

*Julia Hess,  
Vienna, Austria, 1969*



I was born on a farm in Austria in December 1946, eleven months after my father — drafted to be a soldier after Hitler took over Austria — came home from the war.

I never contemplated becoming a nun. Yet, I very much wanted to live a life with God and be made an “instrument of His Peace,” like St. Francis of Assisi. I was hoping to get married some day and have a family. Jesus and the great saints were single. I was longing for role models for marriage.

Most of the young Christian adults I knew withdrew into their private lives once they got married. Their plans had been to stay very active in the community. They thought that with both partners having so much love for God and each other, they would be able to love their “neighbor” even more as a couple. That happened very rarely. This gap between the ideal and reality everywhere hit me hard.

I became an elementary-school teacher. I had graduated at the top of my class and was doing very well in student teaching. Yet, I hesitated to take a teaching job right away. To educate means to draw out the best from the students, to facilitate developing their gifts, and to be a helper on their path to a meaningful life. Ideally, the teacher should know much about the purpose of life and its “goals.” I decided to do further study at the University of Vienna in order to qualify as a high-school teacher, hoping in the process to get answers to some of my questions.

Migratory birds know exactly where they are going and get to their destination with incredible accuracy, passing on this knowledge from generation to generation. Why did human beings, as the Lords

of Creation, have to run around in a zigzag course or in circles, not knowing which direction to take?

I came to a crossroads in life on Monday, March 10, 1969. I was on my way to Bible study. A small sign caught my eye: "Does God need man?" That question had been discussed during Christian retreats I had attended.

Some people were going into a lecture hall that was usually closed at that time in the evening. I was curious but did not expect to hear anything new. I sat down in the back, thinking I would stay a short time and then go to my Bible study. The presentation about the three blessings caught my attention. I stayed until the end. As I heard later, that Divine-Principle lecture had been a kind of "trial run." There had been no official permission to give it by the university. There was supposed to be another presentation the following Monday, but I found out it had been canceled.

Then school got out for Easter week. Normally I would have gone home as soon as classes were over. This time, I felt stuck in Vienna with a restless spirit. Maybe I was meant to prepare my heart better for Easter. The Church choir of which I was a part sang glorious music on Easter Sunday, celebrating this great holy day with jubilation. Somehow I could never feel completely joyful. I thought this was because I was too sinful or had not prepared enough during the 40 days of Lent. There was always a shadow of sadness mixed in, and I could not figure out why. Later all this made sense when I learned the Divine-Principle explanation about the Mission of Jesus.

Finally, on Thursday during Easter week 1969, I went to a Christian music store and bought a record, went back to my room, and listened to it. One song affected me deeply. I could not stop crying, and the words seemed personally directed at me. I felt called by God.

For what? (Later, I found out that True Parents had arrived in Vienna during that Easter week, after they had blessed some of the

43 couples in Germany. Probably spirit world was very excited about that).

A few weeks later, I met “that group” again and asked for some literature. They showed me a copy of the first German translation of Miss Young Oon Kim’s book, which was a simplified version of the Divine Principle. I wanted to buy it. I always liked to read.

They suggested that first I should come to their apartment. I gave them all the money I had on me and insisted I wanted to read that copy before coming. I read everything in three days, with a pencil in hand, making question marks, crossing out passages, etc. At the end, I strongly sensed the “conclusion,” that the Second Coming had taken place. I also sensed this would change my life completely. I went to their apartment/center on May 22, 1969. This became my spiritual birthday.

When one of the sisters saw all the question marks and crossed-out passages (I had not erased a lot of the marks after I finished reading, and a lot of it made so much sense, especially the Fall of Man, the Mission of Jesus, and the Historical Parallels), she probably thought I was a hopeless case, but she invited me for dinner. I felt a genuine family atmosphere, and the prayer before dinner touched me deeply. I wanted to be part of this.

Weeks of intense struggle followed, internal and external. I sat up during some nights in the hallway of my dorm, so as to not disturb my roommate, reading Divine Principle and reading the Bible, praying for a confirmation that it was actually Jesus who called Rev. Moon. I certainly did not want to betray Jesus, who had helped me so much. For a while, on Sundays, I would go to an early Mass and then to the “Family’s” Church service.

There were days when I did not feel qualified to belong to a group of such special people. At the same time, my fervent prayer was that Father would not be killed as Jesus was. Everybody in Vienna was keenly aware that the Communists did not like people talking about

God. I met many refugees from Eastern Europe. Some had survived spiritually with only a few pages of the Bible or less.

One big struggle was explaining my new faith to my family, whom I loved so much. For them, it was impossible to understand why I would want to choose this way. I was well liked in my hometown. Bad rumors were going around. I did not want to hurt anybody.

I met True Parents for the first time in the spring of 1972, first in Germany where Young Whi Kim was giving a seven-day workshop, with True Mother taking notes diligently (she was then 29 years old), and then in Austria.

At that time, we had not been able to rent a house. Members lived in different apartments, and True Parents stayed in one of them during their visit to Vienna. We did some folk dancing for them, and our leader, Peter Koch, encouraged me to sing a song I had received from spirit world, accompanying myself on the zither, an Austrian string instrument. True Parents blessed the farmhouse that was to be used as a workshop. Later, we had wonderful workshops there almost every weekend, and I always felt honored when I was called to teach Divine Principle there. To witness the birth of new members was always the highlight of these great workshops, surrounded by beautiful nature. Mr. Koch, who ascended to the spirit world in 1984, believed in me more than I believed in myself. He entrusted me with many responsibilities. He and his wife, Gertrud, took good care of the members. A substantial number of members who joined during that time later took on the difficult, dangerous task of serving as underground missionaries to Communist countries (Mission Butterfly) or in Western Europe working with emigrants from those countries (Mission Flower Bird).

At the beginning of 1975, some Austrian members were invited to go to Korea for the Blessing. I never ever thought I would be blessed with an American. Heaven gave me David Hess as my eternal spouse,

and I got my wish to marry somebody with whom I could build a God-centered family and do something for a greater purpose.

We are very different, but quite complementary. It was our family's privilege to take care of my husband's father, Grandpa Hess, after the passing of David's mother. Our four children helped so much with Grandpa, and he received a lot of love from them, although we had some difficult stretches because of his illness. It was miraculous that he was able to participate in what was then called a "Single Blessing" in New York in December of 1995. The time with Grandpa Hess living with us was very important for our family life, and we treasure it.

Now we want to keep building strong, three-generation families according to Heaven's desire, with first, second, and third generations, praying, studying and practicing the four great realms of heart and love.

I am so grateful that my precious husband and I could work together on many different areas. That's really the greatest: to work as a couple, as a family, whenever possible. The way True Parents have been doing that is so incredibly inspiring. I treasure being a daughter, sister, wife, mother, mother-in-law, and grandmother.

We want to thank In Jin Nim for trying so hard to bring the generations closer together and to help all of us heal our hearts and reach our potential.

I got the answer to the question: "Does God need man?"

God needs us to comfort our Heavenly Parents, liberate their Hearts, and bring their children back.