

Clifton, NJ Family Church: My Leda Project Testimony

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September 2022



I was in America for 20 years, until I went to China and N. Korea and then to Hungary. In 1999, Father called the Japanese national messiahs to come with fishing rods to the Pantanal for a workshop. Following the workshop, he said, "You should think you are now dead and be ready to go to the place I assign you to pioneer." What would you do if you received such a direction from True Father? Father said, "You should think you are now dead, so that you can go to the most difficult place -- the Pantanal. You must go into hell to liberate hell." What do you think you would do if you were given such an order, and you were told to go immediately?

I had been in North America. North America is a nice place. It is very beautiful. Japan is a nice place. Hungary is also nice with a good music culture. However, spending 40 days in a fishing workshop was already enough of South America for me -- especially 40 days in the Pantanal area. It was hot and there were mosquitoes. There were also many reptiles like snakes and alligators. I really didn't want to go to South America, especially not to the Pantanal. It was miserably hot.

When we get a change of mission, and we are promoted, it is a good thing. We have no complaint about that. However, if we are demoted, it is hard to accept. When the Puritans came to America, they prepared themselves for a difficult time, but we did not have any preparation. True Father said to go right away, directly from the workshop location. We were not given any preparation time. I had to go to the place I did not want to go to. I do not like the Pantanal, because it has everything that I hate -- hot weather, mosquitoes, poison insects, reptiles, and especially all kinds of snakes -- jumping snakes, coiling snakes, and huge anacondas living in the river. We could not go to this kind of place unless we thought of ourselves as "dead."

We went to the Pantanal with shovels and carts. There was nothing there -- no drinking water, no electricity, no buildings. There was one communication tower, which stopped working after one month. Therefore we were totally isolated without any communication system. We did not know what was going on in the world. I could not communicate with my wife, who did not know where I was.

Unbearable heat and mosquitoes surrounded me. You know, it's terrible to have 10 mosquito bites, but imagine if you were bitten by hundreds of mosquitoes. Any exposed skin was attacked, but if we covered our skin, it was too hot. We had to choose whether to be hot or to be bitten. I have very sensitive skin, and when I was bitten, I would suffer for a week. We averaged 100 to 200 mosquito bites every day. Mosquitoes penetrate regular clothes easily, so we had to wear nylon windbreakers to protect our skin. I usually chose to be hot, but soon the heat overcame me and I took off the covering. Eventually our skin became tough, and we built up a certain immunity after suffering so many bites. Now my skin is used to being bitten, and the itch goes away after a few minutes. In this way, I got used to the mosquitos.

I hated reptiles, especially snakes. However, they don't bother me anymore because I got used to them being around. I understand their nature. When rattle snakes coil, they are assuming an attack position. Eunectes are large aquatic snakes (anacondas), but in general, they are not aggressive. Also, at night, jaguars came out. We encountered many frightening things in our environment, but we eventually got used to these things.

True Father said, "The Pantanal is a Garden of Eden." Father fulfilled the indemnity conditions for us, allowing the original place to be returned to us -- this is the Pantanal. All original things exist there, pristine and untouched. Why are they untouched? It's because no one wants to go there. Actually it's a barren land. There are no machines, no electricity and no modern conveniences.

We went there simply because Father told us to. The carts we brought with us broke down after two days. Everything was done by manual labor.

We carried 50 kg (110 lbs.) bags of cement and 70 kg (150 lbs.) bags of gravel in the blistering sun. It was an extremely difficult job. There were no cold soft drinks available after such strenuous work, as you would find here in the USA. For drinking water, we added chlorine to river water to sterilize it in order to prevent diarrhea.

National messiahs are intelligent people but they are generally ignorant of this kind of survival knowledge. We were the elite in our former missions. We hadn't held anything heavier than a piece of chalk. We were all used to being served by members. But in Leda, when we gave orders to one another to do this or that, no one listened, and everyone was exhausted.

Day after day, heat and mosquitos enveloped us. But these things we could endure. It was, however, human relationships that were most challenging. We worked together from morning to night with the same people and everyone became stressed out. Our love tended to dry up. It was surely difficult to practice living for the sake of others. We always met with difficulty. Do you understand this kind of situation? Can you imagine it? It was similar to a Korean drama -- when you are tortured, your real self comes out. No matter how great a leader one may be, a person's real nature comes out when times get difficult. Then we would begin blaming one another and be unable to unite. This is truly hell. Actually, we could endure the external hell, but it was very difficult to persevere through the internal hell, which was really emotionally painful. Internal Hell is really painful. How great True Father is who overcame all of this.

