

## Japan: Parishes Achieve Blessing Ceremonies for 430 Couples

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**Unification Movement Japan:** In the month of February, 2015 Cosmic Blessing Ceremonies for Previously-Married Couples by True Parents of Heaven, Earth and Humankind continued to be held throughout Japan. One parish after another reported their achievements of blessing up to 430 couples. Here are reports from parishes of Mie, Toyama, Ehime, Ishikawa, Fukui as well as some reflections of participants.



### Mie Parish: Rejoicing in the meaning of Blessing

On February 15th, a Blessing Ceremony was held at a hotel in Suzuka City, Mie Prefecture, officiated by President and Mrs. Tokuno of the Unification Church of Japan. 12 previously-married couples and 31 single Blessing couples, totaling 43 couples, participated.

Earlier, the Mie Parish had held two Blessing Ceremonies since the first anniversary of Foundation Day held in February 2014. As of last December, 158 couples had been blessed. Thus, this time, they planned to hold a Blessing ceremony to exceed 430. By the day before the ceremony, they could reach their goal. Including those who were blessed on February 15th, the number went beyond their goal.

In the earlier part of the ceremony, a 12-minute lecture was given on the merits of Blessing. Many heard this lecture for the first time, responding very well with big nods as they listened attentively.

In the latter part of the ceremony, its officiator President Tokuno explained about the meaning of Blessing, giving easy-to-understand examples. As he said, for example, Blessing is 'a passport to Heaven', while 'visa is Heaven's Law Article 3', participants listened with deep interest.

The ceremony proceeded solemnly with the Holy Wine Ceremony and the Holy Water Ceremony. In the benediction, President Tokuno reported to Heaven about the achievements of Mie Parish with 430 Couples. Parish Leader Yunkon Kim led the Eok Mansei to conclude the ceremony with joyous feelings.

In the third part of a celebrating party, Suzuka Church Choir called TP Sisters sang Song of Joy and If You Love Me. This was followed by a testimony of a participant in Blessing, touching hearts of some to tears.

Mrs. Hisae Tokuno gave words of blessing, saying, "We hope that Mie Prefecture will become the happiest prefecture in Japan!" President Tokuno followed with 'secrets to become a close couple'. The audience appreciated his humorous advices such as: "Couples should first greet each other. Next, they should accept everything about each other."

In closing, President and Mrs. Tokuno went around each table and presented all the blessed couples with commemorative gifts.

Among the participants was a couple whose daughter is a church member in Kyushu, one of four main islands situated in the south west of Tokyo. When a member of Suzuka Church met with them eight years before and gave them a copy of the autobiography two years ago, he discovered that their daughter was a church member.

As this member invited them to the Blessing Ceremony, the mother tearfully began to share her pains and

sorrow when her daughter started to dedicate herself to the church. Then she declined the invitation, saying, “We are too old to think of attending this.”

However, when their daughter heard about this, she made a determination and returned to Suzuka on the eve of the Blessing Ceremony. In that evening at her parents’ home, she tearfully apologized to them for the pains and sorrow she had caused. Thus, all of them could finally open their hearts to each other after several decades.

On the following day, the parents were able to take part in Blessing. Their daughter watched them with tears until the end. The parents were so moved by the ceremony that they left the hall with smiles. This was a testimony that makes us realize that the Blessing Ceremony can resolve grudges between parents and child.



### **Toyama Parish: The start of an eternal conjugal relationship**

On February 21st, under beautiful skies clearly showing up the Tateyama Mountain Range, the Toyama Parish held a Blessing Ceremony at the Toyama Church Grand Sanctuary in Toyama City, welcoming President and Mrs. Eiji Tokuno of the Unification Church of Japan as its officiators.

Last December 15th, Chairman Yong Cheon Song of Japan’s Blessed Families Federation visited Takaoka Church and Tonami Church. In the evening, a starting ceremony for the entire parish for Victory of Heavenly Tribal Messiahship was held. Moving towards the second anniversary of Foundation Day, a 70-day course to bring 430 blessed families was begun.

Each church carried out such activities as explaining about the single Blessing. They held Blessing Panel Exhibitions or Couples’ Seminars as part of the Heavenly Tribal Messiah activities. As they organized Blessing ceremonies from time to time, by February 2nd the parish as a whole was able to bring 13 previously-married couples and 430 single-blessed couples. Thus, for this Blessing, 230 single-blessed couples gathered, while 8 previously-married couples took part.

In the ceremony, President Tokuno explained about the significance and values of the ceremony as follows:

“This Blessing Ceremony is your passport to Heaven. In order to settle in Heaven, you will need a visa. This is Heaven’s Law, Article 3. First, you must love your spouse from the bottom of your heart, not committing a mistake of love. Next you should build a relationship of trust based on sincerity, kindness, truth and love. The third is not to create problems of money, especially not to divert public funds. Please keep these laws and complete your character and build a happy family by living for the sake of others.”

The ceremony continued with the Holy Water Ceremony, Blessing Vows, benediction, exchange of rings, the declaration of the Holy Blessing by the officiators, and closed with Eok Mansei.

A joyful luncheon followed together with President and Mrs. Tokuno, celebrating the success in the Blessing Ceremony.

