

## Celebrating Europe's First Fiftieth Blessing Anniversary of Eight Couples

Michael Balcomb  
March 28, 2019



Fifty years ago today, our True Parents came to Germany and performed the first Marriage Blessing Ceremony to be held in Europe, in what was to become part of the International ceremony for 43 Couples. At the time, True Father himself was still in his late 40's, and True Mother was a young woman still in her 20's. Those who were blessed on that day were the pioneers of the European Unification Church Movement, men and women of great faith who went on to offer many years of service and dedication to our Heavenly Parent and True Parents, both in Europe and later overseas.

Of those eight couples who were blessed in Essen, exactly half of the participants are still alive, and half have ascended and are now in the spirit world. There are:

Two couples where both spouses are alive (the Kunkels and the Vanderstoks)

Four where one spouse has ascended (the Koch, Werner, Orme, Verheyen families)

Two where both spouses have already ascended (the Vincenzes and the Porters)

Six of these eight ascended in the United States, far away from the country of their birth, and Doris Orme, an American, ascended in Great Britain. Only one, Peter Koch, ascended in his home country. (The Seonghwa details can be viewed by clicking on the underlined hyperlink next to their name)

True Parents always taught us that love is eternal, the most precious thing throughout heaven and earth for both God and for ourselves, saying:

"The invisible love is the greatest among all kinds of love. It would be no fun at all if love were visible. Since love is invisible, it can be the highest, widest, and deepest. Some say love is like the Rocky Mountains or like the Niagara Falls. Those are correct similes. The invisible God is precious because invisible love is precious. It is true that we have to enter the state of the complete absence of ego in order to find God. God lives deeply and quietly in the invisible world rather than in the visible world where we live."

Today our European family pauses to offer our thanks and congratulations to these pioneers of faith, whether in heaven or on earth, and our sincerely best wishes to their families. We all join together in offering gratitude to the True Parents who gave to us all the most precious gift of the Holy Blessing!

Happy Golden Anniversary!

Michael and Fumiko Balcomb,  
Regional Group Chair, Europe and the Middle East

# 50<sup>th</sup> Blessing Anniversary of the 8 Couples in Europe

The European Part of the 43 couples  
Blessing, international extension of the 430  
Couples Blessing

Falkenheim, Essen, Germany  
28<sup>th</sup> of March, 1969





**True Parents with the eight newly blessed couples**

*Back Row (L to R):* Gerhard Kunkel & Romana Maierhofer, Dennis Orme & Doris Walder, Teddy Verheyen & Pauline Philips, Martin Porter & Dawn Faroni *Front Row (L to R):* Johann van der Stok & Elke Klawite, Paul Werner & Christel Werner, Peter Koch & Gertrud G se, Reiner Vincenz & Barbara Koch



True Parents both came on the second visit, accompanied by Rev Hyo Won Eu, Mrs Young Oon Kim, Mrs Won Pok Choi and Mr Osami Kobuki. 60 members had gathered from all over Europe to receive them.



True Parents with members  
at the Holy Ground in Essen.



When we visited the Holy Ground in Essen to pray together, Father let us play a game in the woods, where one partner had to pull the other into “heaven” or into “hell”. (Heaven won!)  
- Gertrud Koch



True Parents in Essen  
Falkenheim, Germany,  
28<sup>th</sup> of March 1969



Father and Mother spoke to the missionaries and Blessing candidates personally and Won Pok Choi translated. We even made a personal confession. Among other things, Father wanted to know whether we had any views about who we could be matched with. It was difficult for True Parents to select an ideal partner for everyone among so few candidates. Most of us were over 40 and everyone was over 30, with many years of experience in the mission.









True Parents are about to grant the Holy Blessing.



Receiving the Holy Wine

The wedding celebration was held in a large hall and all the European members came to join us. Nowadays we would claim that such circumstances were simple, but we were overjoyed at the time, like one large family.



“The blessing was a totally new situation for us. None of the European members had ever experienced a Blessing until then, nor seen a Korean style Blessing robe. I remember Barbara searching the bible to find out what kind of material the robes should be made of.

She found a reference to “white linen” We then went in search of suitable material, but discovered that the only linen available was in yellow, so we decided to buy white cotton. Fortunately Herta, Traudel and Inge, three Austrian sisters were able to sew, and they prepared the rather complicated robes. The crowns for True Parents had to be made of the same material, so True Parents advised us personally on how to sew them.

We discovered who would be blessed with whom only days before the Blessing. Everyone was extremely curious. We couldn't imagine what was going to happen. There were many women but only a few men. Suddenly Johan van der Stok arrived from Holland and I knew that Heavenly Father had chosen him for me. There was so much happiness, beauty and warmth following the magnificent and unforgettable ceremony. One could feel the joy in the air as Father and Mother danced to the heavenly music and the whole community swayed and laughed along with them.”

*- Elke van der Stok*



Elke Klawite & Johann van der Stok with True Parents



Doris Walder & Dennis Orme with True Parents



Dawn Faroni & Martin Porter with True Parents





Gertrud G se & Peter Koch with True Parents



Pauline Philips & Teddy Verheyen with True Parents



Christel Werner & Paul Werner with True Parents



Romana Maierhofer & Gerhard Kunkel with True Parents



Barbara Koch & Reiner Vincenz with True Parents

Left: True Parents' signed the photo album containing the Blessing pictures.

Right: The signatures of the eight blessed couples.

1969.4.7  
2 103  
Sam Young Moon  
Wale ga Han, Ohoon  
2/2 2/4 2/1

Wongpak Chai (1913 2/24)  
1917.4.1  
Ngovan Bu  
Asami Sulehaci  
~~Wongpak Chai~~  
Peter King  
Rene Fournier  
Dennis F. O'Connell  
Flora Pat  
Bernard V. Kinnear  
Carol Wynn  
Dariusz W. Szymanski  
Elke van der Stok  
Kamona Kumbel  
Louise O'Connell  
Dave Tosti

