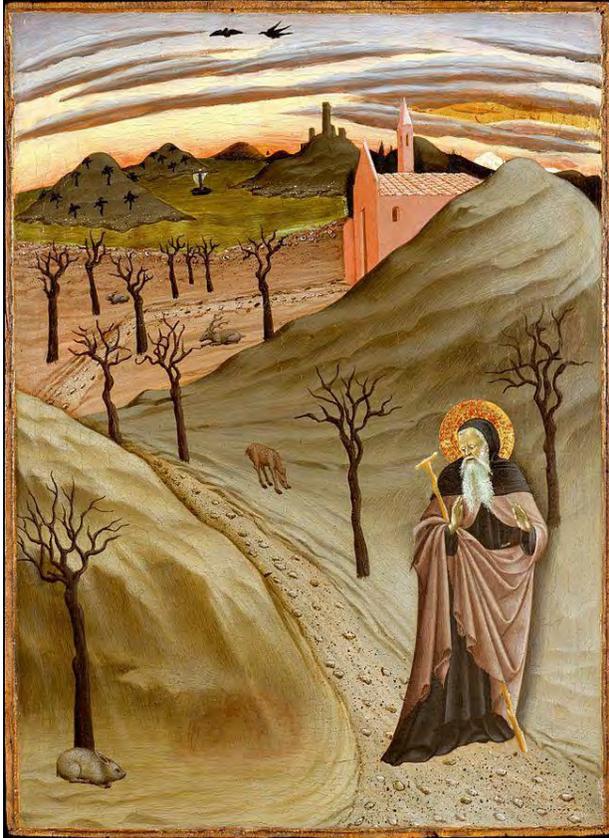


## My Unificationist Memoirs Chapter 55

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The tradition of prayer on MFT has deep roots. Reading and listening to the testimonies of brothers and sisters, I am convinced that, "surrounded by a great cloud of witnesses," we inherited the zeal of our forebears. Our sincere hearts and sacrificial effort attracted the most devoted spiritual ancestors, those who were seeking to benefit by the merit of the age and experience completion stage resurrection.

Jesus exhorts us to "pray constantly." These two words have given rise to religious traditions which have exercised a transformative influence on human societies for thousands of years. The earliest Christian monks sought refuge in the deserts of the Middle East and North Africa, stripping away worldly distractions and devoting themselves to constant prayer, always seeking the heart of Jesus. They modeled their lives on the gospels. Where Jesus withdrew to a "lonely place" to spend the night in prayer, they spent countless nights and early mornings chanting the Psalms in a perpetual vigil spanning all of Christian history. They withdrew to mountains and caves, seeking ever deeper seclusion and separation from the world, all the while becoming a sign and symbol to the world.

When Christianity became the religion of the Roman Empire, these men and women became convinced that the Second Coming was soon at hand and redoubled their devotions and asceticism. They were certain that the end of martyrdom and official persecution signaled the decline of the true spirit of Christianity. If the faith grew easy and comfortable, how could it remain authentic? Thus, they chose to be living witnesses, dying to themselves in prayer and unselfish living, gathering in desert communities governed by early monastic rules. As the stories of these men and women spread, their sayings became the inspiration and wisdom for the lives of their Christian brethren, who often sought these anchorites out as teachers and guides. John Cassian gathered these testimonies in his "Institutes" in the late Fourth Century and eventually finding his way to the South of France, founded a monastic community in Marseilles. His "Institutes" and monastic practice profoundly influenced St. Benedict, who began a monastic foundation at Monte Casino, governed by what became known as "The Rule of St. Benedict." The working practicality and spiritual wisdom of Benedict's Rule can be seen in its success: to this day Benedictine, Cistercian, and Cistercian Trappist communities throughout the world, on every habitable continent, govern themselves according to his daily schedule, organizational structure, and psychological insight.

Benedict's monastic foundations spread from Italy to Spain and France, and to the British Isles, exercising both a civilizing and evangelical role on essentially pagan and tribal communities. The monks of Ireland,

in turn, traveled throughout the Germanic lands, introducing the faith and pioneering foundations which became centers for education, trade, and local commerce as they Christianized the warring tribes. Examine the history of many European cities and one will find a monastic foundation at its very root. Ironically, these very communistic foundations in which individual monks owned nothing and worked for the common good, originated the exchange dynamics that ended feudal economies and allowed the rise of small markets for trade and commerce that triggered an economic revolution in Europe in the Middle Ages. The stable monastic communities always produced more than they could consume, thus enabling them to exchange their "excess" for the goods of surrounding farmers. Scholars have moved the origins of capitalism back from the period of the Protestant Work Ethic, to the habits of trade developed between these monastic foundations and their satellite villages.

Two words from Jesus unleashed a history of change.

Which brings us back to our days on MFT. We labored for the common good, surrendering every penny we earned, owning nothing but a change of clothes, a few pictures, and several precious books. We prayed constantly. We had to in order to survive. As with the monastic foundations of Benedict, we prayed individually and communally. We shared many meals together, studied Father's Words together, worked in tandem or singly, sang Holy Songs together, and prayed and prayed and prayed.

As a team captain, I lived a semi-hermetic existence, a wandering monk. Driving from town to town, I prayed constantly for each member, reviewing their circumstances and struggles in my mind and heart. I listened to Holy Songs on a tape made by Mrs. Kobayashi, singing along for extended periods. I jumped out to fundraise, shopped for food, delivered product, obtained permissions, maintained the van, checked on members and often brought them sandwiches I had made. Like the family, MFT is the school of God's love. Father's standard of leadership requires unselfish devotion to the care of each member. Though easily said, I for one, know I did not consistently meet that standard of leadership as either a team captain or regional commander. And for my many failings, I apologize to the members who served with me on MFT.

Miracles marked each day's course. Inexplicable changes in heart, leaps in growth, dreams, visions, answered prayers, accidents avoided, intuitions and insights, these were all the fruit of our constant prayer and sincere efforts. Wherever we went, we stirred the spiritual world and brought along a "great cloud of witnesses." Like the monks of history, we pioneered every corner of our continent, we carried the Messiah's presence everywhere we went, we initiated a revolutionary commerce in which small donations covered a multitude of sins, and as we changed the spiritual environment of the communities we fundraised, we simultaneously converted our own hearts.

Though the world can appear to be very dark, confused, and torn by ceaseless conflict, above all, we must draw on our MFT training, pray constantly, and remain people of hope, embodying the vision of our True Parents.

If two words of Jesus could unleash such a revolutionary historical transformation, for a moment, just imagine the tear, sweat, and blood soaked decades of True Parents' Public Ministry, the millions of True Father's spoken words, and the sincere efforts and sacrifice of each of us, True Parents' disciples... Just imagine for a moment, what changes have we unleashed?