

Testimony of Annemarie Bichsel

January 17, 2015

Born in 1946 - Austrian and Swiss citizen

Joined the Unification movement on 1 January 1969 in Vienna

Spiritual mother: Emmi Steberl

Blessed with Kurt Bichsel in 1978 in London - Two sons



"I took home the Divine Principle book and read it through without a break. I was sure that God answered my prayers through the Divine Principle and that this was His message to me!"

Anmerkung: Ich habe mein Zeugnis anlässlich des 40-jährigen Jubiläums der Gründung der Vereinigungskirche in der Schweiz im April 2012 verfasst und im Januar 2015 aktualisiert. Es ist in Englisch, weil aufgrund der vier Landessprachen und der Internationalität der Schweizer Mitglieder die Kommunikationssprache der Vereinigungskirche in der Schweiz Englisch ist. Dass Englisch nicht meine Muttersprache ist, wird man rasch merken. Das Wichtigste ist meine Freude am Weg zu Gott.

My Path to New Life

"A heartfelt welcome to your new homeland!" ("Herzlech Willkommen i dr neue Heimat!") This was the welcome when I arrived at the Zürich Center, Switzerland, in 1980, when my husband and I started our family life. How I felt when I stood beside my husband in front of this door with this welcome sign? Quite well, although at that point I did not know my husband very well yet! I felt open for what will come, and I was looking forward to an adventure!

Actually, this adventurous feeling was not new to me. I experienced this kind of feeling already 11 years before that moment in front of the door. I was then about twenty-two years old...

Childhood and Youth

I had an experience with Jesus in a Catholic church at Eastertime on Good Friday when I was about nine years old. I waited in the church until I was alone with Jesus. I got very sad seeing Jesus at the cross, I gave him kisses on the stigmata as I saw the grownups doing before. During this moment I felt strongly that Jesus should not have been crucified. I decided to think about him every day, so I changed a tradition on my own in which I every day prayed a part of the rosary for peace in the world, as my grandmother asked me to accompany her. Instead of praying the rosary I read the "way of the cross" in a children's book. I was surprised, to hear that I am not alone with this feeling. (Years later I heard, that it was not God's will that Jesus got crucified. Sun Myung Moon got a revelation when he was 16 years old in which Jesus Christ asked him to finish his mission.)

In the years of my youth I knew concretely, that I am living in the "Last Days" of mankind. Of course I asked myself: How would God restore humankind to a righteous state? I was really curious about it and felt beforehand ready to be part of his workers [for the Kingdom]. I had a very intimate relationship with God, discussing all the details of my daily life with him. I could guess that some details were not so important to him. Important was my feeling that I can be very sure that he will inform me about his daily and long-term plans and that He could be sure that I am interested to follow his call.

In my youth I created my own idea about how God could possibly stop the evil in the world: I thought there should be a period of time where men and women do not multiply, but be taught by God how to live. Only when they are mature, they will be allowed to be fruitful. The Christian belief of the Return of Christ, expecting his coming on the clouds, was not part of my Philosophy although I was Catholic.

First Contact with and Joining the Unification Church

When I was 22 years old and after my commercial education, I moved from Linz to Vienna and started to study Social Work. Shortly before I met the Unification Church I was working in my first profession as secretary and bookkeeper. Day by day went on and it happened that I developed a strong desire to receive signs from God!

One evening I was with friends in a Vienna Style Restaurant. A singer came in front of me, singing a part of an Operetta ("Zarewitsch"). The lyrics were: "Hast Du dort oben vergessen auf mich?! Du hast so viel Engel bei Dir, schick doch einen davon auch zu mir." ("Did you, up in Heaven, forget me?! You have so many angels with you, send one to me!") This was too much for me. This song, offered to me personally by this singer, reflected exactly my situation! I started to cry and cried the whole evening.

