Testimony: Ilmi Baklanov's A Pilgrimage of Heart

Bogdan Pammer
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This June, I attended the 285th General Workshop for 30 days - my first time in Chung Pyuung. My main goals were to connect with Heavenly Parent's heart, True Parents' heart, and my own heart. Earlier this year, I had woken up with a single word etched into my mind: pilgrimage. I concluded I needed to go on pilgrimage to Chung Pyuung, learn about our Church's origins, and make this trip the foundation of my faith.

I arrived in the evening. After orientation and Chanyang, I went to Cheonshim Won. I was just looking at the huge portraits of the True Family, not really praying. Suddenly streams of tears started flowing down my face, and I couldn't stop them. I felt Heavenly Parent and True Parents were so happy I was there - that they had been waiting for me to come home. I'm not a very emotional person normally, and I hardly shed tears - maybe twice a year and only when something had really upset or hurt me, so this was very unlike me.



Because it was my first time, I originally planned not to take any responsibility so I could focus on my three goals. But a brother from my community (Allister Gough), the outgoing workshop leader, and a coordinator asked me to consider becoming workshop leader. I declined at first. After reflecting and calling my mum, I agreed - serving as assistant leader most of the time, and workshop leader toward the end. Once I accepted the role, I found myself naturally giving a lot - attending the whole schedule, supporting others, and sacrificing personal time.

A few days in, on a holy ground tour, I asked Heavenly Parent, "How do people go into such deep prayer?" The answer came clearly: "Trust. Trust that everything will be alright and that I am here."

I had a condition to go to the Tree of Blessing every day. One time I lost my footing going down the steps and heard in my mind, "Be humble." I reached the water of life, and I noticed the water fountain output was flickering; with this, I felt the sign was to be careful, but I wasn't sure what to be careful with. In a later conversation, I realised I had been putting a lot of pressure on myself as a leader - trying to be 100% perfect 24/7. Later that day, a lecturer shared, "God has to teach you secretly without Satan noticing. God gives you signs - you have to catch the signs." From this, I knew that the "Be humble" was not from my original mind and that Satan was trying to corrupt my thinking through self-criticism, and God was telling me to be careful of this.



Halfway through the workshop, I hit a spiritual wall. When I prayed, I felt nothing. I tried to work through this, but I couldn't break through it, so I decided to talk to a staff member. He shared that Satan attacks those who are on the 'right' path, especially with the additional responsibility of being assistant workshop leader, a model for the workshop - you are in the prime position Satan wants… I realised I needed to keep attending, stay consistent, and not give in, which gave me the determination to keep investing.

That same evening, during the 1600th Vigil, the International Yeongseong team sang "Waymaker", entirely in English. When they reached the lines "Even when I don't see it, You're working… Even when I don't feel it, You're working," it hit me. It was the answer I needed. I should keep faith that God is working even when I can't feel or see it.

On my last full day, I went to the Tree of Blessing again. In prayer, I felt deep gratitude that I could experience Heavenly Parent and True Parents' love through this opportunity. And as a leader, I had been able to give love to others from a parental position, even when it meant sacrificing my own time. I apologised for the times I failed to recognise that love, and for not always recognising my ancestors who guide and protect me. It was one of the most heartfelt prayers of the whole workshop - my heart was moved to tears multiple times. These first 30 days became the beginning of a much longer journey of my heart.





Midway through the workshop, inspired, I booked a flight back for after my university graduation to officially complete 40 days, knowing I could offer more during this time, but I had no strong idea of what I would do when I came back.

On my last full day of the General workshop, a staff member suggested I apply to the Yeongseong Workshop, which was accepting 21-day trainees. With only two days in London, I ended up answering the application on my plane ride back. My heart poured out the answers, but intellectually I felt nothing, and that discrepancy left me unsure whether attending Yeongseong was the right choice. A staff member suggested I offer 1,000 bows for True Mother and see whether I felt a stronger pull to join. I accepted this bowing condition, with two intentions: to challenge myself and to substantially support True Mother at this crucial time.





While completing the bows alone, I had two spiritual experiences, but doubted them, worried I wanted one so badly it was only imagination. A few days later I learned I'd been accepted into Yeongseong. But again, I doubted this, thinking, " I have been accepted, but I still have a choice whether to accept or not". Unsure about whether to attend Yeongseong, I returned to my two original reasons: to challenge myself and to support True Mother, and committed to joining the 21-day workshop.





