

Celebrating the Lunar New Year in Korea in 1989

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In 1989, after I was blessed, I stayed in Korea for 3 months. The lunar New Year was celebrated during that time. I learned to say "happy new year" in Korean (saehae bok mani badeuseyo) and have enjoyed being able to say it ever since.

It is a huge holiday in Korea. Everyone is on the move, traveling to their hometowns. It is

comparable to Christmas or Thanksgiving here. I was staying in a small church centered in the south with 5 other sisters. We traveled with our Moksanim (church leader) and his family to visit his parents a few hours away. A day or two after we returned Moksanim told us we had been invited to a church member's house for a New Year's meal. Though the house was small, the table was set with an enormous amount of food. All the standard Korean dishes we are familiar with plus many many more. Korean moms are similar to quintessential Jewish moms, with lots of encouragement to "eat, eat, eat." So we did.

We returned to the church, stuffed to the gills. About an hour later our beloved Moksanim came in and told us that we'd soon be leaving to go to another member's house for yet another New Year's meal that had been prepared with the equal amount of sincerity, love and an expectation that we would "eat, eat, eat"!! That meal was tortuous!

Nevertheless, when the lunar new year comes, I am reminded of that time, and now with HMart I can buy a reasonable amount of Korean food and enjoy it with loved ones. Yesterday, I did just that and it was wonderful.

In Korea, the lunar new year is about sharing love with your family. Growing up in America, in my family, Valentine's Day was also like that, (though without the emphasis on eating). We all would hand make Valentine's Day cards for one another. In our house Valentine's wasn't just about romantic love. It really was about the 4 great realms of heart. My mom and dad had cards for us and we for them, I had cards for my siblings (all 5 of them) and they for me. My dad brought candy for my mom, which she shared with all of us. When my grandfather was alive he would arrive dressed as a postman and have one of those cards with slots for coins for each one of us. Ten slots for 10 dimes, almost \$10 dollars in today's money. Each family member's love for the other was creatively expressed in what they made and gave to each other.

Wanting to share that kind of heart yesterday (before the HMart trip) I bought some flowers and made small arrangements for everyone living in the Boston Church. While we have been quarantined, they have continued to take care of the building, whether it be helping Hiroi-san with his projects, sweeping the stairs, or shoveling snow. So I wanted to say thank you and show them some love. I also made a big bouquet and brought it to Tina Saxon, who I haven't seen in months. (She and George recovered from Covid and are getting their vaccines)

Reflecting on the past and the present, I am filled with gratitude that we have so many ways to experience love with each other.

Have a wonderful weekend