

3,000 at Belvedere celebrate 40th Anniversary of Yankee Stadium with our Mother

Michael Balcomb
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3,000 Unificationists gathered at the Belvedere Estate in Tarrytown, New York today to celebrate the 40th Anniversary of True Parents' landmark rally at Yankee Stadium on June 1, 1976. Though more than three inches of continuous rain, thunder and lightning was in the forecast, the rain held off right until the very last moment when True Mother left the stage after her speech—and then the heavens really opened and the water came down in sheets.

All this strongly reminded us of that June evening 40 years ago, when torrential rain threatened to wash out the Yankee Stadium rally and our family united and sang “You are My Sunshine” until the clouds rolled away. This time we sang the “Sunshine” song again, and our happy spirit, combined with ample heavenly grace shared by True Mother, somehow managed to hold off the rain just long enough. Hallelujah!



After half an hour of songs and praise led by the New York worship team band, Continental Chair Dr. Ki

Hoon Kim greeted the eager crowd to begin the program:

“We are not here today just to remember that day 40 years ago at Yankee Stadium,” he said, “but to cultivate a new culture of heart and passion. We are very lucky to have True Mother with us. Today, God is calling us. True Parents are calling us. America is also calling us. Let us stand up again and let us respond to these calls. Let us move forward with the spirit of heavenly doctors and firefighters!”



Following a video retrospective of the Yankee Stadium event, three volunteers of the 1976 rally shared their reflections: Mr. Thomas McDevitt, Chair of the Universal Peace Federation USA (or *The Washington Times*); Mrs. Patsy Casino, who sang for the Sunburst Group and Dr. Theodore Shimmyo, past President of the Unification Theological Seminary. All of them shared stories of tears and joy, thinking back to the day when failure looked inevitable but God somehow brought the victory.



Bronx Family Church Pastors Esteban and Lorna Galvan then read a proclamation from Bronx Borough

President Ruben Diaz, Jr. Then Dr. Neil Salonen, the President of the Unification Church back in 1976, came forward to introduce True Mother. “Father did amazing things in those days,” Dr. Salonen said, “and as I worked with him more and more closely, I came to realize just how much he was strengthened by True Mother’s constant support. Since Father’s ascension three years ago, she has stepped forward boldly to keep us all moving toward that heavenly vision. Let us welcome her with all our hearts.”



True Mother got right to the point in her address. “America is a chosen and blessed nation of God,” she said, “and as we all know, with great blessings come great responsibility. America is to be the elder son nation, working with God and keenly aware of his burning desire to build his kingdom right here in America.”

“Yet, somehow, America is in danger of losing its ways. Most of the problems of 1976—youth immorality and family breakdown, secular humanism and individualism, and the declining influence of true religion—are all problems today as they were then. America needs to realize that it must unite with True Parents,

sent by God to be the returning Messiah and the parents who can bring the divided human family back together again!”



After True Mother’s speech, she was presented with a beautiful crystal gift depicting the victories and venues of Yankee Stadium and Washington Monument. In return, she shared some very historical mementos: buttons and ribbons from the 1976 rally. Altogether she prepared 108 sets, saying that the number 108 (9×12) represents the possibilities of a new beginning. Most of these sets will be distributed by lottery with all eligible families who came to Belvedere.



After the program, attention turned to the Festival. Despite the rain, all the food vendors did a brisk trade, and a mountain of food disappeared quickly. The children made their way to the bouncy castles and jousting castles; others visited the boats and tried to catch live fish with their bare hands! Meanwhile the adults took the chance to tour the grounds and the main house, learning about the long history of Belvedere both before and after True Parents had the inspiration to acquire the estate back in 1973.

“Interest was phenomenal,” said Michael Balcomb, President of FFWPU. “I really want to thank the thousands of brothers and sisters who came out to support True Mother and who helped make this day successful. Most of all I want to thank God and True Parents for a truly memorable day. I don’t think anyone who was here will forget the drama! From now we move on to the anniversary of Washington Monument, to 2020 and beyond.”



The following are some reflections from the day:

“The American movement turned out in force to show True Mother our love and support. Despite ominous weather forecasts, the people came prepared and ready to receive our marching orders from True Mother and to celebrate the Yankee Stadium Rally. The event certainly brought back great memories for all the veterans and also gave younger generations the opportunity to experience Unification culture. I heard one young girl say, ‘This is what church should be like every week.’”

–Rev. Kevin Thompson

“I think the rain was an very important ‘guest’ at the event. It played a major role 40 years ago and I think it made today’s celebration more meaningful...and it was polite this time, waiting until True Mother had finished.”

–Rev. Larry Krishnek

“Congratulations to True Mother for a wonderful celebration of the victory 40 years ago of Yankee Stadium! True Mother appears radiant and filled with heavenly grace. Thank you True Mother for reminding us of the preparation of the Han people, and the importance of God’s True Daughter in the great work of restoration.”

–Bill Lay

“What a huge blessing for America. How many countries could have such a privilege? True Mother’s message went straight to the heart of our responsibility.”

–Demian Dunkley

“I’m very inspired by understanding more about Mother and how she was prepared by Heaven. I really do believe that the last 2000 years were spent looking for Christ’s bride since Christ had already come. I was very excited to see her and I’m really happy I came.”

–Arlene Candelaresi

“To True Mother I would say, thank you. Thank you, thank you, thank you. Thank you for sticking with Father. Thank you for growing and learning and manifesting the feminine aspect of God’s heart. And thank you for coming here and talking to us. We love you very much.”

–Michael Candelaresi

“I’m so grateful that True Mother came all the way from Korea to see us. It was so great to see her. Although we were all wondering what the weather today would be, we knew that whatever it was would be okay because we have the history of the Yankee Stadium Rally. Anything that comes—we’ll be ready. I’m so grateful to Heavenly Parent for holding back the rain while True Mother was speaking. I feel so sweetly True Parents’ heart and True Mother’s love for us and how we should really be united with her.”
–Yasuko Kono

“The one thing I would tell True Mother today if I could is, thank you so much for not giving up and staying with True Father, even though it sometimes seemed an impossible course. True Mother is the one who has demonstrated the most faith and the most loyalty and the most commitment in our movement.”
–Chris Bush

“Like the original Yankee Stadium Rally, today was very refreshing—to see the old faces but with new determination. In a way we are going to move on, but we are moving on to do something new, something more.”
–Shinichi Higashibaba