

A Family Experience of Christ's Return - Part 3

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January 2010

Republished by FFWPU International Headquarters July 25, 2022



Paul and Christel Werner

Paul was still living in his VW van when winter set in. Winters in Vienna are quite cold and accompanied by heavy snowfall, so sleeping in his van was no longer possible. He fasted and prayed desperately for a place to stay, while Klaus and I, back home in Wiesbaden, supported him in prayer. Through a contact, he finally found a small place on the outskirts of Vienna. We were so happy and grateful that he had found shelter from the elements. However, when Klaus and I visited him for the first time in December 1965, we were shocked by his living conditions. Coming from a warm and comfortable apartment in Wiesbaden, we had to enter his upstairs "center" by an outside staircase, which was little more than a ladder. It had no running water, not even cold water, no sink, no toilet facilities and no heating system. Every drop of water we used had to be carried upstairs from a pump and the dirty water carried downstairs in a pail and discarded. Even the homeowners, an old couple, had no sanitary facilities. The outhouse could only be reached by walking through a chicken coop. This was a real nightmare, especially when we had to use it at night, bracing against the bitter cold wind and snow and always mindful not to let any of the chickens escape. To prevent the snow from blowing into his

front room every time we opened the door, Paul nailed a blanket in front of the opening from the inside.

The room in the back, where Klaus and I were to sleep, was even worse. Paul usually used it for storage. The only window was ice-covered and frozen shut and our breath was visible, just as it was outside.

Even so, when we first entered Paul's front room, we felt the peaceful atmosphere created by his deep prayers. As it was located in an attic, the ceiling was slanted. In one corner he had placed his little altar with a candle and Father's official photo for 1960, the only picture we had. To get even a little bit of heat, he had bought a 500-watt heating lamp to keep his back warm while praying for his contacts after coming home from witnessing.

When I voiced my concern about his health under these severe conditions, he replied that True Father had survived in a cardboard house in Busan and added, "Heavenly Father knows why I am here." This of course was true but we have to fulfill our part by taking care of our body. This worried me quite a bit. Feeling my concern he said, "I'm not home most of the time anyway. I'm witnessing and teaching every night into the morning hours, or I pray at St. Stephen's Cathedral, where countless candles are lit by other people continually coming in for prayer. That keeps the area pretty warm." When Klaus and I returned home to Wiesbaden, I prayed and fasted for decent living conditions for my husband.

When Klaus and I visited Vienna again in 1966, Paul had already found many members, and all of them had moved into a better center on Zirkusgasse.^[1] though it was a neighborhood infamous for its vices. They had turned this apartment into a haven for the spirit of God, where many members and guests had spiritual experiences. So many more people joined that soon even this center was too small to house all of them, a very happy problem.

When Paul left for Austria, he had resolved not to come home for the next three years, or before laying a solid foundation in our mission country. This he accomplished in the summer of 1966, a year after starting his mission, when he visited Germany for the first time with his nine spiritual children.

When it finally became clear that Paul would remain in Austria indefinitely, Klaus and I joined him in 1967. At that time, because the members had multiplied, they had just moved into a larger center on Oelzeltgasse.² For Klaus it meant changing schools and an entirely different school system again; for me, it was the most difficult time in my life, my personal valley of tears. We were a family, yet since joining the movement, my husband and I had lived as brother and sister, and so it was in Vienna. Sometimes there were family matters to solve, and it was difficult to even find time to talk. When the situation was almost unbearable, I felt that perhaps someone else was much better qualified for my mission, and I should leave Austria. In that instant, Heavenly Father scolded me saying, "My child, I never make mistakes. I know about your situation, just go on a bit longer and I'll be by your side every step of the way." At that point, I resolved to endure silently whatever and however long it took. One dear sister in Vienna, Romana, supported me all the way and I'll be forever grateful for her unconditional love. I'm also

greatly indebted to my wonderful sisters in Holland for their understanding and support. Heavenly Father definitely kept his promise.



Paul and Christel Werner with Hyo Jin Moon at Barrytown, NY circa 1975

During those years, we always kept in close contact with Miss Kim, who kept us informed about True Parents' activities in Korea. When she visited Vienna in 1968, she comforted me by saying that Klaus and I had to pay all the indemnity for Paul's great success and to endure just a little longer. She told me that True Parents were in the process of obtaining visas for their second world tour (in 1969) and many things would be resolved. She also said that Father was planning to hold the first blessing outside Korea at that time and we should prepare.

In March 1969, we travelled with our Austrian family to Essen, Germany, to meet our True Parents. For the first time we could welcome Mother. Her inner and outer beauty impressed everyone. Father and Mother, who was pregnant with Hyun-jin nim, sat with us on the floor; we had the feeling of being one big family.

As we all know, Father truly is full of surprises. One day before our blessing, Peter Koch and Paul were called suddenly into True Parents' room and Father told my husband, "Paul, you are now the leader of the German movement, and Peter, you take over the Austrian family." It came as a shock to us and to all our members. Tears started to flow when Paul broke the news to our Austrian members. Yet, this was God's will and Paul started right then and there to focus on our mission in Germany. This meant a great upheaval for my husband and I as well as for Klaus, who was still attending high school and had to change schools for the thirteenth time.

A few days later, our engagement took place. Each couple was called into True Parents' room individually and while True Parents held our hands, Father said to Paul and me, "You two were made for each other." After the ceremony, he added, "No more separation for you." It truly felt like a father speaking to his children. After our Blessing Ceremony on March 28, 1969,^[2] we resolved to try to live up to our True Parents' expectations, however bumpy the road may be - and it was very bumpy at times.

^[1] The name of the street in Vienna.

^[2] Eight couples were blessed in Germany on this day as part of the 43 Couples' Blessing