

Takeru Kamiyama's Seunghwa

December 16, 2016

I drove up to Mr. Kamiyama's Seunghwa. I thought it might be just a tiny gathering, and wanted to support the family. To my shock, it was packed.

It was extremely beautiful, and a lot of amazing stories were told. I hadn't known that Mr. Kamiyama was excommunicated...that seemed even more odd in the light of the unchanging nature of his action, faith and character right up until the last minute of his life. I knew he was Christian before the movement, but I didn't realize that this was so key to his entire course and character. His family were persecuted for their Christian faith before he was even born.

Despite the beautiful (and humorous) stories that were told by so many, the remarks that really hit me were at the end, by his son, M.. He said the family never had any extended time with their Dad...except when he was fighting cancer (three different times.) For them, the "sick" era was kind of a special opportunity to get to know their father in a deeper way. They felt it was a time of connection for them. He said previously they would line up to greet him when he got back from some "public mission", and then a few days later, line up to see him off. He compared their family to the Von Trapps, in Sound of Music, and said it was even more apt because "Captain" means the same thing as "Taicho."

He explained several things I wanted to share here. He knew he was dying, and participated very much in trying to make his passing something reflecting his heart. He asked his son to give us three messages.

1) **Forgiveness.** M. said that his father knew that he was a strong character, opinionated, and probably hurt others with his decisions or actions or words. He evidently contacted those who expressed anger towards him, in the last months, to repent to them and to ask forgiveness. On behalf of his Father, M. said that he wanted to apologize to anyone who he hurt. He asked us to forgive him. I know various of us have expressed pain about things that happened, that were direct or indirect actions of Mr. Kamiyama. I just wanted to pass along his sorrow at having left any pain, and that he hopes you can forgive him.

2) **Love.** M. said that in Japanese culture, saying "I love you" is almost never done. At the end of his life, Mr. Kamiyama began saying "I love you" to his family and friends, and was evidently quite shocked at the reaction, which made him realize that it was important to tell people. On behalf of his father, M. said to the gathered people "My father wants you to know that he loves you."

3) **Unity.** It had already been mentioned throughout the service that Mr. Kamiyama was heartbroken at the division and destruction going on in the movement. Although he felt certain people had made wrong choices, he wanted the central family to be re-united and reconciled, and he wanted us all to be brothers and sisters again. For this reason, when the discussion of a final memorial took place, the initial wish was for a small, informal event with family only, or a few friends. Mr. Kamiyama, however, wanted to use his passing as a time in which people of all factions could come together, without barriers, and reconnect. Thus, the large Seunghwa, which was open to everyone, and which he intended as a reminder of our common purpose. He said that until now, we were all in training, for a time such as this, and now we should go out to the world, to restore it all. He asked for unity and reconciliation.

I personally am not a fan of formal ceremonies, but I loved seeing brothers and sisters of all "factions" come together to honor a true warrior for God. I want to thank those who put together such a loving occasion, and I just wanted to pass along the message shared by M..