

God is With Us

Tomihiko Tanaka
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On July 17, Shoto Headquarters in Shibuya, Tokyo, welcomed President Tomihiko Tanaka and held a service where blessed families and members from all over Japan participated via online. President Tanaka delivered a sermon titled "God is With Us" and encouraged the brothers and sisters of the Family Federation in Japan who are currently facing difficulties.

Holding a press conference after hearing heaven's voice

Greetings to all leaders and senior families throughout Japan, as well as to all the members, including the Blessed Families.

It has been ten days since the unexpected and unprecedented tragedy. Once again, I would like to express my heartfelt condolences to former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and pray for his soul to rest in peace.

Since his passing, the media coverage in Japan and abroad over the past week has clearly demonstrated that Prime Minister Abe was respected and loved by many Japanese citizens. I wonder if there has ever been another Japanese who has been so sorely missed by the leaders of the world amongst the global network.

Former Prime Minister Abe had high aspirations and a big dream based on his vision of a "beautiful Japan." It is with a sense of regret that I personally feel that he was about to give shape to this dream.

It is no exaggeration to say that this tragedy is, in every sense of the word, the greatest incident in the postwar period. It was a major shock on a global scale.

And the moment it was reported that the alleged culprit was related to the Family Federation, my blood really started to boil. I am sure you all spent anxious moments wondering if it were true.

As days went by, all media outlets began to focus on a "specific religious group" that the suspect allegedly had a grudge against. When the word "former Unification Church" was mentioned in some of the media, everyone here at headquarters became tense and began to confirm the connection with the suspect.

The incident occurred on Friday, July 8, but on Sunday the 10th, around 3:00 a.m., a voice from heaven woke me up suddenly. It said, "Come out into the open."

I pondered what it meant to "come out in the open" and came to the conclusion that it was to have a press conference. And so I prepared myself to hold a press conference.

That morning, a meeting was held at our headquarters. For the sake of all the members nationwide and the many concerned parties who support our movement, it was necessary for those responsible to come forward and sort out the speculations made by the media. In addition, from our organization's viewpoint, if we did not make a clear statement, it would be a tragedy like the one that happened 30 years ago, so the entire group made an unanimous decision to speak out.

Of course, there were some people in headquarters who commented that it was premature or that we shouldn't do this now without a police announcement. However, it was obvious that it was only a matter of time. Based on our experience 30 years ago, we assumed that similar ordeals would come flooding in, and looking back on it now, we thought, "That was the only time (to do so)."

After the press conference, we received words of encouragement not only from Japan but also from all over the world through social media and e-mail. I would like to apologize for causing a lot of people to worry.

However, with the prayers from members in Japan, as well as brothers and sisters around the world, and above all, under the watchful eyes of the Heavenly Parent (God) and True Parents, I was able to hold the press conference with a calmness that surprised even me.

That morning, the song Purple Hibiscus kept playing in my head and I strongly felt that True Mother is praying for us. So, for today's service, I had us sing Purple Hibiscus.

Accept the facts and return to True Parents' teachings

Now, the media reports that the suspect committed the crime out of resentment, saying that his mother was bankrupted by donations to our organization and that his family had been destroyed. The details of the truth are still unclear. We are doing our best to track down the facts.

However, it is a fact that his mother had a relationship with the church for more than 20 years as a member, and the suspect himself, even though he was not registered as a member, came to the church two or three times when he was a minor and encountered the word.

It is true that our church did not directly commit the crime, but there was a time when the suspect's mother came to study and when she was striving to do the will of God as a member of the church. We regret that we were not able to deal with the challenges that she and her family were facing nor resolve them. We regret that we were not able to continue and support them, even if it hadn't led to a solution.

I am sure that the mother was seeking salvation with a sense of desperation. We are a religious entity that preaches the importance of family and the value of living for the sake of others first. This is the core teachings that True Parents devoted their lives to convey.