If someone asks you to do something when you are totally exhausted, you might reply, "Why don't you do it yourself?" In Leda, there was an unspoken agreement that those who suggested that something be done should also be the ones to take responsibility to carry it out. We came to believe that it was better not to suggest anything because, if you did, and it didn't work out, you would get blamed for its failure. You would be safer by staying quiet. However, there was no progress under those circumstances.

In Leda, a person's true nature (often fallen nature) was revealed because the situation was so difficult. Again, it's something like being tortured. If we exposed too much of our fallen nature, we created a bad atmosphere, so it was important to endure even when we wanted to complain. So, we simply persevered and kept on working, even though we basically understood that nothing much would happen just by enduring.

I really thought about True Father's greatness in this environment. After his wedding to his first wife and after having a baby, he heard God's voice directing him to go to North Korea. In N. Korea, great tribulation was awaiting him. He knew he might die in N. Korea. He went to Hungnam prison but he always "lived for the sake of others." Do you think ordinary people could survive in this kind of situation? If you could do this, it would be the ultimate practice of the Divine Principle. The homework True Father has given us is huge. This is because we are meant to become extraordinary people.

Everything is connected to humankind, including solving the food shortage problem and protecting the environment. All is for the sake of humankind. However, when we faced difficulty, we were not able to think about humankind; we could not think about anything beyond our own personal problems. We initially just did things fast and loose -- look around, there are only shacks around here. We felt at first that it was not necessary to have beautiful buildings here. But later we realized that we needed to build nice buildings for the future, so that we could invite world dignitaries here. We envisioned that we could make a big impact if we built a beautiful settlement on this barren land.

Can you think about saving humankind when you are facing poverty, or when you can't even get your own dinner? The distance from the capital city Asuncion to Leda is similar to the distance from Tokyo to Sapporo (over 700 miles). It takes one week to get there by riverboat, and almost two weeks by the land route. Further, there was no electricity in Leda. We wondered, "Why are we building the ideal kingdom here? For humanity?" This was impossible; there was no humanity there. So we struggled to understand. We imagined it would have been easier if we were building closer to the capital city, since Leda is barren land. Our minds also became barren. There exist many different expressions of becoming barren. That's why, in Leda, we can see the greatness of True Father. Even in the most difficult situations, he lived for the sake of others.

True Parents have never given up trying to fulfill their dream of building an ideal kingdom. Everything would be in vain if we were to give up now. Therefore, we studied True Father's words. Here in America you can go for advice when you have a problem. You have people who can help you. In Leda, everyone had problems, and consequently there was nowhere to go for help. Everyone was thinking about how to exit Leda. When an airplane would arrive in Leda, suddenly those who had been sent here got toothaches, or leg pains, or had to attend to children's health problems back home, and they would leave Leda one by one.

It is then that we must go back to Father's words. Father really is the messiah, because he can live for the sake of others in every kind of situation. Not everyone can do this. What is this place? This is a huge homework assignment, isn't it? Building the ideal kingdom is homework for humanity.

One member struggled and went to ask for professional advice saying, "We have 80,000 hectares of land here. What shall we do with it?" The advisers responded, "Why didn't you think about that before you

bought the land? Usually people buy land knowing what they plan to do with it." So, this was our situation. Nevertheless, we kept on going by encouraging ourselves, because there was no one encouraging us, no one praising us, and we really had no one to go to for advice. We were all in the same situation. We could only encourage ourselves through Father's words. There was only me, God and True Parents. Gaining encouragement through Father's words was the key. In Leda, we have been doing Hoon Dok Hae at 4:15 am for 15 years. This is the earliest Hoon Dok Hae time in the world. We start working at 6:30 am at sunrise.

I think I was fortunate to have been in America. I love America, American members and American history. The Puritans had a difficult time in the beginning. They did not give up colonizing God's land even after losing many loved ones during the first year. They were our founding fathers. Because of this foundation, God blessed America and established America as a central nation in His providence.

This history of the Puritans' faith touched my heart deeply. I was fortunate to come to Leda through America. I often thought about what the founding fathers would do if they were in my shoes. Only Father's words and Father's example served to encourage us. We relied upon Father's way of life, and little by little we learned to overcome our difficult circumstances.

