started a full-time teaching position at UTS and taught for 12 years. While teaching subjects in theology, I also developed an interest in philosophy and the emerging field of science and religion. I also taught courses related to psychology, philosophy, and science at different places such as Marist College (Poughkeepsie), Webster University (Vienna, Austria), and the International University (Vienna, Austria).

Through my teaching career, I found that our True Parents, in their capacity as the second coming of Christ, see us helping each other to realize our unique original potential. We are called to use these original gifts not only on the individual and family levels but also on the level of our common higher purpose to build a peaceful global society in which we will all experience the abundance of divine love.