

Meeting True Father One Last Time!

David Byer
September 14, 2012



View from the wall below the Palace

This trip to Korea was punctuated by little "miracles," when combined, led to a tremendously meaningful day yesterday. The first "miracle" occurred when I actually found a flight I liked and then was able to find it on American Express Travel, where I could pay for most of it with rewards that I'd been hoping to use in a meaningful way. The flight itself was mostly uneventful; just a bit cramped during the second leg of the journey, despite being "miraculously" bumped up to an economy "plus" seat without asking or paying a cent! I left from Philadelphia with a stop in San Francisco and one other family member on my flight; in San Francisco, we picked up the usual smorgasbord of brothers and sisters comprising all nationalities, ages, shapes and sizes.

I arrived at Guri International Training Center 3~4 hours after my flight landed, registered, showered and prepared for the next day when we would travel to Cheongshim Peace World Center to pay our respects at True Father's altar and then proceed to Cheon Jeong Gung to visit True Father's body as it lay in state and offer our final obeisance before the form of our eternal True Parent.

The next day began for me at around 3:30 am when someone either closed a computer that was connected to the public speaker. (Either that or the MS Windows shutdown song was meant to be our initial wake up. I suspect the latter since it happened again about an hour later!) Breakfast (banana, Korean baked goods and milk) was at 6 am and then in line to board buses starting at 7 am for the Cheongshim Peace World Center. Only took about an hour and a half to board and off we went. Two more small miracles: the light rain that began stayed light; and no one complained about waiting. It was to be a day of waiting, lines, patience and more little miracles.

After arriving at the Peace World Center, we got in line under a canopy that covered the entire waiting area. At least a couple of hours in line and we were inside, sitting now, watching a slide show of True Father's life, waiting to go to a viewing room to see the "Tribute" Video of True Father's life, narrated by Kwon Jin Nim. Often the group we would be in would be passed over by another group which had been behind. Later we would pass them and then again we'd see some of them in the group ahead. On and on it went from line to line, venue to venue, everyone very accepting and harmonious, knowing why they were there. Finally we reached an electronic message board where we all signed our names/messages electronically, on a pad not unlike digital signature pads at stores, but much larger and cooler. And then the final line to enter the altar area, where we would bow before True Father's huge memorial picture. Beautiful flower arrangements were everywhere. Hundreds of bouquets and tributes sent by various admirers, dignitaries and members, all recognizing the history of the moment, the physical passing of greatness.

As we waited in about 5 or 6 different lines, dignitaries would be passed through, sometimes ahead of us, some leaders of our church, but mostly other admirers of our True Father. Despite our time being extended considerably, I heard no complaints; I think most were actually glad to see such support for our True Father.

We were instructed how to offer our flowers and bow and then move to bow to True Father's representative family members. There was no need to instruct on our attitude. That was a given. Everyone, I'm sure, could feel the solemnity and the import of this event and we all behaved as we felt.



So I visited True Father's altar and paid my respects, with 5 or 6 other brothers and sisters, offering a lily and a full bow. Afterwards we bowed to members of the True Family, including Hoon Sook Nim. The faces of the family members told it all. There has never been a time in my memory that has been this solemn and holy. We could also leave a message on a walled message board. My message was in both Korean and English and thanked True Father for all he did for God and all of us. And I promised to live a life as the noon sun in no shadow. Pictures and commentary representing True Father's life were in every passageway, in Korean, Japanese and English.

Afterwards, another miracle, when I met my spiritual mother who has, over the past 40 years, always shown up at the most meaningful (and often difficult) times in my life. As if that wasn't enough, we ended up in the chamber with True Father together at Cheon Cheong Gung, another part of a day of things coming together. I felt our spiritual lineage was well represented, as she had another spiritual daughter as well her husband and their daughter. In all of this, I was so impressed by the guides in all the venues, mostly 2nd generation sisters, from all over, all of whom were multilingual and bright lights in every venue...hundreds of them! They exuded life, love and beauty, conveying everything professionally with such heart!

Going to the Cheon Jeong Gung was another time of waiting patiently in lines and waiting more in the bus and then walking up part of the mountain to the Palace where Father's body lay in state. We entered and checked our cameras (No pictures allowed at the altar site or inside the Palace) and then waited a little longer. We finally began inching forward up the spiral staircase to the third floor where True Father's body rested. Then, just as our group was ready to be called forward, one close brother noticed Hyung Jin Nim going into one of the rooms near the chamber containing Father's body and we could hear him talking as we approached True Father's final resting chamber.

