

Message from the new President of Unification Theological Seminary

Thomas J. Ward
October 11, 2019



It is my pleasure to greet you as the new President of Unification Theological Seminary.

Academic year 2019-2020 is upon us. Having devoted more than a third of my life to working with learners to navigate matriculation, curricula, internships, as well as career and graduate study preparations, I know that our lives are punctuated by yearly cycles of nature. For us, the content of each season represents more than spring blossoms or the variegated colors in the autumn leaves. Each measured passage of time should testify to the ways in which we ourselves have grown and been transformed through concerted self-investment during a given time lapse.

2020 is a momentous year that remind us of this. 2020 marks the 100th anniversary of Reverend Sun Myung Moon's birth, a man who invested himself fully throughout his earthly life for God and humankind. What were the odds of a young boy born in 1920 in the countryside of an impoverished, colonized Korea setting up an accredited seminary in New York some 50 years later?

Not only have Rev. Sun Myung Moon and UTS Co-Founder Hak Ja Han Moon set an example of how to fill each season of life with achievement and growth. In studying their lives, we learn that they have driven and sacrificed themselves because of a deep awareness of the need to use their lives in such a way that humankind and God alike could be liberated from suffering, anxiety, and regret.

Used wisely, your time at UTS will prepare you to engage the world. Your time at UTS may be one of the last opportunities to equip yourself for the future. Some Church historians do not believe that St. Paul immediately went from Damascus to preaching in Thessalonica and Corinth. Paul may have spent as much as a decade preparing himself prior to beginning his public ministry. The Apostle Paul learned to preach and correspond with each of his early Christian communities with pinpoint accuracy and content germane to each community's circumstances.

The Roman Empire of Paul's time was sophisticated philosophically, religiously, culturally and scientifically. For centuries, the Greeks and Romans had begun to see their gods and goddesses as mythical rather than real figures. Society had grown increasingly secularized and, after Caesar Augustus, the centrality of family and classical virtues had begun to diminish. Even within Judaism, some Sadducees saw religion as more of a source of social stability than Divine inspiration.

As we enter academic year 2019-2020, we are reminded every day that we also live in a time, which although more complex than that of Paul, remains torn by spiritual vagaries and moral confusion. Society today needs visionaries, like Paul, who can not only point to the Light but do so in a way that elevates humanity.

Like it or not, much of the renewal of today's world will fall on Unification scholars. This time you spend at UTS is thus your time of preparation. My prayer is that you and I, as well, can already be a more refined instrument of truth and goodness when, next March, Heavenly Parent and nature burst forth with a new spring and the beauty of nature that accompanies it.

If I may offer you some advice on best practices to enhance your growth and success:

1. Introduce yourself to your Professors. They want to get to know you.
2. Meet your Academic Advisor in the first month and work to map out a plan for what you see as your definition of success at UTS and in life.
3. Do not miss classes.
4. Review and respect the syllabus of each course and submit your assignments for each course in a timely manner.
5. Do not procrastinate.
6. Do not just write papers to get a good grade from your professor. Grapple with ideas and content and write with the intention of being someone who can make a difference in the world and contribute to the well-being of Heaven and Earth.
7. Treat with respect and become a colleague to each of your fellow students and your professors.
8. Discover your strengths while you are at UTS and build on these so that you may leave here prepared to make a difference in the world.

God bless you and thank you so much for becoming a part of the UTS family!

With Respect and Expectation,

Thomas J. Ward
President, Unification Theological Seminary