A few days later I was contacted by Emmi Steberl, a member of our Church in Austria, who went to Czechoslovakia one month later for mission work behind the Iron Curtain. Her approach to me was:

"I will introduce you to new saints who you do not know yet!" That sounded really exciting to me, so I gave her all my addresses and phone numbers that she would not lose contact with me and also to show her how interested I was. For me God is a living God. I thought I wouldn't be surprised, if new saints appeared. Soon I attended the lectures that taught the Divine Principle of Sun Myung Moon in the Unification Church in Vienna. I took home the Divine Principle book and read it through without a break. I was sure that God answered my prayers through the Divine Principle and that this was His message to me!

Very soon, by the end of 1968, I could complete my own philosophy about how God works to lead to a "new" mankind: Through the Messiah, the "True Parents" at the center starting here on Earth, right now! Even though this was not my philosophy before, I told God that I like this way and was looking forward to see how it would work out.

Community Life and Mission Activities

When I got to know Reverend Moon and his wife in spring 1969 in Vienna, I congratulated God for his choice and thanked Reverend Moon and his wife that they accepted the call of God for the mission of Messiah, the True Parents of mankind. I was deeply impressed by this couple. I felt that they radiate real beauty, internally and externally. I discovered two aspects which impressed me with True Father: His seriousness and at the same time spreading a happy and joyful atmosphere. And with True Mother: She moved me by her beauty of her young age of 25. All this surprised me, after getting to know the hardships they experienced in their lives.

I had a happy time, testifying about True Parents in many cities, until June 1969 in Vienna and then in Germany. We did many extraordinary things such as reading Divine Principle on the busses, praying loud in the busses or the tram, preaching in the streets, telling people within a few minutes that the Messiah is here on Earth and so on. The National Leader of Germany, Paul Werner, had many ideas for exiting actions.

Looking back, one thing comes to my mind: I enjoyed life in the centers so much. I was leading centers in Nürnberg, Freiburg, Regensburg, Berlin, Aachen, Düsseldorf, as housemother in a team in Camberg, and later together with my husband in Zürich, and then leading the Women Federation in Switzerland for five years and leading a national prayer group for many years. Everywhere I could feel how precious it is to share our belief and actions with brothers and sisters and our guests in such a close way. It was a big field of learning, but not only that, I felt lots of love among us and this was the base for success, on the personal and on the community level, for growth, in depth and broadness. I felt, that we could offer a base to God in this situation. When I meet brothers and sisters from these times, with whom I worked together over forty years ago, I often hear that they felt joyful and happy in our centers, too. I was happy, when I could witness to people who could feel joy meeting the Unification Church and who chose to follow this way of dedication. A lasting very deep relationship could be established to brothers and sisters to whom I witnessed and who joined. I wanted to give them the love and joy that I could feel by God, True Parents and brothers and sisters when I joined!

Reverend Moon and his wife gave us guidance for our life of faith with unconditional love. There are many books with contents of their guidance. I will express just a few points which personally helped me in my life of faith:

"All of Jesus' words have one basic teaching: Love is of the utmost value. That is why Jesus' teaching was so meaningful and had such historical impact. Love is also what you are learning from me. Do you understand?" -- Sun Myung Moon

"God is streaming into the very cells of your body. How can you not feel close to Him, knowing that He will be with you 24 hours a day, just as long as you work publicly? We must know that God is not a concept; He is not anything less than love itself. All He wants is to make us the perfect objects to Him as the perfect subject." -- Sun Myung Moon

"Your concern should be how to give and how to give well. As for the return to you, you must trust in God. He will take care of it." -- Sun Myung Moon

"If we are filled with the divine spirit and truth and lead a life of constant prayer and gratitude for all things, we will be able to hear the voice of our Heavenly Parent, which will sweep through our entire being." -- Hak Ja Han Moon

This describes True Parents' goal. Their main subject in their guidance is about LOVE, on all levels, to support us in our spiritual growth. After the time of mainly living and working in centers, True Parents led us to the next level: learning to build a strong base for Heavenly Father through marriage and building a family.

