

FFWPU Japan: Sang-il Bang: Build a family where God can live together with us

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On January 29, a special service was held at the Omiya Family Church of the West Saitama District, where Mr. and Mrs. Bang-Sang-il, Regional Group President of the Heavenly Japan for the Heavenly Parent's Holy Community, were welcomed. In his sermon, he talked about True Mother's new year's message and presented the slogan and five points for 2023, calling on members to "become one with (their respective) district and church leaders to advance heaven's providence under the protection and guidance of the Heavenly Parent (God) and True Parents." We will share what he spoke, as well as greetings from his wife, Ms. Kazuyo Fujinohara.

Leaders and members should become one knowing that God is together with us.

Happy New Year to all of you here at the West Saitama District.

In Korea, new-year celebrations are held according to the lunar calendar. Until now, church leaders have not been able to return to their hometowns on New Year's Day, as they have had to greet True Parents for the New Year.

True Mother has always been pained by this. At the Special Luncheon to Commemorate the Holy Birth (January 27, HJ Garden Hall), she instructed us to return to our homes for the New Year and then convene with True Parents for the Holy Birthday, and then she blessed us by saying that the new year for the holy calendar will begin with the Holy Birthday of True Parents. I believe that the Korean leaders, who must've been distressed because they could not attend to their parents on New Year's, are truly grateful.

This is the Omiya Family Church, where district headquarters of West Saitama District is located. "Miya" means "the place where God lives." Since "O" (the Chinese character for "big") is included in the name, there is no doubt that there is great fortune in Omiya. Also, the right side of the Chinese character for "Sai" is "miracle," and the Chinese character "tama" symbolizes gemstones; it symbolizes the authority of a king. In other words, Saitama is home to a "miracle-making king." You should all be proud of yourselves.

In the ongoing Second Nationwide 40-day Special Cheongseong Course for a New Beginning of the Heavenly Japan (January 29 - March 9), "visitations" (尋訪) are greatly emphasized.

Allow me to explain the meaning of (the first Chinese character) "尋." "ㄋ" and "寸" expresses "手" or "hand" according to ancient writings. "工" represents a tool that casts spells to invoke the gods (charm or magical tool) and "口" is a vessel to hold a prayer to the gods. In other words, we seek God with the magical tool that holds prayers. Therefore, God is with us on our visits.

Through the visits conducted by church leaders, the fortunes of the churches and districts can be linked with all of our families. Moreover, our houses will be cleansed as we give it our all, so what more can we ask for? Despite this, many Japanese brothers and sisters, the moment they hear that a leader is coming to visit them, they refuse and bring down their own homes. That is not good.

The first 40-day course (November 15 - December 24, 2022) was to study the Unification Principle and True Parents' words in order to establish the foundation of faith.

The second 40-day course is to set up the foundation of substance by practicing true love. The main part of this process is to have the leaders and members unite through their visitations. Only when the foundation of faith and the foundation of substance have been established, can we establish the foundation to receive the Messiah.

Please welcome the leaders into your homes not once, but two or three times. The leaders will do all that they can and pray over your household so that the individual and familial problems you are burdened with can be resolved. Your ancestors and other absolute good spirits will be moved by their prayers, and they will all cooperate with you. This is because the prayers given by the leaders, who are supported by the churches and districts, are more powerful than individual prayers.

The immeasurable value of the True Parents of humankind

Have any of you ever been to the Louvre Museum in France? It is one of the largest museums in the world, visited by 8 million people annually, and it would take at least three days to see all the exhibits.

You will find the most famous painting in the world, the Mona Lisa (by Leonardo da Vinci). People from all over the world gather to see this painting. Some even jokingly say that even if France is destroyed, the Mona Lisa is the only thing that must be preserved. This is impossible, but if the painting were to be auctioned, it is said that it would fetch 100 billion yen, or even over a trillion yen, which would certainly be the highest price ever paid for a painting.

Then, if we were to convert the value of the Second Advent of the Messiah, the True Parents of humankind, into money, how much would it be?

