

Daffodils, the Harbingers of Spring

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In the United States we have a training center for our international movement. Called Belvedere, it is a lovely estate on the Hudson River in Tarrytown, New York. The name "Belvedere" means beautiful scenery or magnificent view. I liked the name as it befits a place where people can deeply experience God's love in a serene environment.

Beginning in 1972, amid Belvedere's beautiful trees and expansive lawns, our American members and guests were taught the Principle through workshops ranging from a two-day weekend to 100 days. My husband gave sermons at 6:00 a.m. every Sunday as well. The training center would often be crowded with young people from all over the world who came to meet my husband and me.

In the early years I planted yellow daffodils at Belvedere and our nearby East Garden residence and conference center. Why daffodils? Daffodils are the harbingers of spring. As the first flowers to pierce through the frozen ground after withstanding the cold of winter, they herald the coming of warmth and new life. I am always amazed at this providence displayed by Mother Nature and by the strength of the sprouts that appear where snow still remains. Roses and lilies that bloom in spring or midsummer are beautiful, but I most appreciate the little daffodil, whose humble, unassuming bloom breaks the spell of the cold winter. Called to be the Only Begotten Daughter and True Mother, my path is to break through the icy grip of human sin and help bring God's blessing to the world. I often identify with this lovely flower.

It was a joy to return to Belvedere for a special event in the summer of 2016. It was June 1 and the American members were commemorating the 40th anniversary of the God Bless America rally at Yankee Stadium. That 1976 rally was a monumental event for us. Following God, we sought with all our might to awaken America, which had fallen into chaos and corruption. At that time, Father Moon and I were known only as the founders of an emerging religious movement from the East. I feel today, half a century later, as I did then - desperate with the hope of giving birth to God's global peace kingdom.

With this heart, I felt so grateful to the families that gathered on that day at Belvedere to celebrate this 40th anniversary. It was a sea of daffodils. They were in their twenties in 1976, and now here they were, with their children and grandchildren. At one point, we sang, "You Are My Sunshine." It is a simple song but one that I will never forget, for to me, and to all gathered on that day, it has deep significance. I was overcome with emotion, silently meditating, reliving the memories that flooded through me.

The Puritan spirit of seeking God and religious liberty at all costs gave birth to the United States of America. Nonetheless, over time, America permitted a selfish and decadent culture to emerge and displace its original concern for God's Will. Traditional Christianity lacked the spiritual resources to prevent the rise of sexual immorality and materialism. Arriving here in December 1971, my husband and I, with our members, invested all our strength to resurrect the founding spirit of America and awaken Americans to their God-given responsibilities. God's dream is for all people in the world to live with gratitude in the peaceful, happy realm of God's love. To achieve this, we knew we had to stir up a revolutionary culture of heart. This was the impetus for our Yankee Stadium rally on June 1, 1976.

The year 1976 was the bicentennial of the founding of the United States. As Koreans, citizens of a republic that owed its existence in large part to the United States, we love America. Since 1972, my husband had been speaking emphatically throughout America, saying, "God sent me in the role of a doctor and as a firefighter to save America." We believed that America is a chosen nation, and we

declared as our theme for the 1976 rally, "God Bless America." We raised our voices to shout that God needs America to overcome communism and restore family-centered morality.

Throughout April and May of 1976, our worldwide membership prayed for success at Yankee Stadium. Volunteers came to New York from across the United States, as well as from Japan and Europe, to invite people to attend. They reached out tirelessly and enthusiastically. We tried in those two months to awaken a sleeping giant, to revive the democratic world by countering the influence of communism and the culture of drugs and free sex that was destroying the moral fiber of America's young people. We considered the bicentennial a crossroads, an event that would signal whether or not we could change America's direction. Through our members' hard work, people from throughout the tri-state area and our supporters from other states and nations gathered.

And on that first day of June, others gathered as well. Just as in Korea, where from the right and left, Christians and communists united to accuse and attack, outside Yankee Stadium the demonstrators were yelling, screaming and heaping all kinds of ridicule upon us. The police couldn't handle it, so we sent many of our core members out of their seats inside to cordon off the crowds of opponents and allow the more than 50,000 people to enter peacefully.

As history records, however, the real drama of Yankee Stadium was not in the protests. The real drama was the weather. Even though the sky was clouding up, thousands of people were in their seats and more thousands were entering the stadium. The banners and signs, sound system and staging were all set up; the band and choir were in place. Suddenly a violent rainstorm swept in from Long Island Sound. Fierce winds blew, rain poured down, our God Bless America banners were torn off the outfield walls and our posters were soaked. The equipment onstage was blown around. The rain soaked the people as well; it was an indescribable mess. And outside the stadium, the crowd of opponents was yelling, screaming and heaping all kinds of ridicule upon us.

One would have wondered, was God truly with us? Was this all part of God's plan? Then one of our young American leaders jumped onto the top of the home team dugout, raised his arms like a conductor in front of an orchestra, and started singing at the top of his lungs, "You are my sunshine, my only sunshine. You make me happy when skies are gray."

It was like a signal flare. With one heart, everyone began to sing, "You are my sunshine, my only sunshine!" A magnificent chorus spread through the stadium and tears of joy mixed with the drops of rain flowing down everyone's faces. The summer squall, our opponents' criticism, and the scramble to protect the equipment - these had only bolstered our spirit. Even though we were soaked, no one sought shelter. Heaven was the shelter that united the people of all races, nations and religions that filled the stadium.

That singing was the condition of faith and unity that moved God. The skies over the stadium began to brighten. The darkness cast in both heaven and earth was lifted. Rays of sunshine appeared, and the festival, which seemed utterly demolished, was reborn. Our volunteers swept the stage, wiped off the media equipment and cleared the grounds of fallen signage. Now, with the sunshine warming everyone, the program began.

Before he went out onto the stage, my husband said a prayer. Then he grabbed my hand and said, "Thanks to your sincere devotion and prayer, I am going on stage today." My husband's smile of gratitude was warmer than the sun that was shining through the clouds. I truly felt that we and our entire global family had pierced the darkness. From the borderline of death, we had resurrected into a bright future for heaven and earth. I brushed the cold raindrops from my face and gave him a hug of encouragement.

We had strong faith in God and in the salvation of the world, and we did not lose courage, because we were fully aware that God was with us. Compared to the hardships and oppression we faced in our homeland before coming to the United States, this was nothing. We transformed shouts of opposition into songs of glory. The pouring rain and gusts of wind blew away our signs but not our love.

As my husband took the stage, the audience greeted him with loud applause. "Who are the true Americans?" he asked. "True Americans are those who have a universal mind. True Americans are those who believe in the one family of humankind, transcendent of color and nationality as willed by God. True Americans are those who are proud of such international families, churches and nations consisting of all peoples." With faith and courage, the rally was a great success.

It was 30 years later, in June of 2006, on our sprawling complex on Chung Pyung Lake in the Republic of Korea, that our movement opened its global capital, the Cheon Jeong Palace. In its gardens, I did not plant roses or lilies. I planted daffodils. And early each spring, as I see the yellow flowers peeking out from under the melting winter snow, I'm gently reminded of the Yankee Stadium event.

Daffodils, which overcome the wind and snow, are a signal for the advent of new life. Their bright little petals, the color of sunlight, are the first sign that spring has finally come. They will always be here, in a special place in my heart. To me, they symbolize the beauty and peace that is blossoming worldwide in our movement. They are seemingly small, but within them is a surge of new life that leads us to forget that there ever was a winter.