

My Unificationist Memoirs Chapter 21

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As I reflect again on my Mendocino experience with True Father, the image of a comet keeps coming to mind. As Father's light swept through me, I felt loved, energized, and inspired. The experience occurred in a moment but flashed into eternity. In the days that followed, events unfolded with similar rapidity and relational depth.

Monsignor Gaffey approached me and asked if I would take responsibility for the "Renew" program at St. Eugene's. Renew was a nationwide program started by the US Conference of Catholic Bishops, which involved setting up small prayer and study groups in each parish throughout the American dioceses, to revive the Catholic faith in a small community setting, in preparation for the New Millennium. Monsignor Gaffey, by now very familiar with my background, thought that my training in the Unification Church and my

experience as a church director would be ideal for the task at hand. Of course, I readily agreed. It's important to note here, Monsignor Gaffey and later, Bishop Ziemann, never asked me to take a theological litmus test to check where my loyalties might lie. Monsignor Gaffey served as my confessor as well as my pastor. He had spent time in discussion with me, felt my sincerity of heart, and knew firsthand my commitment to the community. I did not disappoint him.

I immediately set to work by forming a trinity with two other volunteers who were interested in organizing the parish into small Christian communities. One, a former Army Ranger and West Point graduate ('74), was the president of a high tech company. The other, a retired Navy pilot, Vietnam veteran, and Naval Academy graduate ('68), managed a drug and alcohol rehabilitation program. We clicked. Needless to say, our organizational skill sets were pretty strong. Very soon, we divided the parish into small groups and launched the three year program at St. Eugene's. Importantly, no one was able to choose their own group. The spiritual revival sought to break down comfort zones and get the participants to make new friends and broaden their associations.

Without any influence other than the work of the spiritual world, my "home" group included a Chinese-American couple (he was a Yale and Stanford trained cardiologist, she, a lawyer); an artist and teacher from Cardinal Newman High School of Cuban descent, married to a Chinese American from Los Angeles; a Dominican nun who was a classmate of my aunt's at St. Rose High School ('48) in San Francisco; a Catholic priest who had studied in Rome and then worked on reservations; and finally, an entrepreneur who had started a wonderful bakery, married to an audiologist. We met nearly every week for three years, during Advent and Lent. We studied scripture together, prayed, and began our discussions along suggested topic lines, but then, opened up our worlds to each other in wide ranging conversations. We made a point of meeting and attending the same Mass every Sunday. It became very clear as we met, God inspired and informed our hearts as our relationships unfolded.

The Renew concept involved diocesan and parish level activities, as well as the small group meetings. During these years, I often was called upon to speak at the Sunday Masses or diocesan events. My practice was to take one of True Father's early sermons on Jesus and rework it for my own presentation. Without fail, people would have deep experiences as the words resonated with their hearts and drew them into more profound understandings of the mission of Jesus. At first I felt reluctant to rewrite Father's sermons, but my hesitation vanished as the words took root and bore fruit. I also introduced a number of Holy Songs to the liturgy committee, which were adopted by the choir and sung at different liturgies, especially over the Lenten Season.



My work in the parish expanded out from Renew to a spiritual resource center, "The House of Prayer," and the adult religious instruction classes, "RCIA" (Right of Christian Initiation of Adults). I would often speak on prayer or deliver talks on scripture. I always pushed the envelope theologically, teaching in a way that opened up questions concerning Original Sin, the Mission of Jesus, and Christology.

While I was very busy with my family and Renew activities, I also carried on with a smattering of legal work, including a little for Golden Gate Seafood in San Leandro. I had a preexisting relationship with Steve Mudgett, since in 1981, when I first had been sent to Judah Street, Mr. Kamiyama assigned me to Golden Gate Seafood as a "chaplain." Since I was a person of no particular skill or talent at the fish plant, I got to clean fish guts from clogged drainage, and load the small trucks for their fish sales while being yelled at by Japanese sisters who were in a rush to get out and hit their routes. The job that I preferred was going out and working on the Green Hope off the coast. However, that was a rare treat. Mostly, I unloaded

fish at the dock or worked in San Leandro.

My legal association with Golden Gate Seafood proved to be heaven sent. In October 1996, Father wanted 33 American Church lawyers to attend a conference in Montevideo, with a guest list composed of prominent political and judicial figures from the Uruguayan government, including members of their Supreme Court. With my company work, I qualified. Moreover, Golden Gate Seafood provided me with a legitimate rationale to assuage a skeptical wife. Although I had seen True Parents at a distance over the last 10 years, this promised to be a more intimate gathering, one in which I could honestly report to True Father and make a new beginning.