

My Testimony

Marie Mikhael Bond
August 14, 2021



My family was a middle-class family living on a monthly paycheck. We never owned a house or a land or even a car. But We had everything our need. Good food, nice clothes, holiday gifts and celebrations and mostly we were surrounded by relatives, good neighbors and wonderful friends. My father was from Beirut and open to western culture, he worked all his life as an accountant. Her mother came from a village from a traditional family known with their honesty and generosity. He have 3 children; I was loved dearly by my parents and he trusted me in my choices. I attended private catholic schools despite it was expensive pour my parents.

I didn't feel we were missing anything and when the war started in 1975, that what kept us strong and positive. Every time the fighting starts mostly in Beirut, we escape to Baskinta, my mother's hometown where it was peaceful and serene.

While I was growing, I was thinking a lot about God. I remembered praying fervently with a sincere heart telling God that there is no meaning for my life if I didn't do something for him. I

wanted to contribute in building a better world centered upon God. I has a dream that I had when I was around 15 years old. In the dream I saw a saint from Lebanon named saint Charbel who came and asked her to become a catholic nun. Then I saw myself getting married with someone that I didn't see my face. Saint Charbel was there and instead of being upset that I didn't become a nun he was very happy saying God bless you, God bless you.

I met Vera the first day in college during the orientation, in October 1981. She chose to major in Journalism and Mass Communication. She became good friends as they studied together for four years at Lebanese University of Journalism and Documentation.

During our time in college, Vera lost her only brother in a tragic accident. He was only 14 years old when he went with his father and cousin to his village where he picked up something from the field and put it in his pocket. It was a hand grenade and it exploded killing him instantly at home in front of his sisters and mother. The family was devastated. Vera and her two sisters tried their best to comfort his parents and support them. Although she was the second daughter, Vera took the position of the eldest in her family and took in charge to help her father running his grocery store by driving him to buy his products and work in his store besides finishing her college. She was a big support for her family.

It was Christmas 1980 when someone knocked on our door one evening. The country was in the midst of a civil war. He was selling Christmas cards. His name was Adel. Although he knocked on so many doors before, but I was the one who invited him to come inside and offered him tea and start asking him all kind of questions. I was searching in my life of faith and I found that Adel is more than a salesman. He was a man of a deep faith and carried within him a deep love to God and a sacrificial spirit to serve his fellow man. He promised to come back.

Six months have passed. I thought he forgot but he didn't. This time he came back with another brother named Alfred and later another brother joined them as well. His name was Sabah. She found out that a French missionary, Rémi Blanchard, came to Lebanon around 1970 and lived for few years in the country and witnessed to some of the brothers.

Adel started teaching me Divine Principle. There was no center so I used to go for a picnic with those brothers where Adel Fouad Jamati brings his guitar and they sang holy songs and she listened to a lecture.

Our parents loved the brothers. They trusted us and they let me go with us. my mother used to cook dinner for us and enjoy our visit to my house. But as the country was in war, many times my family escaped to the village and stay there for many months until the situation calm down. Meanwhile, the brothers left for France to join the church there doing fundraising and witnessing and I didn't see them for

long time. Adel use some time to come and visit I in college so I introduced Vera to him. She liked Adel and she felt that he had good values. But the most one that really inspired Vera was our regional central figure, Thomas Cromwell. Vera was interested to connect to international people and to travel and visit places. Thomas invited her to come with me to Greece for 21 days workshop so she came.

In 1984, I went with Adel to Greece to attend a 7-day Divine Principle workshop and one morning I woke up remembering a dream that I had when I was around 15 years old. In the dream I saw a saint from Lebanon named saint Charbel. In that time I didn't understand the dream. Does the saint want me to be a nun or to be married? But when I attended the workshop, I understood that the saint wanted me to not have relationship until I got blessed.

In the same year, I decided to leave home after I graduated from college and join Adel and a Japanese couple, the Narihatas, as a full-time member. I was very inspired to join an international group whose the main purpose was to serve the community and reach out to all denominations encouraging us to communicate and work together for a peaceful world centered upon God. I started going fundraising with Adel selling small prints. As I joined the church in 1984, Vera started visiting her often in the center. It was a peaceful place for her to rest and meditate. Bit by bit, she started coming more often and staying much longer until one day she decided to leave home and join her to become a full-time member within a year.

My first dream about True Father was right when I became a full-time member. I saw him coming and pushing me strongly to the ground and when I turned back, I saw him get shot on his shoulder. Despite he was trying to protect me, still he felt so sorry for pushing me down.

Every summer, our region organized a Divine Principle workshop where both missionaries and young members came together from different parts of the Middle East either to Greece, where our church headquarter were, or to Turkey as many Iranian members could attend easily. It was the highlight of our yearly activities. We met young people from different countries and different cultures and religions and came to know us and understand us and communicate with respect and appreciation to our beliefs and to our traditions.

In that time, Pauline came to join Adel as they were blessed in Madison Square Garden 1982. A sister from New Zealand who was fundraising in United States, Pauline brought with her oil painting canvas and suggested to Adel to sell them during fundraising instead of the printing pictures which brought a little profit. I started going fundraising with Vera every day selling the paintings door to door. It was a big hit. The Lebanese fell in love with the painting and the profit was high. Fundraising in Lebanon was a very good experience. Despite the country was in war, the Lebanese people were optimistic and generous by nature. They liked to decorate their houses even when the situation of the country was unsafe and unpredictable. And they will never shut the door in our face. They would always welcome I and even if they didn't buy, they would offer me coffee or tea with cookies or fruits. I fundraised with Vera for almost 5 years and from the fundraising money our could buy a center.

For five years, since I joined the movement in Lebanon in 1984 until I left to Korea in 1989, Vera and I together with Adel and Pauline, joined by new friends and members like Adel Habr and Khaled Ashour (who was a Muslim) were very active in serving our community by fundraising, attending workshops and seminars in Greece and Turkey, involving our parents and our neighbors and friends to participate in conferences and lectures and meeting people from different ethnicities and backgrounds.

In January 1989, I left Lebanon on my way to Korea as the first Lebanese sister to attend the blessing and start a new chapter in my life. 1989 was a very difficult year in Lebanon. The country again engulfed in an endless fighting and clashes between different denominations and outsiders. In January, Beirut airport closed as the bombardment escalated in the city. The only way to leave the country was through Cypress by taking an overnight boat. From Cypress, I flew to Singapore and stayed two days in a hotel then took the flight to Seoul. It was the first time that she flew all by myself and the first time to see True Parents other than in my dreams.

I arrived in Korea on January 8 and next day the matching began. We are at McCol factory. I remembered feeling very peaceful and at ease. I was confident that True Father would find the right match for me.

Almost an hour has passed when True Father approached to me. How old are you? True Father asked, 28 I said. He picked me up and took me for a matching. I didn't look at the brother's face but at True Father. I saw him very happy and satisfied from matching him as like his ancestors were really clapping from such a successful match. As they left the room, I looked at the brother's face and said: "I am very happy". He said: "me too". We went and signed up our acceptance to True Father's choice of their partner before we started talking to each other. Both of we were on the same page. Whoever True Father chose, we would accept. His name was Larry Bond, he came from United States. I told him: "My name is Marie Therese Mikhael. I am a sister from Lebanon. I will try my best to love you and comfort you." Within two days, I received the blessing.