

## A Time to Reflect on Our Heritage of Faith

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In *Exposition of the Divine Principle*, we learn the importance of the number forty to conditionally separate from Satan and as the number of a new start. For example, when the people of Israel failed in the forty-day spying condition, forty years passed before they had a second chance to enter the Promised Land. After wandering in the wilderness for decades, God had to appoint a new leader, Joshua. Few survivors remained from the earlier attempt; forty years is a very long time in anyone's life and is almost as significant in the life of an institution or community.

As our American family welcomed True Mother to Belvedere to celebrate the fortieth anniversary of the Yankee Stadium rally, we were reminded of this simple fact. The ranks of those who were there in 1976 are thinning fast. Age and illness have taken some away. Others lost their connection with True Parents and drifted away over the years.

When veterans of Yankee Stadium were asked to stand at Belvedere, only about two hundred rose to their feet out of a crowd of thousands. Yet for those who were there in 1976 and again in 2016, and for their now adult children, the reunion was a memorable and life changing experience. We really felt we were making a new start as True Mother spoke with hope and authority about God's plan for America and the world: What path should America take today? Many issues are plaguing this nation, and unfortunately, America feels like it's distancing itself from God. What is the wish of heaven? The dream of the Heavenly Parent, the dream of the True Parents, is to realize one global family under God.

As she spoke, even the most dedicated listener couldn't help but have at least one eye on the skies. Torrential rain and lightning had been predicted all morning, but somehow, the weather held off right until the very last moment. Only when True Mother had left the stage after the final cheers of Og Mansei did the heavens open with drenching, purifying rains. No one could miss the symbolism and parallels with that June evening forty years ago.

Father declared that the Yankee Stadium rally would be a showdown between God and America. In speeches at Belvedere leading up to the event, Father said that he was putting everything on the line: My success or failure at the Yankee Stadium rally will have universal and historic significance. That is why God, Jesus Christ, Christianity, all humanity, the Unification Church and Reverend Moon all placed their lives on the line in this fight.... I have yearned and prepared for this moment, June 1, 1976, since my youth. It will be a time of joy if we are successful, but a time of misery if we fail. It is a time of joy, but also a fearful time. Most of the members who were there at the time felt the full impact of these words. They said that the day itself felt like an utter defeat, even a crucifixion.

True, we've all seen on film how the rain poured down and how the members stood up and sang "You are My Sunshine" with great spirit. The show went on but no one felt confident to say, What a great victory! Not until True Father, speaking at Belvedere the next day under glorious sunshine, pronounced that Yankee Stadium was victorious could everyone at last exhale. But not for long: in the very next breath, Father announced that he was advancing the date of Washington Monument by eight months to September 18, 1976!

Just like forty years ago, however, the rains at the anniversary event could not dampen the enthusiasm of our families who went on to enjoy hours of fellowship and food. Tours of the newly renovated Belvedere Main House were a big success, with more than five hundred people coming to look at the rooms where True Parents and their family once lived.

At our victory celebration the next day at East Garden, a happy True Mother thanked everyone for their efforts and shared her ongoing vision for developing the museum and cultural center in Korea and her desire to create the world of a culture of heart: As we lead our daily lives, human beings seek happiness, freedom, peace and unity. But with these things, there must always be heart. The heart behind each of these words must be felt. Isn't that so? We must express beauty through paintings, through music and through beautiful melodies. That is very important.

As we closed by singing "Generation of Righteousness" led by Dan Fefferman and David Eaton, we all felt that we had crossed the Jordan under True Mother's guidance and that the Promised Land is indeed in sight!