

Confronting Suffering in Central Africa - Part 2

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Missionary to the Central African Republic

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It is with considerable sadness that I write about the person for whom I truly poured out my whole heart to save, for at this moment he is not living in our Family. Yet, I still feel confident that because so much indemnity has been paid for this brother, especially through his own sincere heart and hard efforts, he will be able to return to the church very soon.

This brother, Dieudonne, was the first of our members to live in the center. He was also the first person who truly understood the Divine Principle in a deep way. But to bring him to that point was certainly not easy. His own family and spiritual background provided quite a difficult path for him to walk.

Our brother Dieudonne began to come to our center to study the Principle about one week after God's Day 1977. That year represented a new departure for all of the missionaries, as the first one and a half years of the mission had been fraught with difficulties and all of us were ready to "begin again." Since this brother was the first to respond to our witnessing in that year, I told Heavenly Father that I was determined to do all I could to bring him to the Principle and the True Parents.

In one sense, the sacrifice required was a little lessened because his apartment was less than 500 meters from the center. In this way it was very easy for me to visit him many times; but what I wanted with all my heart was that he understand the true value of the Divine Principle. Until that point, and even afterward, many, many people had come and listened to our teaching, but then had gone again; and we were searching hard to discover the reason why. I am sure that the reasons were internal ones, rather than external, but at the time, I was able to see more of the superficial causes.

As a result, I decided that I must teach this brother in great detail, even if my French was far from perfect. Fortunately, he turned out to be a person of quiet temperament and a very patient nature; he often came to the center very early in the morning and stayed until late at night, listening intently from chapter one through the conclusion. As I taught, I realized more and more that despite my faltering French, the Principle was truly touching his heart, and the importance of the content stimulated many questions from him. I felt a glimmer of hope that a wonderful spiritual son was being born.

There followed many nights, weeks, and months of prayer, of visiting, of teaching, and of explaining/answering questions before Dieudonne became our first center member. But it was truly worth every single effort. Although it was difficult for us, he did not have an easy time of things, because he was the one to pioneer membership in the Unification Church in his country; he was the first and we demanded a very high standard from him. In retrospect, I realize that the standard we demanded must have been too much of a change, too much of a shock from his previous way of life. Due to his temperament, it was much more difficult for him to express his true feelings. Also, even though he did not express so much, I could always feel his heart, and intuit what he was feeling, what he was thinking, even if he did not speak. This was the first experience in my church life, and in my life, to have the feelings of a mother's heart so intensely. I had prayed so many times to break through the barrier of my heart and mind that prevented me from experiencing a parental heart. But Dieudonne was the first spiritual child where such give and take began to flow. I often felt such concern and anxiety that he continue to do better and better, and that he would never abandon his life of faith. Yet I also knew that he confronted numerous difficulties and challenges, and so often my heart ached that I was unable to understand more myself, that I was unable to give more guidance and love.

I also experienced both the true desire and joy to have a child exceed, to do better than his parent. Dieudonne studied very methodically and learned to teach the Principle clearly and exactly, in much better French than mine. When a child is able to exceed the accomplishments of his parent, the joy that

parent is able to feel is both very real and deep. I can imagine the intense feeling that must exist between Heavenly Father and our True Father: I know that the heart and the determination and the victories of our True Father have amazed, warmed, and comforted the heart of God so many times in the deepest way. I tasted a bit of that kind of warmth and comfort since Dieudonne could teach very well, and also when I saw what exceptional effort he made to pioneer in the area of witnessing, especially street witnessing. It was a true battle for him to overcome the natural timidity of his character, but he tried very hard.



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However, approximately one year after he moved into the center, Satan attacked our small family very hard. Family problems and personal problems seemed to strike Dieudonne from all sides. Just as he tried to make determination to overcome in one area, another difficulty would arise. Although I could see and feel what was happening, because I myself was not so confident, I was unable to guide wisely. I made several conditions - cold showers, prayer, walking long distances - to assist Dieudonne, but in reflecting back, I did not succeed in guiding him to make similar conditions and work to separate himself from Satan. I approached the difficulties he was having on too much of an intellectual level, when the cause was actually a spiritual one.

One morning I found a note from Dieudonne saying that he felt unable to go on and that he would have to, temporarily at least, live outside the center. I experienced such deep pain and a feeling of desperation: "My Adam, where are you? It is just not possible that you want to leave; the difficulties can be worked out if only you stay and persevere." Each time I prayed, my heart cried out, and tears flowed without ceasing. Until that point, I had not experienced or been able to imagine what must have been Heavenly Father's grief at the departure of Adam and Eve.

Those days (about ten days from the time Dieudonne left the note until he moved out) were so long, so heavy, so difficult to understand. Prayer and soul-searching: what and how and where we went wrong. Dieudonne is now an associate member, but not so active. He never denied the Principle or our True Parents, so I retain hope that he will return. He is an eternal spiritual son. A mother, a parent, can never forget, no matter what. Through him, I learned so deeply about the profound, and secret heart of our saddened Heavenly Father.

Mary Johnson had been in the Central African Republic for one and a half years when she witnessed to Dieudonne. Recently Mary mentioned that later on, Dieudonne did indeed come closer to the church again.