

Geraldine ("Gerrie") Porcella Linek, San Francisco, 1968



All my life I was aware of the spiritual nature of our existence and was on a path of seeking the highest truth. I was raised Catholic and at one time thought about being a nun so that I could have a closer relationship with God. However, I always knew I wanted to have children. I thought it was unfair that only certain people, such as priests and nuns, should have the closest relationship with God and mediate between God and the rest of us. Some people may mock the use of statues in the Catholic churches, but when I was little, I loved looking at them and imagining what it was like to be alive at the time of Jesus.

Born in 1946, I was a teenager during the restlessness and protests of the 1960s. I had attended community college right out of high school but had no idea what I was doing there. I had such a restlessness inside me. One time my girlfriends and I drove to San Francisco. As we passed through the Haight-Ashbury District, my friends were laughing at the hippies, but I remember identifying with them and feeling a kinship with their disillusionment and rebelliousness. I determined to find out more about them.

After moving to Haight-Ashbury, I had a profound experience in which I "became" Christ dying on the cross. But instead of dying just once, I died many times over, and asked those around me, "How many times do I have to die?" I had a deep realization that Christ didn't just die one time, 2000 years ago. Christ dies over and over again every day, as long as we continue to argue, fight, and kill one another. Even though this was a drug-induced experience, it was very real and profound to me and kept me on the path to discover the meaning of my life. Also during this period my mother gave me a

copy of *The Imitation of Christ* by Thomas a Kempis, which made a deep impression on me. In my heart of hearts I wanted to live a more Christ-like existence.

My path to meeting the Unification Church was very roundabout. I was not witnessed to directly. In October of 1968, at the peak of my desperation to find God and the meaning of life, I was shown a pamphlet for an “Experimental College” at San Francisco State College by my sister’s roommate’s former roommate’s sister, who was not a church member. I share this because it illustrates how God will go to any lengths and use whatever convoluted means necessary to lift His children up out of their struggles. Experimental College was an innovative program through which anyone could offer alternative education classes. I signed up for three classes that sounded interesting. One was entitled: “Man’s Purpose: A Process of Creation.” What intrigued me about this class was the promise that it would answer my burning questions: “Where do I come from? Why do I exist? Where am I going?” The course description stated that it was sponsored by a group of young people of different races and faiths living together cooperatively. Presented by the San Francisco members under Mr. Sang Ik Choi’s leadership, the class was a vehicle for them to witness and invite potential members to lectures and weekend workshops at the center.

I had a difficult time at first, because everyone was so positive and squeaky-clean, and I was so questioning and challenging. But there was undeniable warmth from the members, and I can still recall the welcoming smell of barley tea as I ascended the stairs for evening lectures. I accepted the Divine Principle teachings on November 5, 1968, the day I heard the concluding lecture and realized the Messiah was on the earth.

When I asked to move into the center, I was not accepted right away. However, when True Father visited the following January or February, Mrs. Mee Shik Choi asked me to sew curtains for the

unfinished basement which they were converting to a meeting room. Once I met Father, I knew I could never leave, and so I moved into the center. When Father returned to America and created One World Crusade in 1972, I had a deep experience in which I felt like he had called me to join the crusade across America, so I flew to New York and traveled across the United States on his seven-city speaking tour. During the tour we received so much love and education from True Parents and daily Divine Principle lectures given by Young Whi Kim. These are just a few memorable highlights of my early life of faith.