### Reflections of Participants

- My guest took part with his wife. He had run a barber shop for a long time and worked for the community. He felt that True Parents could embrace people of all religions to become one. During the ceremony, he looked at his wife in a wedding dress many times. (Female, 40's)
- When I first joined the Unification Church, my parents opposed me and things were in an uproar at one time. My father passed away and we live with my mother. She says to me, "You are the happiest, being married to a good husband". She started studying at the Education Center and took part in the Blessing Ceremony. Mother was all smiles, as she told me, "Rev. Moon's teaching was filial piety all along." (Female, 40's)
- My son's couple invited us to the Blessing Ceremony. We may not comprehend its deeper meaning, but it was a very solemn ceremony and we are happy to be present. (a couple in their 80s)
- I attended a Blessing Panel Exhibition. I was so moved by one part of the Blessing video that spoke about an eternal relationship between husband and wife that we decided to attend. We would like to continue studying this. (a couple in their 60s)



### Ehime Parish: Renewed determination to become True Couples and True Families

On February 22nd, the Ehime parish conducted a grand Blessing Ceremony in Matsuyama Church with Chairman Yong Cheon Song of Japan's Blessed Families Federation and his wife Mrs. Hae Ok Lee acting as its officiators.

305 couples from four churches within the Ehime parish filled seats of the first and second floors. Including the participants of this Blessing Ceremony, the number of families blessed in the 2nd year of Cheon Il Guk has now reached 458.

As the Blessing Ceremony was held at a church, the members prepared the ceremony by decorating its interior in order to please the participants. Upon arriving at the Matsuyama Church, Chairman Song's wife Mrs. Lee acclaimed, "I can feel the members' devotion. I feel like I am back in my hometown!" It was a great blessing for the members to welcome Chairman Song and Mrs. Lee to the ceremony.

In the Blessing Ceremony which started from 1:30 pm, the officiator Chairman Song emphasized, "Japan is now at a crisis with low birth rate and family breakdown. The Marriage Blessing of True Love is our only hope for the future. The Blessing Movement is the way to save Japan!"

Many participants shed tears, making new determination to become true couples and true families. After the ceremony, Chairman Song and Mrs. Lee appreciated the ceremony and said, "The Blessing Ceremony was conducted in a solemn atmosphere. It was a wonderful ceremony filled with sincerity and devotion."

One of the guests, an important local figure, who gave a congratulatory remark, spoke candidly about his familial circumstance and touched the participants' hearts. In the entertainment, the Matsuyama Church Choir performed a festive song. The venue reached a climax with entertainments by the choir and a local pops unit.

## Participants Comments

- My husband talked about True Father's autobiography 'As a Peace-loving Global Citizen' before heading for the ceremony. But I was nervous until the day before, staying awake until 3 o'clock in the morning. I am now convinced that my husband and I will restore our original image. (*Matsuyama Church member Mrs. U*)
- *I was nervous at first, but the bright and warm atmosphere of the hall gradually relieved my tension. I could enjoy the ceremony. Chairman Song's message deeply pierced my heart, making me rethink the whole concept of a family. From now on, I would like to cherish my family, nurture love and build a happy family. (Imabari Church member I)*



## Ishikawa & Fukui Parishes: Blessing Ceremony is the first step to an Ideal Family

On February 22nd in a venue in Ishikawa prefecture, a Blessing Ceremony was co-hosted by the Ishikawa and Fukui parishes. President of Unification Church Japan, Rev. Eiji Tokuno and Mrs. Hisae Tokuno acted as the officiators for a total of 153 couples consisting of 10 previously-married couples and 143 spirit and physical world blessed couples.

In the Region 7, each parish has made efforts in line with the regional objective to bless 430 couples by the second anniversary of the Cheon Il Guk Foundation Day. As a result, 547 couples have been blessed in Ishikawa parish while 459 couples blessed in Fukui parish within one year. Notably, the number of couples blessed in the course of the year in the Kanazawa Church of the Ishikawa parish reached 446 this day.

In his address, President Tokuno emphasized the value of Blessing. "There are three moments when one becomes the main character of one's life, namely; birth, marriage and death. Among them, marriage is a turning point in life. Today's Blessing Ceremony is a decisive moment for you to make a vow to love your spouse eternally centering on God", he said. He then explained the meaning and value of Blessing in a plain terms.

The ceremony proceeded with the marriage proclamation, floral tribute by a representative couple, a guest's congratulatory address and the choir of the Kanazawa Church "Pola Star Kanazawa" singing 'Shin-Ai (眞愛: True Love)' as a song of celebration. The ceremony was concluded with cheers of Eok-mansei led by the emcee.

At the luncheon banquet, two newly blessed couples from Ishikawa and Fukui expressed their sentiments. The participants felt cleansed by watching the heart-warming fresh couples.

Then, Mrs. Hisae Tokuno gave a congratulatory remark: "Today's Blessing Ceremony is your first step to become an ideal family. Through the ceremony, a husband and wife could thank each other and create conjugal and family bonds not only in the physical world but also in the spirit world for eternity".

Then, President Tokuno provided the participants with some tips on a harmonious married life with humor: "What is most important for a husband and wife is communication (dialogue). The second important thing is not to ask too much of your spouse and accept him/her for what they are. It is important for both the husband and the wife to take the approach that your spouse will change if you change.

## Participants' Comments

- My wife became brighter after meeting the Unification Church. I hope we could live more harmoniously from now on. Thank you for telling us the importance of conjugal love. (Previously-

married couple/ husband)

- President Tokuno's message was wonderful and easy to understand. The ceremony was filled with solemnity, while atmosphere of the luncheon banquet was cheerful and happy. What pleased me most was that my husband said it was a wonderful ceremony. (Previously-married couple/ wife)

- I didn't even know what was going on, but I ended up attending in a wonderful ceremony. I participated because I wanted to make my wife happy. (Previously-married couple/ husband)

- I felt the heart-warming atmosphere from the well-prepared stage and True Parents' picture watching over us. I feel that I must develop my love in the rest of my life with gratitude for being given the grace of being able to live with my husband even in the spirit world. (Previously-married couple/ wife)