

Preparing for True Mother's visit to Gorée Island

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The Mayor of Gorée Island and island residents were touched by True Mother's love and compassion.

The International African Summit, which took place on January 18 and 19, was a great accomplishment on a national level with the president of the country receiving True Mother as if she were a head of state. I stayed for over a hundred days in Senegal to help prepare the summit. My first mission was to work with the National Assembly to organize the inauguration of the International Association of Parliamentarians for Peace (IAPP). Thus, I was able to meet the president of the National Assembly, Mr. Moustapha Niasse, a man of deep vision and insight, who shared his goal for the country with a few of us. It closely aligns with UPF's vision of one family under God.

Among my other activities, I had to visit various brotherhoods or Sufi movements [like religious orders, or distinct spiritual paths] such as the Murid, the Tijaniyya and others. I also visited some traditional rulers. The activity was very important and I later understood the role of these religious groups and traditional rulers in relation to President Macky Sall and to the Parliament. A very close relationship exists between political power, religions (the spiritual sphere of guidance or influence) and the traditional rulers, who are the owners of the land, even that of Dakar. All three parties try to support good government.



Patrick Jouan (left) walking at the Abdou Diouf International Conference Center

After I had been there for a month and half, Kathy Rigney asked me if I could prepare for a visit by True Mother to Gorée Island. The mission was to prepare the practical aspects of the visit, knowing that a special ceremony would take place with a prayer of liberation and a sanctification with Holy Salt at the "House of Slaves." What a challenge! How would we be able to achieve that?

Moreover, True Mother wanted to offer a boat to the island populace that they could use in emergencies to quickly reach Dakar and bring people in need of medical care to the hospital. True Mother had said that if we united with her, miracles would occur. That was the situation

and through all the trials I knew that was the main point, unity and being faithful to fulfilling the mission. It was important not to stumble in some situation but to move on somehow.

Thus, I went to visit the island. Having visited some Sufi brotherhoods, I decided to go to a Catholic Church as well. Occasionally in Senegal but more particularly in Gorée, within one family you can find Muslims and Catholics living under the same roof. You do not need an inter-religious meeting, since they already live together as a family.

Meeting the mayor

One Sunday, during a Catholic mass, I met the mayor, Mr. Augustin Senghor, descendant of a branch of the family of a Senegalese president, Léopold Sédar Senghor (1960–1980). I explained what UPF does, the summit that would take place and that the founder would visit the House of Slaves. Gradually, I built trust with this man, the main authority of the small city of 1,700 people. We suggested mobilizing some young Unificationists of our second generation, for service projects some time before the summit. Therefore, two weeks before True Mother's visit, around twenty young men and women in STF-Europe came to renovate some places on Gorée Island. We had to prepare this course of action carefully, as some officials harbored doubts about it. In the end, it proved a good foundation for True Mother's visit.

Another task was to find a boat, a good one in good condition, within our budget and ready on time. With different opinions and uncertainties as to how to decide properly, the task was not easy. A few times, I was about to give up, but after deciding to involve the mayor and his assistant, their cooperation proved fruitful and allowed us to find a boat and to prepare it on time. Even choosing the name was vexing. A few days before the event, we received the name -- Victoria. True Mother had decided.

The authorities and citizen of the island will long remember the visit by True Mother, locally called Mother Moon. This historic event, which went smoothly and was successful, was the eye of the storm -- calm and solemn -- whereas the event at the Abdou Diouf International Conference Center (CICAD) had the intensity of a strong ocean storm.



The Victoria undergoing holy salting from the pier

A starting point for peace

In the morning of January 19, before the arrival of the presidential boat used for True Mother and her party, most members as well as the Little Angels arrived two hours early. While waiting, an interesting phenomenon took place. As we were coming to the pier with the mayor and his assistants, an old woman began yelling. The woman appeared crazy, shouting and pushing the mayor. Some security people took care of her and everything then became quiet. Clearly, it seemed a manifestation of the spirit world.

The receiving line of members, children and the adult islanders was long; it nearly reached the House of Slaves. I was next to the mayor who offered flowers, with his wife, to True Mother. The people were joyful -- some were clapping, children were singing, music filled the air.

The ceremony that took place at the House of Slaves was significant. The tension preceding the ceremony was palpable. With key Korean members, Rev. Lee Gi-seong, Rev. Bang Seungman and Mr. Seo Hyunook, we prepared the necessary items -- Holy Salt from Korea, some earth from True Father's grave site (Bonhyangwon) at Cheon Jeong Gung, some earth from Gorée and holy water.

Reverend Camara, the regional president, was the MC. He introduced Mayor Senghor, who said a few words of greeting. Rev. Lee read the Declaration of Heaven and then True Mother offered a special, deep, moving prayer. We were grateful to Mr. Seo, who translated directly into French so that everyone present understood her Korean entreaty.

Afterward, True Mother mixed the earth from the two locations in a large bowl, and then she spread Holy Salt, right there in the center of the House of Slaves. She declared it a holy ground, eternally connected to Heaven and to the holy ground in Korea, as well as a starting point for world peace. It was profound. The participants respectfully united with the ceremony, including the mayor, his wife, the director of the

House of Slaves and Sheikh Mansour Diouf. Dr. Michael Balcomb concluded the ceremony with three cheers of Mansei.

Following the ceremony, we all listened to an explanation by Mr. Eloi Coly, curator of the House of Slaves. True Mother took the time to go inside some cells, especially the one used to hold children, in which True Mother cried. When she emerged, people could see that and it moved them. Everyone's seriousness was apparent.

We all then went to Monument Square. The Little Angels made a nice circle around our group. There, together with True Mother, the mayor unveiled the golden plaque dedicated to her special visit. The mayor gave a few words of explanation when bestowing on True Mother a certificate as a pilgrim to Gorée. The atmosphere was serene and smiles were on all faces. Mayor Senghor received the key to the boat. The Little Angels sang Senegal's national anthem in the Wolof language [the native language of the majority people of Senegal] and a very popular song, "*Dibidi Direk*." Hearing these songs in the beautiful voices of the Little Angels moved the mayor to tears.

Long-distance purification

The last stop was for the blessing of the boat. I had asked the pilot to bring the Victoria as close as possible to the pier. Holding a bowl of Holy Salt, True Mother, with two daughters-in-law, Julia HJ Moon and Yeon Ah Moon, and assisted by the mayor and me, went as near as possible to the boat. We laughed just a bit when the Holy Salt did not reach the boat because it was moving in the wind. I offered to take part in the ceremony and even said to Mayor Senghor, "You could also bless your boat." Mother looked on, smiling, as we both took a handful of Holy Salt and threw it. This time it went on the boat -- a victory for Victoria.

Mayor Senghor understood; the special grace Gorée received from True Mother, the depth of her prayer and the sanctification of the island made a strong impression on him. Other important and famous people had visited Gorée in the past, but True Mother's visit will be memorable because of the depth and significance of the ceremony, including the plaque and the boat.

After the departure of the presidential boat, some people around the mayor expressed their sincere respects and heartfelt thanks to True Mother for what she had done in Gorée; some religious leaders and traditional leaders expressed sincere appreciation for True Mother. They had felt her deep heart and spirituality.

To conclude I can say that Senegal had good conditions for this event. Our teamwork, our unity and especially the cooperation with talented members of our second generation, were also keys to the victory. During this preparation, I saw myself representing my country France (with a direct connection at the time of the slave trade between Gorée and Nantes, near my hometown in the West of France). We had to go through some special situations that tested my humility, attitude and ability to remain aligned with the providential purpose of the Africa Summit. Thank you, True Mother.