

## FFWPU USA: Remembering True Father's Danbury Release on August 20, 1985

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"If I am to get people who are in the valley of tears to repent, then I must first shed tears," wrote True Father in his bestselling autobiography, *As a Peace-Loving Global Citizen* (2009). "Unless I first experience such a wretched heart, I cannot get others to submit themselves to God. Heaven really works in mysterious ways. After I was imprisoned, 7,000 ministers and other religious leaders accused the U.S. government of violating religious freedom and began an effort to save me."

Thirteen months after wrongful imprisonment for tax evasion, on August 20, 1985 True Father was released from a Danbury Prison. On this 37th anniversary, we remember and celebrate True Father's release, a resurrective and defining moment of the Unification movement.

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An exemplary inmate, True Father's sentence was reduced by six months for good behavior, and he spent the last 43 days of his sentence at a halfway house in Brooklyn. On the evening of his release, 1,600 clergy and prominent figures gathered at the Omni Shoreham Hotel in Washington, DC, to welcome True Father back at a "God and Freedom" Banquet. Twenty prominent clergy, including Rev. Jerry Falwell, head of the Moral Majority, and Rev. Joseph Lowery, president of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) - leaders typically at opposite ends of the religious-political spectrum - held a joint news conference earlier that day to decry government encroachment upon religion and called upon President Ronald Reagan to pardon True Father.

In his banquet speech, True Father expressed his deep appreciation to supporters, as well as his resolute determination to relieve God's suffering. He called upon all leaders to transcend denominationalism and sincerely consider the mission of Christianity to lead a global cultural revolution. Below is an excerpt from True Father's Aug. 20 speech as we honor this historical victory and his enduring legacy of love.

*I have suffered imprisonment six times in my life. As in the past, I had moving experiences with God during this time in prison. I was not there because of my personal actions or mistakes, yet I did not brood with resentment or hatred for those who persecuted me, nor did I spend my time in prison pleading my innocence. Rather, I dedicated my time in prison to prayer and meditation to understand what America needs to do to fulfill God's Will for the world.*

*The determination which underlies my whole ministry and life is to relieve the great and long suffering of God. Since the world is ignorant of God's heart of suffering, my work and the work of the Unification movement have long been misunderstood and persecuted. However, I understand the urgency of my mission before God... Throughout my life I have communicated deeply with God, and through numerous spiritual experiences I have come to know His heart and His love. I have always testified to this...*

*America is a nation founded on the spirit and love of God... Unfortunately this country continues to ignore the monumental Will of God. America is withdrawing more and more from its global responsibilities, preferring to enjoy false comfort as if this nation were a world unto itself. This attitude, of course, merely multiplies America's problems, both within and outside its borders... Christianity must repent with great anguish, and must unite. We clergy must re-examine ourselves and also repent. We are reliving the time when Jesus came to earth and called the world to repentance. That call is being repeated now. We must fulfill the world mission which God has bestowed upon us. Without question, America must change. A new religious reformation must take place. Christianity must transcend denominationalism and ascend to a higher dimension.*

You can learn more about True Father's extraordinary life in his autobiography available [here](#).



# Never Defeated: Father Moon and Danbury



“Many of us remember it like it was yesterday, we remember the heart and attitude that True Father demonstrated throughout that time, and the bravery and courage of our True Mother,” said Dr. Thomas Ward. “[True Father’s imprisonment] was such a sad day for our movement’s founders, America, and Christianity. It was a heavy and difficult time, but True Father assured us that he would never be defeated, nor abandon his course.”

Dr. Ward was among Unificationist leaders who spoke in the July 19 virtual program, “Never Defeated: Father Moon and Danbury,” which honored the 38th anniversary of True Father’s unjust imprisonment at Danbury prison on July 20, 1984. Some 525 Unificationists from around the world joined the program organized by the Unification Theological Seminary (UTS), FFWPU USA, and TribeNet.

An historic interview with Dr. Peter Kim, senior advisor to UPF International and longtime personal assistant to True Parents, was conducted by Dr. Thomas Walsh, UTS president and UPF International chairman. Dr. Kim recounted his personal experiences with True Parents as the caretaker of their children, as well as the time of True Father’s 1982 trial for alleged tax evasion and his wrongful conviction two years later.

“I would always be the first person to sign up for visitation to see True Father [at the prison],” said Dr. Kim, who quickly got a condo in Danbury to be close by. “I’d go in and we’d sit on a bench. Sometimes True Mother would also join us, as well as other leaders ... She was his number one supporter, praying every day and every night.”

Dr. Kim, who lost his own father during the Korean War at age four, described True Father as the father figure he

never had. “Until I graduated from high school, I never said the word ‘father,’” shared Dr. Kim. “When I learned the *Divine Principle* in 1965, I really fell in love with the word ‘father’ ... this word really lit me up.”

Dr. Kim recounted his trip to Danbury prison before True Father’s incarceration and the heart-wrenching realization that followed. “I talked to the warden about the next steps True Father had to take. By the end of the meeting, I almost knelt down on the concrete floor of his office and begged him, out of my ignorance and foolishness, that I could stay and be imprisoned with True Father. I was so desperate to protect him because of all the criminals at the prison.”

The grave reality of True Father’s imprisonment struck many people, who struggled with such injustice and religious persecution occurring in America. “I was critical of the prosecutor, the judge, and even, in a way, True Father’s lawyers,” said UTS Prof. William Lay. “But I had the impression that True Father didn’t really look at it that way. I had the sense he wasn’t blaming anyone and he was viewing this ordeal from a higher perspective.”

“I remember how shocked I was to see True Father dressed in an old military uniform in prison,” shared Dr. Walsh. “But I saw how much he totally invested in the people who were there with him. He gave them so much inspiration and hope ... I marvel at how much True Father accomplished in the midst of this tornado of difficulty.”

True Father persevered through his incarceration with a forgiving heart of kindness and service. Mopping floors and scrubbing toilets, he was a model inmate who personally touched fellow prisoners and guards. In and out of Danbury, a deep respect for True Father emerged, as a number of inmates studied the *Divine Principle* and Bible with him, and supporters rallied on his behalf.

“True Father had a regular stream of visitors, including political and religious leaders,” said Dr. Walsh. “There was an outpouring of support among Christian and religious leaders who were calling out the injustice.”

“What True Father accomplished with this incarceration was three-fold,” said Dr. Kim. “He laid a foundation for the revival of Christianity and our members’ unity by sacrificing himself; he brought all the True Children together with internal unity by going through this course, and, all this clearly showed the kind of person True Father really was.”

Nearly 40 years later, the powerful effects of True Father’s sacrificial heart remain. “True Father decided to accept prison and love America even more,” said Dr. Chong Sik Yong, FFWPU regional president of North America. “We should never forget this. Let us never forget True Parents’ willingness to give everything to save America and all humanity.”

You can learn more about True Father’s life course in his autobiography available [here](#).