

## UTS Graduation: Secure Your Spiritual Anchor and Find Creative Ways Forward

Ki Hoon Kim  
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*Dr. Ki Hoon Kim's Commencement Address to the Unification Theological Seminary Class of 2020*

Congratulations to the UTS class of 2020, and congratulations to our Unification Theological Seminary on its 44th commencement ceremony!

As a fellow UTS graduate, it is my honor to recognize the Class of 2020 and to express appreciation to Father and Mother Moon, our Founders, for having made the bold decision to create this institution in 1975 both to train Unification leaders and to enhance dialogue with the Christian community of faith and other believers.

Our graduation this year is unique and unprecedented. The world is suffering through a global pandemic due to COVID 19 and UTS is conducting its first ever virtual ceremony. In many ways, I feel sorry for this year's graduates. You put in hard effort over the past two or more years. Normally, graduation is an occasion when parents, relatives and friends gather to celebrate your great accomplishment with you. Normally, you would receive your graduation diploma in your hand, pose for many photos, greet your professors, say goodbye to classmates, and enjoy a wonderful reception with lots of food.

Unfortunately, all of that is missing this year.

We are truly in a time of tribulation. COVID-19 has claimed more than 300,000 lives worldwide, more than 88,000 in the United States and 22,000 in New York City, the home of UTS, which is the global epicenter of the pandemic. In the United States, 1,149 colleges and universities closed their doors in early

April, affecting more than 14,000 students. According to one publication, the Class of 2020 has become the Class of Covid-19!

The entire world has been on lockdown and this is negatively affecting the economy. More than 33 million Americans have filed unemployment claims. Social isolation, job loss and grief over the death of loved ones is leading to psychological strain and even political unrest. Some communities have staged protests over stay-at-home orders and business closures. There has been a rise in Sinophobia and incidents of abuse directed at Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders.

The question is, "What Shall We Do?"

I suggest two responses. First, we must secure our spiritual anchors. To do so, it's important to recognize that tribulation is never too far from people of faith. Sometimes tribulation is universal as with COVID 19. Sometimes it targets only believers as in religious violence or persecution. Sometimes, it strikes individuals. such as Job, a blameless and upright man in the Hebrew Bible who loses everyone and everything he cares about. But other times, people of faith freely choose tribulation and identify with those who suffer. Rev. Sun Myung Moon, the co-founder of UTS endured torture under colonial Japan and suffered for years as a prisoner of conscience in North Korea, South Korea, and the United States. He had as his lifelong motto, "Let us go forward in the shoes of a servant, shedding sweat for earth, tears for mankind and blood for heaven." Our Seminary co-Founder Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon was born at the height of World War II and endured years as a refugee both during and after the Korean War. She has stated, "On your way to heaven you must expect to experience not only the heavenly side, but also the dungeons of hell; in the end, what you go through in hell will be the most precious part of God's grace."

Still, suffering with humanity or even with God is not the last word.

After securing our spiritual anchor, the second response to COVID 19 must be to find creative ways forward. Many colleges and graduate schools, including UTS, are finding creative ways to honor their graduates this year. I know a great deal of work has gone into our seminary's virtual ceremony. Schools have also found new ways to educate. This has been seamless for UTS. UTS has already launched its first full-online distance learning degree program, its first MOOC or Massive Open Online Course, has Zoom technology in place and has extended beyond its borders through online Faculty Roundtables. Churches have adopted online worship services and are facilitating interaction through social media.

Mother Moon spent 55 days in deep prayer and devotion during the height of coronavirus. Afterwards, she spoke publicly on the occasion of her and Father Moon's 60th wedding anniversary in April. She advised the worldwide Unification community to "reflect on, review, repent for and improve" their daily lives. But more than that, she announced several new initiatives and commitments. She declared the establishment of Heavenly Parent's Holy Community "where all people and all spheres of life, whether political, religious, economic or ideological, can all gather under one banner." She expressed determination that while she is on the earth, "at least one third of the 7.7 billion people around the world should practice living in the kingdom of heaven on earth by knowing and attending [our] Heavenly Parent." She also announced that she will oversee completion of a great museum and sanctuary complex in Korea by 2023.

I say this not only to elevate Mother Moon but to encourage you, our UTS graduates, to be bold in your sphere of life and ministry. If Mother Moon, at age 77 can break new ground, surely you can do so also. In this unique and unprecedented time, make a firm resolve to be victorious in your field of endeavor or the field of endeavor into which God leads you. Secure your spiritual anchor and find creative ways forward. God bless you all and God bless UTS!