

## Pilgrimage to Korea (Part 1)

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Having recently returned from Korea to participate at the World Leaders' Assembly and various other events connected to the Cheon Bok festival (celebrating the start of the new heavenly year as well as commemorating various Unificationist Holy Days) I feel obliged to share some of what I experienced. There's too much to share in one post, however, so I'll divide my story in a few posts.

In this first post I want to share about being with True Parents.

It's always a privilege to spend time with True Parents. I was fortunate to see them on four occasions:



Midnight prayer at the start of the year

1. At the midnight prayer at the beginning of the new year, during which True Father wrote the caligraphic motto for the year
2. At the pledge service on True God's Day. During this time True Parents remained silent until the end of the service, adding some words once we had offered three cheers of "eog mansei".
3. At the pledge service on the Day of Victory of Love. Unlike the previous day, True Father started speaking even before we had the chance to offer a bow or recite the Family Pledge, and continued speaking for most of the morning's service.



Caligraphy of this year's motto

4. At the Cheon Bok festival, during which holy salt was prepared containing earth from the birth places of the religious great saints (including soil from True Father's home in North Korea). True Father totally ignored the planned schedule for this event and took control of the event, telling everyone what to do and how to do it – that was quite an incredible thing to observe!



### True God's Day

One thing in particular impressed me about True Parents during this time in Korea: they truly are the centre of the cosmos! True Father is the king of kings, the lord of creation, the top dog. He exudes authority, and the beautiful thing I witnessed is how willing everyone surrounding True Parents was to surrender their authority to True Parents. Surrendering your authority might sound like giving up your freedom, but with True Parents it's converse: you win your freedom by surrendering to their authority. It occurred to me that the solution to all the world's problems, the divisions that bifurcate the world in so many dimensions, it through unity centring on True Parents. By devoting ourselves to the love of God, which is channeled to heaven, earth and humankind through True Parents, can we discover devotion and love for each other, despite the differences that might tear people apart. Such devotion is something that must be developed, hence the need for religious exercises to develop our spiritual discipline.



### United in prayer

I witnessed this especially during the Cheon Bok Festival, during which True Father barked at his son Hyung Jin Nim as well as various representatives of the world's faiths and leaders of our movement. They all hung on every word he uttered (or rather yelled) as they tried to carry out the instructions he hurled at them spontaneously. Such a hurricane of commands would have seemed inappropriate if one places importance on etiquette and protocol, but True Father teaches about heart, a culture of heart which is rooted in an original lineage, and witnessing the unity that emerged out of the chaotic event demonstrated to me how to bring unity and peace to the cosmos.

I'll put up a few more posts over the next few days to share more of my experiences in Korea.