

The passing of Annemarie Bichsel: A Dream on the morning of the Seonghwa Ceremony

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By Carolyn Handschin

I'd been thinking so deeply about the unclear circumstances of the passing of our elder and beloved sister

Annemarie Bichsel. We were very close and had worked together in many ways over many years: in pastoral care for members, as WFWP-Switzerland President and in her long work as coordinator (and motivator) of our Swiss National Prayer Group.

Knowing that I would be speaking in front of our community at her Seonghwa, I was desperately trying to understand what I could say to comfort everyone and bring some clarity. The facts were few: she was found in the Rhine river on the French side after being missing for 4-6 days. The Rhine is known for being a strongly moving river with many currents and even strong swimmers are cautioned. Annemarie has a hearing aid and difficulty with her knees.

She had attended the first Swiss Special Grace and Holy Items Bequeathing workshop and ceremony at the end of October- and clearly more than ever strong in her faith. Since then, she had ongoing communication by email and telephone with several Swiss members, including Heiner up to a few days before she went missing. Her last known conversation was with the Swiss WFWP President who called to check on her, as some members often did, knowing she lived alone. At the end of the

conversation when Goya asked if she could do anything, Annemarie said, "Please just pray that all goes well".

DREAM:

On the day of the Seonghwa ceremony that was being held at our Swiss Peace Embassy, I had a dream in the early morning that woke me with a shock. In this very vivid dream many brothers and sisters from all over the world were together on a moving bus. The weather was changing and it was raining. There was a sense of mission, like from our early days and the crowd was vibrant and excited- and united. But it was raining hard outside and then Annemarie appeared and asked if she could drive the bus through this storm. Then she was in the drivers seat and we bumped and bounced around over the winding road, but the storm worsened and at one moment we got stuck and couldn't go forward. The crowd in the bus became quiet and serious.

Without being able to stop her, she opened the door of the bus and said to us that she would fix the problem and be right back. She didn't come back. I was in the front seat and could see that she was trying to pull some debris in the pouring rain and tried to cover a hole in the ground. I could see the determination and single-mindedness in her expression and body language. Then suddenly a wave/ like a waterfall of rushing water came and pulled her into the current. I could feel it like it was

happening to me. And while there was an element of something unexpected happening- the overwhelming feeling was one of peace and calm and I had the impression that it was not my feeling, but hers as she was pulled away.

And, as is our experience at Seonghwa Ceremonies, it was so moving to hear testimonies from so many about her incredible dedication and love for Heavenly Parent, True Parents, members and also, very much, for God's children not yet reached. We all learned many aspects of her life and faith that we didn't know before. I was reminded of True Father's words, that the Seonghwa ceremony at the close of our physical life is meant to be more joyful and beautiful than that of our Blessing day. It was hard for me to understand the first time I heard that.

There were quite a few who had never been to a Seonghwa Ceremony before, especially 2nd gen (unfortunately many not in the closing photo), who were so deeply moved by this experience. Our of our daughters who had to leave a little earlier because of a school project, told us later that she had spent part of the afternoon describing our ceremony to the mother of the girl in whose home they were studying. She, still quite young, but just overcame cancer, was seemingly so appreciative of how we celebrate lives of people passing into the spirit world.