As about 50 of us entered the room, Peter Kim told us this was the time we could say our farewells to our True Parent who saved us and whom we had followed for so long. He led us in a full Korean bow, after which we were asked to take a minute of prayer. The moment was so deep and emotional; somehow I was able to thank Father for saving me and for all he has done for Heavenly Father and this world. Inviting my ancestors to join me, I told him we would carry on and that we loved him; I prayed that I would not lose the seriousness and import of this moment and that I could overcome all of my deficiencies, especially so that Father's offering of his life would not be in vain. Finally, I offered it in the name of the Byer Central Blessed Family. The atmosphere was one of weeping and deep, deep emotion. We were completely one in the spirit of our True Father and True Parents and one as a family. I don't think this moment was lost by anyone. And there is no question in my mind that each of us felt so Blessed to be there and truly representatives of all the rest of our beloved brothers and sisters.

Then came time in the ceremony for each line to come closer to Father's body and personally say goodbye to Father, Peter Kim, (Kim Hyol Yol), one of True Father's most trusted assistants for so long, was able to guide us in such a filial, deeply moving manner. I was astounded and deeply humbled by the level of his devotion. You could feel how deeply affected he was by True Father's passing even as he repeats this for each and every group that attends this holy ceremony. He exhorted us to keep forever the image of True

Father's face and build on that to work tirelessly to fulfill all that Father had asked of us in his life on earth.



Looking at True Father's face, seeing his body, so small now compared to the giant presence that he conveyed as he stood before all of us, despite having seen and posted pictures and preparing as much as possible, was still a shock. The sister next to me was crying, almost uncontrollably, and I was, by this time, almost numb. I had already said my goodbyes and committed myself as never before. And the fact that I believe that Father's body is indeed holy, as his Temple for so long on earth, this was no longer Father. In that moment, I felt relieved for Father that he was free and his True self was in Heavenly spirit world.

The time to say goodbye to Father was deeply moving and emotionally draining...for everyone, I think...for each and every person. The attitude that everyone brought with them was exceptional. I know of no group of people anywhere in the world who would be able to conduct themselves with such dignity and pride as our brothers and sisters. I felt deeply proud to be a part of our family...and yes it IS a family again, Thank God! The feeling I have had since this has all begun, is that True Father really gave his life for ME...and for each of us.

Finally we faced members of the True Family and offered our bows and gratitude to one another. Included in this representative group of the True Family was Yeon Ah Nim (Hyo Jin Nim) and Hoon Sook Nim (Heung Jin Nim).

Then, as we left Father's resting chamber and headed down the spiraling steps, we moved to the side of the spiraling stairway as Rev. Michael Jenkins led a solemn group of ACLC ministers slowly up the stairs toward the chamber. And then another small miracle: my spiritual son, climbing the stairs at the end of the column of ministers. I hadn't seen him in a couple of years, again in Korea during my daughter's 2010 Blessing. It was Father who had originally brought us together...and he was still doing it.

Just as we were heading back toward the exit gate, we were invited to visit the Palace Museum which had new exhibits, including the clothing (blue sweater and pink polo) and books (SMM Volumes 55,56) Father had worn and read for Hoon Dok Hae before going into the hospital. I was struck by the contrast with how much Christians have tried to prove one shroud even touched Jesus. Father's legacy, even involving seemingly mundane physical things, clearly will not be lost.

As we exited the museum I Rev. Joon Hyun Park came up to me and I grabbed him and gave him a big bear hug; then I saw Dr. Pak Bo Hi I ran to him and thanked him in tears for all he had done for True Father.

My friend, Christoph Wilkening and I decided we were hungry and made our way to Chonga Camp where we had dinner; just as we were finishing, in walked Rev. Cotter and he came over to us and I told him how tired he looked. He said he'd been going for nine days straight. Thinking of all of our brothers and sisters everywhere I was moved to tell him how much we were behind him and were there for him. I honestly don't think it was really me. At that moment I felt like all of us were standing behind him and I hope he felt it. We went upstairs to the coffee shop and our first chance to do any internet work. Then we headed back to the buses for Guri at 8 pm. Everything had taken the whole day. A day of little miracles. Finally we arrived at the training center with one day to help prepare us to bring closure to this stage of our True Parent's life, culminating with his Seonghwa tomorrow.