

Hearing speaking for the first time in 30 years at Niigata, Japan's Shosha Festival

Shintaro Kido
February 16, 2018



Last October, Ms. Yokoyama (unmarried, thirty-nine years old) visited our church through a personal invitation, and Mrs. Ando has been taking care of her since then. When she was in elementary school, Mrs. Yokoyama suddenly lost her voice and although she visited many doctors, they were unsure of the exact cause. In spite of all the medical treatments that she went through, thirty years passed without any effect. Ms. Yokoyama could hear what others said, but since she could not speak, she did all of her communication by writing. However, perhaps because of tension, Ms. Yokoyama's hands always tremble. For her to write each word took a lot of time and her handwriting was barely legible.

Mrs. Ando admitted she felt irritated at not being able to understand what Ms. Yokoyama wanted to say. Ms. Yokoyama also had a strong desire to speak in her own voice and to overcome her malady. She willingly accepted Mrs. Ando's suggestion to start *shosha* [writing out quotations from True Parents' speeches]. Later, they began to communicate through Line, a message app popular in Japan.

At the end of last year, Mrs. Ando received a Line message from Ms. Yokoyama saying, "I need to talk to you," so she visited her home and they had a long conversation, one speaking, one writing. When Mrs. Ando told Ms. Yokoyama about the shosha festival scheduled for February, she replied, "I would love to participate in it." Since then, she eagerly awaited the festival and worked even harder.

On the morning of February 16, the day of the shosha festival, Mrs. Ando greeted Ms. Yokoyama at the meeting point and said, "Good morning." Mrs. Ando heard a whispered "Good morning," but she thought she had misheard and dismissed it. Then, pointing at the car Ms. Yokoyama had come in, Mrs. Ando said, "That's a nice color." Again, she heard a whispered "Thanks." For an instant, she could not believe her own ears. She said in amazement, "You were speaking just now!" Ms. Yokoyama said in a small voice, "I

suddenly found my voice this morning."

Hearing herself speak for the first time in thirty years, Ms. Yokoyama said disappointedly, "My voice used to be higher." That day, Ms. Yokoyama spoke fluently as if she had never lost her voice. She said, "Is this happening for real? My mom will be surprised to death. It's so nice to be able to speak," as she shed happy tears.

She also said, "Every time I finish writing good sentiments for shosha, I feel so refreshed. The time doing shosha is a very precious time for me." When Mrs. Ando asked her what she had been wishing for as she wrote out quotations, she answered, "I was thinking about my friend and about world peace." This was how Mrs. Ando realized that most of the wishes Ms. Yokoyama wrote out did not concern herself.

Later, Ms. Yokoyama visited her parents' house. She greeted her mother saying, "Welcome home!" So surprised was her mother to hear her daughter's voice, she screamed, "What happened? Your voice is back!" and embraced her and cried. She called Ms. Yokoyama's younger sister on the phone right away and told her the news. Ms. Yokoyama and her sister enjoyed their first conversation in three decades.

Ms. Yokoyama is now learning the Divine Principle. Day by day, she is relishing the joy of being able to communicate with her family. We will continue looking over her.

The name of the member and witnessing contact are pseudonyms.



Niigata District