

“You Are My Sunshin” 40 Years Later

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June 13, 2016



*Weekly Chosun, June 13 2016 issue (Korean National Major Monthly Magazine)
translated by PR Department of Tongil Group*

Headed to Belvedere, FFWPU’s Holy Ground in New York

On June 1, 1976, 50,000 people filled the Yankee Stadium in New York. People flooded in from New York and other neighboring cities to hear Rev. Sun Myung Moon, who had come from Korea and founded the Family Federation for World Peace (FFWPU), give the keynote address. Rev. Sun Myung Moon delivered a challenging message to American society that day.

“If we do not fight the threat of Communism and raise up the morale of the youth in this nation, there will be no hope for America.”

“I came as a doctor and firefighter for America.”

As America celebrated the 200th anniversary of the nation’s founding, Rev. Moon was deeply troubled by the hippie culture and drug usage among the youth during that time. Rev. Moon gave America four tasks. They were to revive the values centered on family, restore the nation’s morals, eradicate Communism, and oppose homosexuality. Rev. Moon’s messages moved the hearts of the people who had been worried about their confused generation. A few days later, Newsweek magazine featured a picture of Rev. Sun Myung Moon on its cover and “Sun Myung Moon” became a household name.

Frank Maketa (62), reminisced about that day, “All of a sudden in the middle of the event, rain started to pour and the strong wind blew away everything that had been set up. It was a mess. People began stirring and the event was close to being called off. To be honest, my faith also wavered. Then suddenly, someone began to sing “You Are My Sunshine.” Everyone began to join in, hoping the rain would stop. As we began to sing, the dark clouds finally lifted. It was a very moving scene.”

40 years later, on June 5, 2016, the audience at Belvedere in Tarrytown, New York once again began to sing “You Are My Sunshine” at an event commemorating the 40th anniversary of the 1976 Yankee Stadium Rally. A proclamation for a new vision for the future was also held here. Coincidentally, it also began to rain on this day, and everyone began to sing “You Are My Sunshine.” Belvedere, which lies along the upper region of the Hudson River, was home to Rev. Sun Myung Moon and Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon during their time in America. To FFWPU members, it is America’s greatest Holy Ground and the current training center in New York.

This was the first time that Belvedere was made open to the public and the press. This secret garden sits just a 40-minute car ride away from the center of Manhattan. Measuring 101,150m² (30,651 pyeong), this garden may be better referred to as a park. This tranquil and well-maintained property makes you wonder how such a place could exist in such a close proximity to Manhattan. Belvedere contains 5-6 buildings, including the church. One of these buildings is the guesthouse where Rev. Moon and his wife once resided. It is the exact location to which Rev. and Mrs. Moon had frequently invited world leaders, including American congressmen. It is also the place where a celebratory event was held the day following the Yankee Stadium Rally 40 years ago. This guesthouse became open to the public for the first time at the God Bless America Family Festival. The first two floors of the building have been preserved as-is during Rev. Moon’s residency. Rev. Moon and Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon had purchased Belvedere, as

well as another property in nearby Irvington called East Garden, in the latter half of 1960 as the stronghold for missionary work in America.

Rev. Moon and Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon proclaimed America as the center of missionary work and officially entered the nation in 1971. Rev. Moon toured 40 cities, including Wall Street in New York, Washington D.C. and Baltimore, reawakening Christianity and warning the public about the threat of Communism. The unprecedented arrival of religious leaders from Korea gathered attention in America. The names “Sun Myung Moon” and FFWPU became especially known through the Yankee Stadium Rally. Three months later in September, 300,000 people gathered for the Washington Monument Rally, setting the record for the largest religious gathering in America. 40 years later, FFWPU is regarded as the religion that had the greatest success in the shortest amount of time in America. We were curious as to how they were able to transcend religion and gather this level of strength and energy.

The main event took place on an outdoor stage in front of the guesthouse. 3,000 people from all over America began to arrive from early in the morning. They set up mats and camping chairs on the lawn in front of the stage as if getting ready for a jazz festival. Choir groups sang on the stage as the audience sang and danced along. Even the reporters began to move their bodies to the music. A group of food and event tents stood beside the main stage.

“Are you ready?”

The festival began with the welcoming remarks of the emcee. Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon (73) stood on stage just as Rev. Moon had 40 years earlier. She called for America to reflect on its self-centered ways, and fulfill its role in leading the rest of the world.

FFWPU is currently led by Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon. Following Rev. Moon’s passing in 2012, his fourth son Kook Jin Moon and his seventh son Hyung Jin Moon stepped up as the successors; but in 2013, they lost their authority and resigned from their positions. Although there was a report stating that the fifth daughter, Sun Jin Moon, had emerged on the scene as the International President of the Family Federation for World Peace and Unification, today’s event confirmed Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon as the solid center of FFWPU.

Former U.S. Congressman Dan Burton, who had also attended the Yankee Stadium Rally 40 years ago, gave the congratulatory address. “The message given at Yankee Stadium is needed in America more today than in the past. We can resolve the social issues that plague America today if we look at them from the perspective of that message given 40 years ago. The Anti-Communist movement that Rev. Moon emphasized at that time moved President Reagan, and ultimately led to the fall of Communism. I am grateful that Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon has continued to lead the peace activities that Rev. Moon began.”

The event was not only attended by FFWPU members. It transcended race, region, and faith. Among those in attendance was Archbishop George Stallings. Archbishop Stallings is the founder of an Imani temple for African-American Catholics, and serves as the Co-President of the American Clergy Leadership Conference (ACLC). He was born to a Roman Catholic mother and was blessed in marriage to a Japanese woman by Rev. Moon and Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon at the FFWPU Holy Marriage Blessing Ceremony. Rev. Moon named Archbishop Stallings’ two sons Shin-Young and Young-Pal.

During an interview prior to the event, Archbishop Stallings shared, “Rev. Moon and Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon removed the divisions and barriers created by human beings. Existing religions could not imagine that all religions were meant to be united under God. Republicans and Democrats alike, along with Christian ministers followed them. In the same way Martin Luther King, Jr. stated that people should be judged not by the color of their skin, but by the content of their character, I believe that they are true leaders who worked to unite all of mankind as one true family.”

The view of FFWPU from the stage was incredible. Rev. Moon and Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon’s homeland of Korea was especially important to the members in the audience. During the event, Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon spoke in Korean, and simultaneous translation was provided in English. Rev. Moon and Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon insisted on giving all of their speeches in Korean. All FFWPU pastors are also required to learn Korean. Black and White people from all over the world can sing the four verses of our national anthem, and it is not uncommon to see them singing the Korean song, “Sarang Hae Dang Shin Eul.” It’s like the original “Hallyu Wave.” FFWPU currently has 3,000,000 members from 190 nations. Japan has the most members with 600,000, followed by Korea with 300,000 and America with 100,000.