Marriage and Family Life in Switzerland



This was my reason to come to Switzerland, as my husband was living in Switzerland. From experience I could be a hundred percent sure, that even though it was difficult to leave a country, first Austria and then Germany, to live in another place is even more exciting. I discovered, this phenomenon has to do with one's own growth. This was the reason I trusted that it would be more exciting in my new place than ever before. Even it was a very new situation having my husband suddenly beside me.

Before I met Kurt my husband at the matching, I had a special experience of being enlightened that my future husband is a participant in a meeting in Camberg, Germany. I was working there as a house mother and was part of the Staff in a European Workshop. When I typed all the 70 names of the participants, it came to my heart that my future husband is among them. As I was a hundred percent sure about it, I took a copy of this list (which I never did with other lists of our Workshop participants in Camberg) – and I kept this list until my Marriage Blessing. And Kurt was on the list! Of course, although I was so sure that my future husband is present among the participants in Camberg, I was still too shy to look at all the brothers' faces who were in the meeting, to figure out who my future husband could be. In another big meeting in London in 1978, Rev. Moon, our True Father did it for me at the matching of the 118 Couple Blessing, in which my husband-to-be and I participated. (When I first heard that Reverend Moon will, if we wish so, find a husband for us, I felt released that I can avoid the stress of making beautiful eyes to men to eventually find a husband.)

When living in Switzerland I initially did the same things as before in Austria and Germany: Living together with brothers and sisters in the Zürich Center, sharing our time of reflecting and working together. However, the difference was that my husband was next to me and this made it very special, in a good way (and sometimes it also could create difficulties). I could understand much deeper than before God's nature through experiencing the expression of the masculine and feminine aspects of our personality, beside our differences of personal character. It was a time to learn.

One year later we had our first son. I remember the deep joy in the night he was born. Although I had incredible pain during the night, I was full of joy and I always had to look at him, lying beside my bed. I only had expressions of joy and gratitude in my heart. (Many years before, two people read in my palm that I wouldn't be able to have children). Through my son's birth I could imagine, how exciting it must have been for God, when he was welcoming His children. Then our second son was born. He was so lovely, making a special noise which expressed that he feels so fine here on earth. Kurt first thought this noise would be asthma, and he felt relieved when the doctors said that his son is just fine.

Of course, having children all of a sudden being a family among other newly built families also brought an instable situation to our movement in Switzerland and worldwide. The difficulty of living apart from each other and not to have this natural closeness any more as we had when we lived together in a center while sharing everything. Also the question of finances came up. How to raise money for the family and at the same time support the community? It was a new challenge! Changing the style of earning money instead of fundraising meant that one had to work again in one's former profession or learning a profession anew.

It needed some time to understand and follow True Parent's direction that we have a concrete mission, to bring what they gained on a big level into our small level as a "Tribal Messiah"! The era of church was over, we did not pray anymore in True Parents name, but in our own names and sent our own relatives to Blessings. Before that time, we invested our energy in other people, "love other people more" was a motto. Then True Father taught us to concentrate on restoring our

clan. I realized all of this on our family level much too slow. The importance of restoring our clan became very clear to me when I started to read about life in spirit world, the moment of death. We meet our clan when they welcome us in the Spirit World.

Kurt and I were very fortunate that his family was so open to connect with True Parents through a Blessing. First his younger sister was ready to receive the Blessing in Korea, then his parents were ready to receive the Blessing in Bern, his elder sister and brother-in-law in Vienna. We could feel free to speak about True Parents and could feel, in many cases, that we are responsible as a clan. There are further steps in front of us: The situation is different with my relatives in Austria. My parents died 30 years ago. Looking back, I do not remember that my parents would talk with me in detail about religious subjects. The concentration of my parents was more on practicing a righteous life. I am their only child and felt very much loved by them.