God has been walking the path of the providence of restoration for over six thousand years. In the course of this history, many central figures were established, such as Noah, Abraham, and Moses. Even if all of them were gathered together, their combined worth would still be less than True Parents', the fruition of the providence of restoration. The value of True Parents, the only begotten Son and Daughter of Heaven, is immeasurable.

God in heaven and True Parents are completely one. Therefore, God is manifested on earth and in heaven through the image of True Parents. We have formed a parent-child bond with the great True Parents. We have received the blessing and have been blessed with blessed children. We must realize that our own value and worth have been raised to the same level as True Parents'.

To begin the (new) year with True Parents' words, I'd like to share True Mother's words given at the 2023 New Year's Celebration for Cheon Il Guk Leaders (January 3, HJ Garden Hall).

"Your earnest desires will become a beacon of hope that brightly illuminates all humankind in a substantial way."

"We have entered the year of the black rabbit, the year of the water rabbit, which is full of excitement, joy and delight!"

She is saying that she would like the blessed central families to be beacons of hope for all humankind and to live with joy and enthusiasm.

"All of you shall be proud and respected as victors before heaven and humankind."

True Parents were married in 1960, opening the way for humankind to receive the blessing. Since then, they have been calling on the blessed families to become the heavenly tribal messiahs. If you are moved by God's words, it is only natural that you would want to share it with your families and relatives (tribes). Now is the time to take action in accordance with the outpouring of your heart (when you were deeply moved).

"Become a filial sons and filial daughters who can substantiate the Heavenly Parent's dreams."

Filial sons and daughters are the ones to substantiate the Heavenly Parent's ideal world and ideal family. Let us give our utmost in accomplishing the greatest filial piety we can before the Heavenly Parent.

At the special luncheon on the day of Holy Birthday, True Mother said, "As we begin the year of the water rabbit, I hope that we can be the light of hope so that all humankind, all of the religions, and the history of human civilization can be unified within the Heavenly Parent's Holy Community."

All religions, including Christianity, Islam, and Buddhism, will be united under the Heavenly Parent's Holy Community, and all nations, including Korea, Japan, and the United States, will become one under Cheon Il Guk. The era, in which the Heavenly Unified World will be realized, is surely approaching.

True Mother wrote song lyrics in memory of True Father's beloved "Ilsongjeong (the pine tree on the property of Cheong Jeong Gung)"

True Mother spoke at a special luncheon about the Ilsongjeong, a special pine tree on the property of Cheon Jeong Gung Museum. When True Parents were pioneering Chung Pyung, they rested under the shade of the Ilsongjeong, sang with their disciples, and shared God's words. When True Father built the Cheon Jeong Gung Museum, he designed it around the Ilsongjeong.

True Mother wrote the lyrics to this song to express her feelings for the Ilsongjeong. Then, Moon Shin-yeo nim composed music according to the lyrics, which was then performed by a choir with the

grandchildren at the special luncheon. She asked all the world leaders to listen to the song many times and feel the heart contained in it. I, too, will practice the song as I think of Mother.

In fact, we sent a choir from Japan to perform at that special luncheon. They practiced hard for ten days after receiving an invitation. They performed as well as The Little Angels, which is one of Korea's most famous groups.

They gave a short message after concluding their performance and said, "Japan is in a difficult situation right now, but we are doing fine. Please do not worry. We will do our best." I heard that True Mother, who saw their performance, was so pleased that tears ran down her eyes and she gave each choir member a necktie and scarf as a gift.

I received e-mail after e-mail from leaders all over the world who attended the event, and they all praised the Japanese performance as the best, and said the audience was moved to tears.

When you take a step forward for those you love, a path will open

I am going to tell you some stories that I hope will help you overcome the adversity we are currently facing.

As you know, the most-sold book in the whole world is the Bible. However, people in the world may not know its contents intricately. In that sense, it may also be called "the least read book."

So what is the most read book in recent years? It is the Harry Potter series. It's said that more than 500 million copies have been sold worldwide. How did a story that is 100 percent fiction sell so well? It is because the books are filled with people's dreams and ideals.

