

A New Culture, testimony given at Sun Myung Moon Christian Crusade's Celebration of Life

Marion Dougherty [Porter]
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Throughout this moving and colorful production, our greatest fulfillment is in meeting you and having a chance to share with you how we have come together in the Celebration of Life. Beyond the music, we want to extend our deep friendship, love, and relationship with God and Christ.

We feel we are truly at a turning point in history today. More than ever before, people are seeking something new, something to bring together science and spirituality. In the last fifty years science has progressed at such a tremendous pace that our cycle of history has gone faster than in all the history of man, to the point where we can even harness energy itself-at least externally.

But I doubt that this will help our ability to understand the nature of man, internal reality, and communicate who we are, why we are here, and what is our standard of value. Up to now, religion has served as a stepping stone of understanding to bring together the external and internal realities. But we are fast approaching the time when our faith and knowledge need replenishing and reviving to raise our understanding to meet God with spirituality. Even Einstein said before he died that if he could live his life again, he would study the matters of the mind, for herein lies the potential of man.

We feel that we are beginning to fulfill the turning point in history and that this is really a great time to be alive, because we are witnessing history in the making. Jesus said, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs shall be the Kingdom of God." Never before has there been such an evidence of spiritual hunger and seeking an internal value to apply in our everyday life. Many people coming from many different backgrounds, seeking that kind of understanding have linked arms in the Unification Church.

When I was younger, being brought up in a small town in New Jersey, life seemed very orderly, but it was difficult for me to understand the terminology of Christians. I used to ask my many friends who were Episcopalians, Methodists, etc., how they came to believe in Jesus Christ. Many of them gave different explanations. But in no way could I find in those explanations a day-to-day, hour-to-hour way of thinking and understanding.

Two years later an unusual experience took place in my life that opened up a way to a different course. During my art classes in college, my instructor who was a very deeply religious and Christian person would give us lectures while we were painting and provide a very pleasant spiritual atmosphere with music. While I was painting one day I became completely lost and forgot myself in what was happening there. I don't know how much time went by, but when I stepped back and looked at what was created, I was amazed, because the colors and design really didn't come out of my own capacity. I asked my teacher what this might be, and she said, "You had an inspiration.

This is a manifestation of a relationship with God." In her opinion, it was an experience of being in the presence of God. I thought, if only this could happen every day of my life-this kind of creativity. How wonderful, how happy, how fulfilling our lives would be. After that time, it was quite difficult to stimulate that experience again.

A few years later, in California, a birth of a new culture took place. Many of you remember that time. The year 1960 started with a dynamic prayer breakfast in Washington, D.C. where President Kennedy and Billy Graham came together in a fervent prayer for the nation. President Kennedy said, "Don't ask what your country can do for you, but ask what you can do for your country."

That was the hope for the beginning of the 60's. In California, all tradition was stepping aside and new ways of living were coming to play in Los Angeles and all up and down the coast. A new street life

began, and new community living.

The basic question was "how shall we live?" There seemed to be a new freedom born that caused people to break away from the established, conventional living they knew and seek out something different. A new culture began in Haight Ashbury, San Francisco, where young people were trying to find a way of life that would revolve around friendship and love of one another. Their motives seemed pure and good, but with the approaching drug problem, they lost their original concept.

Then in 1963 a tremendous impact on the whole nation occurred with the assassination of President Kennedy. All the aspirations of the 60's came crashing down with the unprecedented event. Many people turned inward to question the true values of life. What was it that we were missing? Why were we breaking down on the individual and family levels? Why was it that in the face of so many scientific discoveries, so much physical enjoyment and perfection, we were crumbling inside?

I will never forget that week. It was one of the first Sundays I attended church, along with many thousands of non-churchgoers. The minister had little sympathy with those who attended that morning and he challenged us to find the will of God, that if we were humble at the brink of the 21st century, we would realize that we could not save ourselves but must turn to the Creator. I will never forget those words. Prayer had been very remote throughout my life, but I found myself needing to pray that morning. The minister said that the time would come when mankind will no longer survive in the free world under the banner of being a Presbyterian, Methodist, or Catholic but that the world would only survive when we can unite in one body under the one Christ throughout the world.

Throughout the rest of that year, through the questioning and discussion that took place among myself and my friends, it became increasingly clear that whatever we had in our lives was not fulfilling to us, but a compromise or contradiction, and that there was a fundamental importance we were all missing. Many of my friends turned to their personal goals -- a career, family life -- but no longer concerned themselves with anything that didn't touch their immediate lives.

Feeling kind of discouraged, isolated, and disappointed, I broke away and left the United States, taking up studies in Rome, Italy. There was an even greater challenge in arriving in a foreign country -- not only the language problem, but realizing that the shattered life experience in America was also spreading in Europe. The hippie movement that had begun in Los Angeles and San Francisco was also spreading throughout Rome and Europe. The divisions that I had seen in the families and government in America were also happening in Italy. It was also the time of elections, that year, and it was astounding to see 45 percent vote Communist, in northern Italy. This was never reported in American papers, but it was a shock to the Italians and Americans who were there.

The ecumenical movement was at its peak in Rome, and I began attending the American church there, where different denominations were all present to study the Bible. They were discussing challenging, fundamental questions concerning Christ's mission, the origin of human suffering, what to expect in the future. We were trying to revive our faith and be re-motivated towards helping mankind. But all the diversities and interpretations of the symbols of the Bible were only more confusing to us, preventing us from uniting in a true brotherhood. I met a Catholic girl who was attending classes, and she invited me to come and meet a unique group that was also under a Bible study program. She said it was a different kind of study, because these people were coming together to hear a new revelation that had been given to a modern-day prophet and missionary who was now conveying the message in many languages. I was surprised to hear the word revelation being used in our time, as I had read the word only in the last book of the Bible, and the symbols and parables had been so complex that I couldn't imagine how God would speak through man today. But she really encouraged me to go with her to the group, so I went.

At the meeting, aside from the warmth and genuine love of the people there, I was struck by the many varied backgrounds, not only religious, but nonreligious, who had all come together in a common concern to know God, to know the reality of the living God. I had never heard such a prayer as this family prayed that evening. It was so fervent, so moving and so familiar with God. Even new people who were there for the first time felt a kind of freedom and a bond of friendship with one another. It was a very deep and revealing truth to all of us. After that evening, for the first time, I began to pray sincerely to God, to find out who was God and how was He moving in our time. In a few days I had a wonderful, real experience of His presence in my life, speaking to my heart, and revealing that God is and has been planning for us. Even more than we have been seeking God, either consciously or unconsciously, God has been seeking for man. Soon I joined the work these people were doing, convinced that they were true-from their hearts, from their lives, and in every way they were fulfilling the will of God.

Tonight, later on in the program, you will have the opportunity to hear directly the divine revelation received by Reverend Sun Myung Moon, who struggled through many long years of study and prayer to give this answer to man. And I hope tonight that you have come, expecting, and open to the presence of God to move among us, and regenerate our hearts in an open expression of the unity and brotherhood.

Thank you for coming.