When my parents heard about my deeper religious interests and that I joined Unification Church in Vienna they became skeptical. Only after our marriage and when we had our children, they could relax and enjoy the relationship with my husband, our children and my family-in-law. They felt that they could trust my husband.



I always felt that my husband is investing a lot for people all around him. He loved to support somebody – whether it was a family member or somebody he met anew. This is part of his character. He loved his missions, building up the ginseng business in Switzerland, building a parents group of our members and leading the Family Federation together with me. What he loved most was to welcome and protect True Parents during their stay and also to support guests in big meetings, preparing and organizing meetings.

A difficult time came when we realized that Kurt had health problems and that it was serious. My sons and I tried to help desperately. The situation did not change for the better. Still then he tried to comfort

us. When it came to the last days of his life, Kurt and I could build a spiritual bridge. When I went to his room in hospital, I heard a special melody, a very beautiful one.

Kurt went to Spirit World on 18th of September 2010. Many brothers and sisters participated in the Seunghwa Ceremony, a Ceremony when a member goes to Spirit

World. I was thankful for the support of our brothers and sisters. Now we already live 4 years without Kurt. I feel him participating in our life out from Spirit World many times. I am thankful for my sons, for their beautiful relationship they offer to me, it comforted me very much. I wish that I can give to them an aspect of parental love, now that my husband is gone.

After about one year when Kurt was passing into Spirit World I had the desire to meet a medium to be able to have some verbal give and take with Kurt. This was an amazing situation. The medium was an elderly English lady, very heartistic. I had the feeling they liked each other. First of all Kurt said to me, "Thank you for your help and loving service when I was sick". He mentioned concrete situations. Then he emphasized twice, please notice, I do not have pain any more. It was, because sometimes I felt so sorry for him even after his death. The medium often started to laugh in the session and then I wondered what Kurt was talking to her about. She expressed that Kurt is such a humorous person. I could notice that he is with us sometimes in our daily life through Kurt's very concrete knowledge about me and our family, even about our thoughts and feelings. Incredible! He gave us many advices. The medium sometimes commented that he is so practical. She said that she feels we are a wonderful couple. That it isn't easy at times, but we stood together and built up a love relationship which goes far beyond the physical life.

Gratitude

When we celebrated the 40 years anniversary of the Unification Church in Switzerland in April 2012, all brothers and sisters reflected in a testimony on the topic "What do we love in Switzerland?"

I love most centrally God, True Parents, my Husband and my Children! I thank God, that he gave me a wonderful husband and children and that I received this blessing from True Parents. Thanks for Switzerland, its wonderful nature and beautiful landscape. I remember, it was one of Kurt's first actions to show me his homeland on several sightseeing tours. He was proud of the beauty of his homeland. I learned that I shouldn't be tired and fall asleep in front of the beautiful scenery in the

nature beside him in the car (yes, he easily could take it personally when I felt asleep during those sightseeing tours) I am grateful for my relationship to Kurt's Family, his two sisters and their families. I felt warmly welcomed by them in their house.

What I also loved especially were the relationships with the brothers and sisters, with the National Leaders, and the support we received through our National Messiah Rev. Joong-hyun Pak and his wife. I had the feeling, they could implant confidence in our members' hearts and we could learn from their love for Switzerland and that we should truly value our country! I am very thankful for it.

I am grateful for my time of doing mission together with my husband, leading the Zürich Center and leading the Family Federation, later founding and leading a national prayer group for years and being president of Women's Federation in Switzerland.

I am grateful for having worked for 12 years in social institutions, as a certified social pedagogue and art therapist, and the education period in preparation for these professions at several schools, besides working in this field. I was joyful that the education through Divine Principle was the base for these professions, as it helped me to reach the hearts of people. In this time I could value very much the True Parents' education concerning true love.

I like to be in Switzerland and I hope that I am able to support our Heavenly Parents (God) and our True Parents here.