The author is a British woman named J.K. Rowling. Although she is now said to be richer than Queen Elizabeth, her life was not always smooth sailing.

She married a journalist while working as an English teacher in Portugal. However, due to domestic violence and other problems, she had to return to England with her four-month-old daughter. She was unable to find a job and lived on government welfare that she developed depression, which drove her to the point of contemplating suicide.

When her daughter was five years old, she had asked her to buy a book at a bookstore. However, due to poverty, Ms. Rowling was unable to buy it for her. She was determined not to ruin her daughter's life, so she took up a pen and finished the manuscript of Harry Potter, which she had been writing. A chance encounter with a publisher led to the birth of a bestseller loved by children and adults around the world.

When she took a step forward for her loved one, the path of hope opened for her.

The next story is about former South African President Nelson Mandela. He was involved in the anti-apartheid movement from his youth and spent 27 years in prison after his arrest at the age of 44.

What do you think would happen to a person if he or she spent that long in prison? Most people would lose hope and some become crippled. But he survived without ever losing hope. He believed that the greatest honor in life was not in not falling down, but in getting up every time you fall down. No matter how badly he was beaten in prison, he maintained his health by doing push-ups and sit-ups every day.

We are faced with many challenges and hardships in our lives. However, successful people see these difficulties as "blessings that make them stronger" and are grateful for them.

There is no end to the biased media coverage of the Family Federation. However, no matter how much they bombard us, members love God and True Parents and are doing their utmost to fulfill heaven's will. Whenever I visit the members, I am impressed because I feel they are different from the others.

True Mother has said to look for the righteous, and these visits have renewed my recognition that the members are the righteous and the treasures of Heaven. I wrote a letter to her and reported on this fact.

How hard did True Parents have to work to build the foundation we have today? Despite being innocent, True Father was jailed six times. Although the mainstream media, politicians and lawyers who are anti-Unification Church have been accusing our past activities and criticizing our lives of faith, I am still able to get a taste of True Parents' heart. It has been a great blessing.

First, humankind should love God

True Mother is now most concerned about the consecration of Cheon Won Gung. The consecration

ceremony will be held on May 5, and let us offer our prayers with the utmost sincerity every day without fail until then. All of the members and blessed families should unite in solidarity.

True Mother said that the completion of Cheon Won Gung will be the completion of Heaven's providence and the completion of human history. She also explained that if the Cheon Jeong Gung Museum is the most holy place centering on True Parents, Cheon Won Gung is the central office, the sanctum of the providence of restoration. The main aspect of Cheon Won Gung is the Cheon Il Sanctum. Mother is trying to create a place on earth where God can be welcomed and attended to.

In the history of humankind, many temples have been built, but none of them have been able to welcome God. True Mother said, "Cheon Won Gung is the one and only sanctum, the capital, and the treasure equipped with the dignity of the Heavenly Unified Korea that can be shared with the Heavenly Parent." (November 19, 2020.)

You have probably read or heard the following scripture:

But when the Pharisees heard that He had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together. Then one of them, a lawyer, asked Him a question, testing Him, and saying, "Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law?" Jesus said to him, "'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.' This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets." Matthew 22:34-40

First, humankind should love God. Second, they should love their neighbors. Look at the faces of the people sitting next to you. They are all children of the precious God. Let us respect and support each other. And let us expand the relationship of love between brothers and sisters to our communities, society, nation, and the world.

If the family shares in joy and happiness, there is nothing to fear

Jesus said this to Peter:

"And I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven." Matthew 16:19

True Parents has explained that the "key to heaven is the family," "God's ideal of creation is the family," and the final point of the providence of restoration is "not the Messiah, but the family."

As a blessed family, the path to heaven will be opened to those who live attending to God and True Parents and practice true love. However, even if one has received the blessing, if the husband and wife constantly quarrel or if they have bad parent-child relations, that family will not be able to be called the key to heaven.

True Father told us that when we look at the faces of our husbands, wives, parents, or children, we must see God. That word has remained deep in my heart.