I received the cheonshim Robe - purple jacket (additional reflection, which is outlined below) on my first day of YS and during Hyojeong praise at Vigil, we sang "Mother Dear," and the line "I will be your answer" deeply resonated with me - Heaven truly wanted me to grow spiritually, and I wanted to uphold that. The spiritual world needs people to dedicate and offer themselves for the Providence, and whilst singing this, I knew I had the responsibility to be True Mother's answer. She is calling out for members to attend Heaven and to align with her, and I want to stand with her as a filial daughter of True Parents. This became the beginning of my real reasons for attending Yeongseong.

Additional reflection upon receiving the CS Robe: Putting the CS Robe on, I felt the responsibility I now carried and felt closer to True Father and the spirit world. I felt guilty to accept the Cheon Shim Robe, as I wasn't completing the entire 40-day workshop and I hadn't attended the inheritance ceremony to officially receive the robe. I wanted to offer at least some form of devotion to receive the robe, so after Vigil I offered 40 bows in the Cheon Shim Won. I still felt that this wasn't enough, but determined that the devotion I do whilst wearing the robe can pile up to eventually fully accept it. I do not feel worthy to

accept the Cheon Shim robe, and writing this now, I am getting emotional. I am so grateful I could receive this, but still I feel like I need to offer more to wear the Cheon Shim Robe.

On the third day, during our Saturday intensive prayer (basically Vigil but for YS and in English, on the weekend - content catered to our group, as a special devotion for True Mother), I had another spiritual experience - True Father standing on stage, praying with us. I understood it as: he and True Mother are one, and he needs us to offer sincere devotion so the spirit world can work. This solidified why I'd been called to attend Yeongseong - Heaven wanted me to level up from the general workshop and knew I could offer more.



During resonance prayers and praise, I began losing my voice, which mattered because I'd always used it to help my heart resonate. With no sound coming out, I struggled all week trying to connect but unable to, and shouting during prayer, never natural for me, was something else to work through. This was frustrating for me, because knowing my time in the workshop was short, I couldn't afford to resonate in heart and only through this connection - I felt that the spiritual world could work to help True Mother. So, unable to resonate, I felt stuck on how to resonate in heart. I was pushing myself so much to connect this way, but was forced to find other ways to connect - which wasn't easy.

Through the workshop, I had assumed that what defined my experience was spiritual encounters and being able to resonate with True Mother's heart, forgetting to listen to my own conscience. With my voice gone, reflecting through conscience became another path. Talking with a staff member, I realised I was protecting my heart, afraid that receiving love fully would be too overwhelming to accept. There's strength in vulnerability, but it leaves you exposed. I remembered something my conscience had told me and forgotten: "Satan lives in comfort. God lives in challenges and growth." A lecture echoed this point - "If you are not challenged, you cannot receive blessings; it is your portion of responsibility."

During our third jeongseong challenge, we offered devotion for three people Heaven is waiting for. Offering 430 calling-out prayers for each, I got so invested in one I stopped watching my counter - until, emotionally, I looked down and it read 443. I felt Heaven lovingly saying, "That's enough now." I desperately wanted this person to align with True Mother and attend her. My reflection whilst seeing True Father on the stage previously was that True Parents are one, and not attending True Mother is not attending True Father. As we should become filial children of True Parents, I feel this strongly in my heart. True Parents are longing for us to return to them. In the CSG, it says God celebrates the prodigal son more than the dutiful first son; such is God's heart (1.2.19) - and with this, I could truly feel Heaven's heart. Our coordinator shared that when you pray for others with tears, you revive your shimjeong and can resonate with Heavenly Parent's heart - I found another way to resonate, even with my voice gone.

I'm grateful for this opportunity to have been able to invest for True Mother at such a crucial time, knowing our devotion goes directly to Heaven, mobilising the spirit world to help her. A mother doesn't want her children to sacrifice themselves for her - she wants them to grow and connect back to her. Through this workshop, I received far more love than expected, and I want to give that love back to True Parents and Heavenly Parent. This has been a pilgrimage of heart.

Coming back home, I worried the fire I had cultivated during the Yeongseong workshop wouldn't last. But that's a limiting mindset - my environment doesn't define me; my willpower does, and I know how much my heart longs to connect with True Mother and share her heart with others. God is with us even when we don't feel it. Thank you so much for supporting me whilst I was away, and for listening to my testimony.