

A Family Experience of Christ's Return - Part 2

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On August 11, 1963, we joined the movement together and shortly thereafter decided to return to Germany as missionaries as soon as our business affairs were taken care of.

In the meantime we started witnessing right away. We visited people in their homes and taught the Principle. This was actually our first Home Church mission. We also attended the prayer meetings and church services of different denominations, but as soon as we talked about the return of Christ and his new name, we were not welcome anymore. One experience within a large congregation is unforgettable. At the beginning of the service the minister greeted and welcomed new guests, specifically our group. We were ushered to the middle of the church and the minister had us all standing up to be welcomed. Every eye turned in our direction and then the minister said, "These people are following the Antichrist, Rev. Sun Myung Moon. Beware! They came to try to convince you of his teachings. Don't follow them because they'll lead you to eternal damnation. According to the Bible, Christ will return in the clouds of heaven, and this prophecy has yet to be fulfilled." As young members this was hard for us to swallow. We had been asked before to leave a church or meeting, but we were never made so unwelcome in such unequivocal terms. Yet at the end of the service the minister stood at the exit and shook our hands with a smile.

On weekends we frequently drove to our center in San Francisco on Masonic Avenue to be with Miss Kim and our brothers and sisters there. On one of those visits, Klaus followed Miss Kim to her room and saw a photo of True Mother. Up to this time we had never seen pictures of Father or Mother. Afterward, Klaus came to me and said, "Mom, True Mother is so beautiful."

Offering

As we were witnessing every day, right from the start, we had no family life and this was very hard for Klaus. By that time, we were planning to go back to Germany as soon as possible. We thought it best to send Klaus ahead of us to my parents in December 1963. When the day of his departure came, we drove him to San Francisco International Airport. I think only a mother knows how heavy my heart was to send our eleven-year-old son across the continent and the Atlantic Ocean all by himself to Frankfurt, Germany. When we saw him disappear at the gate, aided by a flight attendant and waving for the last time, I thought my heart would break. We quickly left the airport and watched his plane disappear until it was a mere speck in the sky. My tears flowed quietly and I felt somewhat numb. Abraham's sacrifice of Isaac came to mind. Would we ever see him again? I prayed silently for the protection of our precious son and felt Heavenly Father comforting me.

My parents received him with open arms, although they couldn't understand how we could abandon our child, as they saw it, and they felt sorry for him. Klaus couldn't speak any German and my parents didn't have command of the English language. This made communication very difficult for both sides. He needed to go to school and had to learn German quickly. It was a difficult and demanding situation.



Father at Frankfurt Airport on July 26, 1965, during his first world tour when he consecrated Holy Grounds in a hundred and twenty nations; Paul is holding the sign that says Welcome, on your visit to Germany. Christel is fourth from the right.

Our return to Germany

From that point until March 1964, Paul concentrated on disengaging from all his business activities, and finally traded in his new Chrysler for a Volkswagen van. For me it was not easy to quit my job at IBM; my departure on March 31 was tearful. The following day, we loaded the van with a few suitcases and were on our way from Sacramento to New York, taking Elke Klawiter van der Stok, a German member we had met in San Francisco, with us. In those days, all churches were open and accessible at all times, so on our way through different states we stopped at forty churches, at least one in each state we passed through, where we prayed and Paul read some parts of Miss Kim's translation of the Divine Principle from the pulpit as a condition for future missionary work in these states.

Our last stop in the U.S. before boarding the ship to Germany in New York was at Dr. Pak Bo-hi's home in Washington DC. Dr. Pak and his wife, who hosted us for almost a week, warmly welcomed us. For the first time we experienced the life of a blessed family and were deeply moved by their total dedication to God and True Parents. To this day, we are very grateful for this precious experience, which helped us very much to cope with our situation and our work in Europe.

On May 8, 1964, we arrived in the German port city of Bremerhaven on board the M/S Berlin. After our VW van was unloaded, we drove to Frankfurt and met our three other members, Peter Koch, Barbara Koch Vincenz and Ursula Schuhmann. All of us had joined in California. Soon it became clear to us that it was best to start our mission in a different city, so we decided to look for an apartment in Wiesbaden, about thirty five kilometers west of Frankfurt. Before moving to Wiesbaden, we drove to seven major cities in Europe - the Hague, Holland; Brussels, Belgium; Paris, France; Madrid, Spain; Rome, Italy; Geneva, Switzerland; and Vienna, Austria and placed a Divine Principle book in each of the main Cathedrals of these cities.

In Wiesbaden we worked during the day and started street-witnessing in the evenings right away, even though according to German etiquette, one just didn't approach strangers in the street. Paul's focus, however, was directed at churches and other religious groups. Yet, as soon as he revealed that the Second Coming has already occurred, he was prohibited from stepping onto the church grounds again. We worked tirelessly for about a year and had very good contacts, only to lose them all because of the hostile influence of Christian ministers.

Our mission in Austria

When Paul received God's direction in prayer to pioneer Austria, his mind was already made up even before discussing it with me, though of course I wholeheartedly supported his decision. Within days, he asked his employer for a leave of absence from his job for six months. A few weeks later, when he decided to stay in Austria, I handed in his resignation. Together we prepared our VW van to serve as temporary sleeping quarters and packed up all the items he would need to be self-sufficient in Vienna.

On May 18, 1965, he was on his way to his new mission in Austria, our first mission country, and our prayers were with him. Klaus attended high school in Wiesbaden, and I continued working at a large

insurance company to support our family as well as the mission in Austria. In Vienna Paul lived in his VW van and started witnessing and fasting to the extreme right away. He lost so much weight that some friends hardly recognized him when they saw him in Vienna. I really was worried about his health, remembering his severe indemnity conditions in Sacramento and started sending him "care packages" with homemade cake and other goodies. When Father came to Germany on his first world tour to bless Holy Grounds on July 26, 1965, Paul returned to Frankfurt with his first spiritual son, Walter Linder, a student working on his PhD degree in Economics.

For all of us, this was our first meeting with True Father, the Messiah, and of course we were all nervous, not knowing what to expect. Money was in short supply, but we tried to prepare for True Father and his party as best we could. When he and his party finally arrived at the airport, he greeted each one of us with a warm smile and a handshake. We missed True Mother; she hadn't been able to come this time. We didn't know, though, that she had her own seven-year course to fulfill and be victorious in. All in all, we had twelve glorious days with our True Father in Germany, practically from morning to night. We were able to participate in the blessing of two German Holy Grounds, in Frankfurt and Essen; we shared all meals together and had marathon meetings, sometimes all night long, when Father taught us holy songs over and over again, very much to the dismay of our neighbors who didn't appreciate the noise. He also had each one of us sing individually and always listened very attentively with his eyes closed. On his last day in Frankfurt Father presented us with the official Unification Church flag and a beautiful wall clock for the center. He then personally gave each one of us a gift. We felt such a deep bond of heart that at the time of his departure we felt like orphans. Tears started flowing and we missed him already. After Father left, the center felt empty.

Before Father left Frankfurt, he honored our family by visiting our apartment in Wiesbaden, discussing our future mission. Father said that after the tour through Europe, Paul should go back to Austria, Klaus should continue to attend his school in Wiesbaden and my mission was to support my family and Paul's mission in Austria.

Paul's center in Vienna for the first six months was his VW van and our only communication was through letters and prayer. Once Paul received a mission, he totally focused on fulfilling that mission and needed all the support I could give him. This was true for all missions Father entrusted our family with, and all of us felt determined to persevere. When the load was heavy, our Heavenly Father was always close, wiping away our tears and comforting us, enabling us to go on just a bit longer.