Religious organizations have a corporate status in society. Therefore, we must be in a position to be respected by society. If they have any resentment against us, we must face it directly and accept it.

I believe that the investigation will now move on to uncovering the full motive and cause of the crime, but if the motive for the crime is indeed as reported, we must take it very seriously.

Currently, media reports are turning their attention to our organization like air strikes from morning to night, and you may not have even a moment of peace of mind. Some of you may have been hurt by some of the heartless reports, and for some, your faith may have been shaken. I have also heard that some of the administration and staff members, who have been subjected to heartless phone calls, have fallen ill. News reports from 30 years ago may be popping up like flashbacks, and your hearts may be heavy.

Some of the news reports are clearly aggressive and malicious in their assumptions and speculation. Since the investigative team is still working to clarify the incident and we have pledged our full cooperation, I cannot share everything today, so I kindly ask for your understanding.

Donations are important to any religion

Ladies and gentlemen, offering donations is an important part in religion. Some media have criticized True Father, reporting that he said, "Offer all the money you possess." Well, how about Jesus? What kind of guidance did he give? The Gospel of Mark tells the story of a widow.

Now Jesus sat opposite the treasury and saw how the people put money into the treasury. And many who were rich put in much. Then one poor widow came and threw in two mites, which make a quadrans. So He called His disciples to Himself and said to them, "Assuredly, I say to you that this poor widow has put in more than all those who have given to the treasury; for they all put in out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty put in all that she had, her whole livelihood.
Mark 12:41-44

Furthermore, Jesus said, "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." (Matthew 6:19-21)

Donations are acts of devotion as an expression of our hearts to know the circumstances and wishes of heaven and to respond to those wishes. To give donations are very important and proud acts for those who have faith.

Through this incident, one Christian member called one of our churches. He said, "For a Christian, an offering given before God is life. Please urge the perpetrator that he did not commit the crime because of donations." Before hanging up, he added, "As a Christian, I believe our heart is one with yours."

True Father instructed that donations come from the heart. If our hearts do not accompany our donations, we may become resentful. We are called upon to convey the correct meaning of donations.

We have received many words of encouragement. Those of us who interact with members on a daily basis and those of us who see the members' actions firsthand are surprised at the gap between the media reports and the reality of the members. Members tell us, "I have not changed at all. Please rest assured that I will continue to be in close contact with you all."

Media reports with malicious intent

Today, there are those from the second generation who participate in worship services. Many of you may be feeling down after being exposed to daily media reports and articles on social media sites.

When we are suddenly exposed to information that we did not expect, we tend to narrow our perspective and are easily distracted by the information in front of us.

Please look at the picture above. I drew this picture in imitation of the illustration in *Petit Philosophie* (written by Masahiko Sato, published by Chuko Bunko). What does this picture look like to you? It looks like the frog on the left is a bully and pushing the frog on the right into the pond. Since the frog is about to be pushed into the water, the fish are shouting, "Look out!" That's what the composition looks like.

This, however, is only part of the picture.

In fact, a large nut had fallen above the (right) frog's head. The (left) frog, who looked like a bully, was not actually bullying the other frog; it was trying to help him. The fish are not saying that the frog is in danger because it's about to fall into the pond; they are shouting that it's in danger of being hit by the nut.

It is easy to see how one part of something can have a completely different meaning when viewed from the whole. This is true in many ways in our daily lives.

Suppose, for example, that a mother severely scolds her child. To the casual observer, this may appear to be mental abuse. However, what if we expand our view to understand the mother's heart? We may realize that it was an act of deep love that the mother had for her child. In this way, being scolded can become a lifelong memory as a sign of love that was poured into you. Of course, without love, it will only be mental abuse.

I earlier mentioned about the malicious media coverage. That would be akin to the bottom picture.

It draws the audience's attention inside the red frame and does not allow them to see outside the frame. The intention is clearly to keep the attention within the frame. They are afraid that the whole thing will be seen and interpreted completely differently.