If a husband looks at his wife's face, he may feel like he is seeing an ogre. If a wife sees her husband's face, she may feel like looking at a tiger. The moment a parent sees the face of their child, there may be feelings of resentment there. When a child sees the face of their parent, they may feel like they are seeing a yakuza boss. Can such a family be the key to heaven? Even if family relations are a mess, as long as you pray hard, you may think that God will come down to your family, but that is not so.

God has always wanted to live with us in our homes. From today, the moment we see the faces of our spouse or children, let us be grateful and say, "Thank you, God, for always watching over us!"

I have nothing to fear when my wife is next to me. I often make the rounds with my wife, and when she gives the opening remarks before my message, I am always impressed and nod while saying, "I see. I see." She is like heaven for me.

When you hear criticism and accusations against the Family Federation, your heart may be hurt and you may get down. If we relate with them, it's only natural that we feel uneasy.

But what if you share joy and happiness with your spouse and children? There is nothing to fear. When we are proud of our spouse and children and always pay attention to them, we wouldn't even bother to look at the news on TV or the internet.

How can there be any room to criticize True Parents' words and the principles we stand for? The Unification Principle, Unification Thought, and the Theory of Victory over Communism surpass all

philosophies, ideas, and religious doctrines. This is because they are God-given by the Messiah.

True Father emphasized that the value of a religion is not determined by the number of believers, but by the kind of ideologies and thoughts it has. Right now, the teachings of the Family Federation are being examined to see if they are genuine. We are entering an era in which all religions are being organized and integrated.

Make the Family Federation be needed by many people

Finally, I would like to review the year's slogan and five key points as we move into this year.

The year 2023 is the year of the black rabbit, the year of the water rabbit. The ears of a rabbit are very large. Through their ears, I believe that God is telling us to listen to people intently.

Rabbits are also very quick. It is not easy for foxes and other animals to catch them. Moreover, their hind legs are longer than their front legs, so they are good at going up mountains. Like the rabbit, we too, should run up through heaven's providence in a single bound.

With this in mind, we have adopted the slogan "Lots of listening, lots of running!"

Next, I'd like to talk about the five key points.

The first point is to increase witnessing results tenfold.

When True Mother called me and asked to increase our witnessing efforts, I immediately replied, "I understand!" At that moment, I felt an infusion of energy from the tips of my fingers and toes. I believe it was the works of the Holy Spirit. In the year of the rabbit, which symbolizes fertility, let us attest to the coming fortunes that will be brought through witnessing.

The second point is to promote the Shimbang Project.

More than ever, leaders will visit the homes of our families. They will listen to your concerns and pray for the well-being of your households.

Tetsuya Uchida, Church Leader of Nagano Family Church in the North Nagano District, has visited 434 blessed families in his district, and he was convinced that "all of the members are righteous." I was very moved when I heard his testimony. The members were very delighted with his visits and he helped create a more cheerful atmosphere in their households that they began to talk more lively.

The third point is a return to the pioneering spirit with the Holy Spirit and the truth.

The heavenly armament given to the Family Federation are the Holy Spirit and the truth. Each one of the members, not just the leaders, should cherish God's words and put them into practice in a loving manner.

The fourth point is the victory of heavenly tribal messiahship.

This is our destiny and if we can not accomplish this in one generation, our offspring and descendants should accomplish this.

The fifth point is to overcome the current ordeal.

Religions develop the more they are persecuted. It is truly perplexing. The most persecuted religious organization in Japan today is probably the Family Federation. Therefore, there is no doubt that it will develop greatly. Let us work together with district and church leaders to reform the church and become an organization that many people can trust and say that "the Family Federation is needed in Japan."

In the West Saitama District, Yasuaki Ito, a second generation member, has been installed as the district leader. True Mother requested that we actively establish second generation leaders, and once again, I am convinced that this was wisdom given by heaven.

As I witness the twenty second-generation district leaders who have stood up throughout the country, I began to understand why True Mother praised the second generation as "pure water" and "clear and beautiful like crystal" and gave them the title of "Hyojeongran."

Although difficulties may persist, we are under the protection and guidance of the Heavenly Parent and True Parents, so let us unite with our district and church leaders to advance heaven's providence.