

Interview of FFWPU International Vice-President Jun Seok An [Young Shik An]

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In July, True Mother appointed Rev. Jun Seok An to a new post, international vice-president. She also gave him a new name. He had been Young Shik An, until recently the regional president for Europe.

Question: Could you begin by explaining a bit about your background and how you joined?

My family background is Confucian; my father was a Confucian teacher. I joined because my eldest brother was a member. He joined when he was very young and had to leave our family.

Eventually he came back. My father was very sick so the eldest son had to come back so he could inherit and fulfill all the various tribal requirements.

He was the sixth generation, with the first sonship, so he had to take his tribal position. After that, all my brothers and sisters joined.

Question: If I'm not mistaken you're from the Jeonla area of Korea?

Yes.

Question: True Father often spoke of bitterness between western (North and South Jeonla Provinces) and eastern (North and South Gyeongsang Provinces) South Korea. Growing up did you sense that?

My ancestors come from eastern Korea. Also in my family, my great grandfather was a great Confucian scholar. He was of the Confucian school of the east, not of the west, even though we lived in Jeonla, which is situated in western Korea. So we did not have any bad feelings about the east, such as the Gyeongsang area; but of course I grew up in the Jeonla area which has so much feeling of discriminations.

Question: In the United States, you were a regional leader in the American Deep South, which had a plantation economy and until 150 years ago had slaves. In one sermon, you spoke of the cultural dynamics between African American and white members there. On the international level how does your experience color your outlook?

That helped me a lot, not only experiencing some racial friction, but also national differences and cultural differences, and then to experience that diversity in the Deep South and the national differences, later in Europe. I loved the Deep South and African Americans. Through this, I learned how to harmonize differences.

Christians say that Christian communities are brothers and sisters because they believe that God is the Father.

They say "Oh, brothers and sisters," but they do not have a real sense of brothers and sisters. If they had a real sense of brothers and sisters, how could they have sold brothers and sisters as slaves and have done all these terrible things?

Even though they have Heavenly Father, they do not have a real sense of parents in truth, as we have. They don't have the same real bond of brothers and sisters who share the parents. To have brothers and sisters, you have to share parents.

Question: Did you see real bonds developing within that church in Atlanta?

Of course, we had real bonds, the real sense of brothers and sisters under True Parents. We could feel all the brothers and sisters, all the members, are all like my physical brothers and sisters, black or white. That was my feeling.

Question: When did you go to Europe, I think first as an itinerant worker?

No, in 1992 I went to Europe as CARP. I was a missionary for CARP for one and a half years.

Question: Could you give your general impression of Europe and the countries that are there?

They speak many different languages and there are so many nationalities and cultures; there is so much diversity. Europe has deep roots in history.

Question: I think that they also have some deep-rooted distrust.

Sometimes, of course they have. Because any country's neighboring countries cause so much trouble in history, they kill each other, but at this point they have a European Union. Especially Germany and France is a kind of a modern model of reconciling and leaving the past. I think that is a very important success.

Question: I think not so long ago we had the problems in the Balkans, though we address these difficulties mainly through UPF.

Yes, there are deep religious and ethnic conflicts. Historically, it was the starting ground of World War I. Recently, we witnessed a great tragedy in the genocide. The area remains unstable. Without the guidance of True Parents, we cannot hope to truly go forward. UPF has and continues to work toward reconciliation and harmony.

Question: Even within the church, I sometimes find differences of opinion.

Of course. People have different perspectives, so they might see the same thing as a positive or as a negative. People have a perspective according to their common base: Russians have their common base, and Americans have their common base. But Americans and Russians also have a common base, a fundamental common base. If we say that the common base is the Principle, there are many layers of principle, so we have to place the priority on basic principles, principles that are more general rather than principles that are more specific. This is how we can resolve conflicts of opinion, by emphasizing the sameness rather than the differences.

Question: Did you study Confucianism as you grew up?

No, I went to a regular public school. My house was the Confucius school, so people came to my house to study Confucian canons as I was going out to study at school.

Question: I guessed you had been a Christian because I read sermons in which you spoke about Jesus.

Actually, I was a strong atheist, but I read the Bible by myself. It was a long process to change from an atheist to believe in God, and in the Bible also. Of course, without the Divine Principle and going the church, I don't think I would have been able to believe in God.

Question: What did your brother first say to you when he first introduced you?

He just said to go to the workshop.

Question: And you just agreed.

No, I did not agree. I had to follow.

Question: Ah, that's a beautiful way to put it.

It has a different sense. Especially in my family, we learned that when we are asked to do something we assume there is some reason for the person to ask me to do that even if I cannot understand at the time. My parents were always saying, "You won't understand until you become a parent." Of course it is better to know, but sometimes you cannot. To act after knowing is preferred, but many times we do not know. Therefore, we must trust our parents and elders.

Question: Better to follow and find out later.

Yes, because my parents and brothers and sisters are not going to ask me to do things that will lead me astray. My eldest brother is the eldest son, but he is also a kind of parent figure. After my parents died, my eldest brother became a kind of parents figure for me. That is why I went to the workshop because I presumed he asked that I do what is good for me.

Question: What did you discover at that first workshop?

At the time, I was not sure that there was God, because I had a very strong belief that there was no God. However, I realized there was some possibility that God existed. There was consistency in history according to God's Providence.

Question: How did you apply your Business Administration studies in your church life?

I was studying practical things, I worked in a bank, which is very practical. This helped me develop a sense of practicality. I think perfection means to cover from one side to the other extreme, a big spectrum.

Question: Do you have anything you would like to add?

Throughout my life I think I stretched in many dimensions. I was born into a poor country, but throughout my life I have witnessed its economic progress, and I have worked in rich countries. I was an extremely idealistic person, but I studied very practical things. And I would go back to the spiritual area again.

I was able to gain a good sense of the mean, the Golden Mean, what the balance is. To be stable, we need to pursue this balance.

Question: It sounds as if you lived a very fortunate life.

I have had a bright life, with many experiences, many people, many nationalities, and many cultures. When I arrived in London after receiving my mission at my first meeting with elder leaders, they basically said that I had to understand Europe. I don't think that perfection means knowing only one side. Perfection means that you span from one side to the other side, covering a bigger spectrum.

A good car needs a good accelerator and a good brake, so you can drive at the right speed. In some places, you have to go fast, and some places you have to go slow. That is what perfection means. If I just follow the European culture, what about the Oriental culture?

We have to balance both.

Liberal people have to learn from conservative people and conservative people have to learn from liberal people.

Many people think they do not like the other side so find nothing to learn from them. They think they don't need to learn from the other side, but that is not good. The differences have to be united through the give and take action, between the subject and object, based on the common base. That is the way to be perfect.