The accounts of malicious reports are too numerous to mention, but Headquarters will continue to respond to the biased media coverage.

I am sure that we will continue to suffer until the storm passes, but the one who is suffering the most is probably True Mother. It was also reported that the suspect's target was True Mother. I can only imagine the heartache she must be going through when she hears this news.

True Mother is our parent. I am sure that just hearing about the current situation in Japan and imagining how difficult it is for her children (us), she must be in an unbearable state of mind. As a parent, her heart must be breaking. Bang Sang-il, Regional Group President of the Heavenly Japan for the Heavenly Parent's Holy Community, has to tell her every day of what is going on in Japan. How painful must that be.

Our brothers and sisters from around the world are standing with us

This is something that happened the other day. I received a phone call from Lee Seong-man, Chairman of the construction promotion committee of Bird Flower Garden, who has been transferred to Korea to be

close to True Mother. He shared Mother's words with me and how much she is thinking of us, her children: "Let us all become one and overcome this together." Mother is also fighting with us. What can we say to her? "Mother, please don't worry." What else can we say?

In addition, I received an encouraging poem from Rev. Lee Seong-man. Although it was addressed to me, I would like to share a part of it with you.

Two thousand years ago,
before the cross stood the only begotten Son of Heaven.
Spit was hocked on the Messiah
by Satan's servants.
Eighty winters passed, the Second Advent of the Messiah
was blasphemed for being the True Parents
by the forces of darkness, just as the time was right.
They will come to bite.

Friends! Friends of the faith!
My brothers and sisters of the living Heavenly Parent
We are members of True Parents' family!
Heroes of the Unification Church!

The good spirit world is now in a state of emergency
We will take all possible measures in all directions to protect it
Serve the only begotten daughter, the Substantial Holy Spirit
Brothers and sisters of the world, serve both day and night
Loudly and proudly
Send praise with songs of prayer
Surely they will reach the heavens

Even if the Genkai Sea lies between us,
from the Father Nation,
a cheer team of 10,000 in beautiful kimonos
are singing the "Cheer Song for God's Will" for this day and age.

Comrades!
Though we are apart in body
Our souls and hearts are by your side, my friends
We are willing to defend the heavens, defend the will of God, and defend our members
In the faith of "He who dies, lives"
with the most powerful force of all,
stand tall with true love, my friends.
We are truly proud of you.

Our Father, in his youth
In the depths of hell, God was full resentment
Yet, Father offered his consolation and gratitude to Him
Let us not forget that

The Heavenly Parent speaks
"This too shall pass!
This too shall pass!
You are not alone"

Because heaven is with us
We are already fighting a victorious battle
The dawn is darkest before the sun rises
Comrades, my dear friends
There is a tomorrow

Japanese wives who have gone to Korea are also praying desperately for the members in Japan.

As always, the best testimony is to stay as you are

True Father said the following:

"You should not despair, saying that your path is blocked. Do not be disheartened that your nation is in turmoil. God is not dead. No matter how terrible the world becomes, you should not be dejected. Remember, God is not dead. God will definitely visit you."

February 12, 1961

God is with us. Let us live our lives with pride and dignity. If we've made mistakes in the past, let us accept them with humility. What is important is the fact that Heaven still wants to use us; they want us to overcome this trial and move forward with True Mother.

Today, there is no one in the Japanese public who has not heard of the former Unification Church and the Family Federation for World Peace and Unification. So, what should we do? Just be "normal." The best testimony is to live a normal life.

Ladies and gentlemen, as always, exchange greetings with your neighbors. Face your friends as you always have. If we do not change who we are, they will change and open up to us. If someone asks you something you don't know, just tell them you don't know, and that you'll let them know when you find out.

We have nothing to lose. We can only move forward. Let us hold each other's hands, support each other, and stand firm.

I would like to conclude today's message by thanking all of you on the front lines throughout Japan for your courage in facing the storm and for your hyojeong towards True Parents.

Thank you very much.