When I visited the New Yorker Hotel today, I remembered that I was once a manager of this hotel. Then, someone reminded me about fundraising at his favorite parking lot. "Wow, a parking lot! Those were the good ole days!" he said. Many old memories came back to me. In Leda, I don't even think about this kind of thing. Everything is about God and the present moment. Our place for prayer was not just a church. We prayed in the field, at the fish-farming pond, and at the pig farm. We were always talking to God. Gradually we learned, we understood, and we gained inspiration.

Leda is located in eastern Paraguay. The Pantanal in eastern Paraguay is about the size of Hokkaido Island in Japan, which has a population of 5.5 million. Only a few people live in this section of the Pantanal. Do you know about Paraguay, and where it is located? Paraguay is like a forgotten country in the world, and Leda is a forgotten place in Paraguay. Do you know how forgotten Leda is? Even Father doesn't visit there (except for the very few times over the past 16 years). When I went back to Japan for a visit, members asked, "Oh, isn't the South American providence finished? Are you still working there? You must like it there." But I am not there because I like it. The reality is that I only continue to be there because of jeong seong (sincere devotion), prayer, and Father's words. This remains the key to our success.

Many NGOs, including European NGOs, came to the Pantanal to work but they left very soon. They came with a big hope, but they left defeated. Protestant Christians came to pioneer, but several years later, they returned home defeated. Somehow we were able to survive. Our greatest achievement was that we developed agriculture on the barren land. This has had a huge impact and people are quite impressed. Leda had been completely forgotten by the people and the government, but Rev. Moon was able to revive this forgotten region!

People thought, "Fish farming? No way! How can those amateurs develop fish farming without electricity and technology?" In Paraguay, we are the first civilian group to succeed in hatching fish eggs. We tried so many times to successfully hatch, but we had failure after failure. We almost lost hope. But, giving up is the enemy to any accomplishment. We knew nothing would happen if we gave up. God and True Father sent us to Leda to create a blessed settlement. We knew there was a reason for this; we had that conviction. Believing in the reason why we were sent there was the key.

When we finally succeeded in hatching the fish eggs, the President of the country heard the news. This was not a small event for Paraguay. This was a revolutionary event. Also, no one had ever thought about releasing juvenile fish into the river to help the local people. No one in Brazil, Bolivia, or Argentina had ever thought about this.

For the Releasing Ceremony, the President of Paraguay, the Minister of the Environment and the Minister of Agriculture all attended and thanked us. This is the way to witness to True Father's work at the highest level. These people don't easily acknowledge a person's work unless they recognize that that person is doing better and accomplishing more than they are. This was a kind of natural submission for them.

Leda was dwindling and as mentioned previously, members were leaving one by one. Our situation had seemed impossible, but then we succeeded in hatching the fish eggs. We thought, of course, the President should be invited for the Releasing Ceremony. But, because Paraguay is a Catholic nation, and the President was aware of the affiliation of our organization with the Unification Church, we doubted that he would attend.

When we invited the President, he replied that he would come if it were God's Will. At first, that seemed to be a strategy of using the invisible God as an excuse. Worse still, the day of our Releasing Ceremony was also the day of a special Catholic holiday mass. We felt sure that, when the President attended the

holiday mass, the priest would suggest that he not go to Leda. However, to our surprise, the President called us and affirmed that he was coming to attend the ceremony.

He came to our event and he was very happy. Then he came a second time, bringing his wife, and eventually he visited Korea. We were grateful to God, and True Mother was very happy. A Korean television station named MVC came to Leda to film our settlement and accomplishments and that program was aired throughout Korea as illustrating the great work that the Unification Church was doing. We were very grateful for these successes.

You didn't know what was happening in South America, did you? People thought I had left the church or that I was dead since they hadn't seen me for a long time. Today, I am finally here after many decades. I see long-forgotten faces here today. For instance, I thought this or that person had left the church, but I see these persons today. You may also have believed that I was no longer in the church, but we are all here today. This is so wonderful. Praise God, I am alive and you are alive. However, just being alive is not enough. We need to make God proud of us. If we practice Father's words, we will definitely prosper. This is true.

If we love all things of creation, they will return beauty to us. Love is the key. We can sometimes fool people but we cannot deceive the creation. For example, you may simply appear to be a saint and, as a result, people will love you, but if you just appear to be watering a plant, it won't respond to you. You cannot deceive the natural world. People can be deceived by smooth talk, but nature will not respond to such insincere talk or appearances. If we don't love and care for the creation, it will not grow. Likewise, if we don't love God and bring joy to God, we will not prosper. So, True Mother was really happy with Leda's development.

You know, God uses those people who have crawled up from the bottom of the pit. We often discover our true nature at the bottom of the pit. Now I am a farmer, fisherman and swine herder. Our viewpoint is quite different when we are looking from the top or from the bottom. We want to see everything from the top, but not from the bottom. We want to learn about Father from the top, but not from the bottom. Father, however, wants to save people who are both at the top and on the bottom. So, what we are talking about here is saving people -- salvation.

Religion without the power of salvation has no use. We should never forget the power of salvation -- the need to save humankind. We are so busy just working in the church, but oftentimes we forget about the salvation of humankind. This is unfortunate. True Father's whole worldview is about nothing but the salvation of humankind and the liberation of God. This is Father's life. True Father transformed the barren land into a blessed land. Father showed us the example.

Our church has this kind of power, the power to save people who are at the bottom, in the lowest position. We also have a desire to do this. This is the way of Abel. We embrace Judaism, Christianity, Islam and all of humankind. We need to live and work according to such higher motivation. Otherwise, we will surely end up in our own small world.

Let's go back to my original point about coming to America (US or N. America) in 1973. Why did Father invest in America? God had a plan to use America. God had a plan for America and then raised America. Here in America, there are so many kinds of different nationalities -- European, Spanish, Orientals etc. This is a model nation, in that it stands as "One family under God." Written on American money is "In God We Trust". There is a trusting relationship between God and America's people. This trusting relationship is rooted in God, our founding father, and is the backbone of our faith.

Why did Father come to North America and South America? It was to bring about the unity of those countries through unifying their Christian foundations. Then, on that foundation Father could embrace Islam, other religions and all humankind. We Japanese have worked in South America. However, at this point in the providence, North America, the elder son nation, is the central focus. The elder son nation must be victorious first. Otherwise, there is no salvation for South America. In other words, without uniting North America and South America, we cannot save the world. True Father has spoken at length about this.

After the Washington Monument Rally in 1976, Father said that South America would be the next country to be providentially addressed. Why South America? As Abel, America (Protestant) must embrace Cain, South America (Catholic). This is the principled course in the practice of love. Just as Jesus and True Father did, we must practice love substantially. America is meant to embrace Cain and other religions, thereby overcoming the fallen nature of Christianity. Then, if we can receive God as our parents, the world can be united under God as "One Family Under God."

America needs to stand as the central nation in God's providence. It needs to stand as an Abel nation. America ought to gain the right of the elder son from Cain. This world is so chaotic and confused. I have dedicated my life for a long time to realizing God's purpose, but I feel almost as if I am standing at the

beginning point once again.

Thank you for preparing this place for me to share my talk today. Think about why Father invested 34 years in America. America is the key to accomplish the salvation of humankind. First, we must embrace North American Christianity, and then together, we will embrace South America through the love of Jesus.

We all worked hard here in America, fundraising and witnessing, and many people joined the church, but for what purpose? Please read the speech that Father gave at the Washington Monument Rally. America is the central nation of God's providence. All people need to believe in one God, True Parents, and the practice of true love. Father wanted to bring the victorious foundation created in North America (Abel) to South America (Cain) through serving South America, thereby gaining the right of the elder son. On that basis, Father could unify the world.

Let me return to my original point regarding the founding fathers, the Puritans. Father came to this land, so we should expect it to become a better place, since Father is the Messiah. If this land became worse than it was before Father came, that is due to our shortcoming. We need to become like Father and rededicate ourselves to the Christian revival of North America and South America. I am standing at the starting point. This is a new beginning for me. You may have thought that you were once a hero. Are you retired now? Are you thinking about the good ole days?

What about our attitude today? This is our problem. Father said, "Our ending should be the best." Is our life dwindling? Are we all getting old, and getting closer to the spirit world? Let's be victorious once more. Let's be active people once again. It is time to come back saying, "I have returned!" You who are gathered here today are the people of "the Return." To just say, "I am here," or "I am surviving," is not a good thing -- it's very sad. We should all affirm, "I am still standing in the front line." This is the important point. I am going to start again in South America. Father transitioned to the spirit world. Now we exist in a single parent-family. Mother is working hard alone. We children should support Mother. Don't you think so?

We are in America, in the country of God's blessing, where we can sing, "God Bless America" and "America the Beautiful." Once again, let us revive ourselves. Let us awaken and become active again, maybe even more active than before. I am going to do my very best based on all my past experiences. Singing "God Bless America" and "America the Beautiful," let us begin anew and let us work hard together.

Thank you very much.

