

Farewell Ceremony for Vice President and Director-General Lee Seong-man

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May 21, 2022

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On May 21, the Shinjuku Family Church (East Tokyo District) welcomed Regional Group President of the Heavenly Japan for the Heavenly Parent's Holy Community, Bang Sang-il and his wife to hold the Farewell Ceremony for Vice President and Director-General Lee Seong-man. Senior family members, sub-regional presidents, district leaders, district women representatives, and headquarters staff gathered on behalf of the entire nation, Regional Group President Bang Sang-il gave a message and expressed True Mother's hopes for Vice President Lee Seong-man.

The Difficulty of Koreans Deciding to Walk the Path in Japan, the Land of Their Enmity

Vice President Lee Seong-man, thank you very much for your 36 years of work in Japan. My heart is filled with a little loneliness right now.

I was 38 years old when I received True Parents' request of becoming a missionary in Japan in 1998. At that time, I had little faith, and despite True Parents' wish, I was very conflicted about living in Japan. In addition, my father worked in a coal mine in Iwate as a conscripted worker. To me, Japan was a land of enmity. You can find many of Father's words talking about "loving the enemy," but it is no easy task getting rid of this hatred towards Japan.

In my mind I thought, "Perhaps I should just quit being a public leader. It would be okay as long as I don't leave True Parents' boson." For about a month, I took my wife and three children to many places. However, I had a change of heart and my mind told me, "If this is something entrusted to me by True Parents, I should pray about it at Chung Pyung and make my heart clear. I should solidify my determination." With that, I took my family there and we attended a two-day workshop.

At Chung Pyung, I closed my eyes to pray, and at that moment I heard of voice in my heart. "What have you been doing as a church leader all this time? Have you been leading the members under you with such a half-hearted attitude?" This voice repeatedly rebuked me for my lackadaisical attitude. I kept shedding tears of repentance and begged heaven for forgiveness.

After the workshop, I visited the Paju Won Jeon and prayed in front of Heung-jin nim's grave and pledged the following:

"I am going to leave my homeland and will now be going to Japan. This is my heavenly mission. I have been considering this for a month, but I will sort all my feelings out right here and give my life."

Before I knew it, I was screaming before Heaven and tears flowed unceasingly.

True Parents have stressed that Koreans must love Japan. He also gave us the cross cultural blessing between Koreans and Japanese so that Korea and Japan can become one. Still, it was very difficult for me to make the decision to leave my fatherland - the country I had lived for 38 years - and go to Japan, the country of enmity.

The "older brother" I admire the most

Vice President Lee Seong-man has walked a path of blood, sweat, and tears in Japan for thirty-six years since 1986.

You are probably familiar with the history of the Korean Peninsula. Thirty-six years is the length of time during which Japan ruled the Korean Peninsula. I have heard stories of that period from my parents and learned it repeatedly in history class. It is a tragic history. During the reign of Toyotomi Hideyoshi, Japan attacked Korea twice. The first was Japanese invasions of Korea (Bunroku-Keicho war). Many innocent Koreans were killed and forcibly taken to Japan.

Even today, these historical issues remain unresolved, and the two countries continue to have difficult relations. In South Korea, a new administration led by President Yoon Seok-yeol has been inaugurated with the aim of improving relations between South Korea and Japan, but I am not sure what will happen if historical issues resurface among the people.

The only way to solve this problem is through the Messiah of humankind, the True Parents, and the Family Federation, which puts their teachings into practice.

Vice President Lee Seong-man, together with his family, loved Japan with absolute faith, absolute love, and absolute obedience. His investment is as good as any of the Japanese leaders and the members.

Vice President Lee Seong-man is the "older brother" whom I admire the most. Of course, I call him "Vice President" in front of you, but personally, I like to call him "hyung" (older brother).

I have two older brothers who both died at the age of 49. My brothers and I had a falling out, and I had never really met others whom I could really call "hyung."

It was in then that I met Vice President Lee Seong-man. He is a senior 6,000-couple family who was in the position of eldest brother among the Korean leaders sent to Japan as missionaries. I was able to talk to him about anything. He was the "hyung" I had been looking for.

The Chinese character for "older brother" consists of "mouth" (口) and "unit" (儿) which represents a person or people. It is said that "a person with a large head" came to mean "ani" (older brother in Japanese). This character also means "elders who teach with their mouths (words)." Vice President Lee Seong-man, in his capacity as elder brother, has protected the Family Federation of Japan and helped guide its members and blessed families.

Vice President Lee Seong-man was the "hyung" who showed exemplary faith, and I am reminded that we must practice the teachings of True Parents, just as he did.

Vice President Lee Seong-man shared the world of heart with True Mother

On May 11, True Mother invited me to visit the Cheon Jung Gung Museum with Vice President Lee Seong-man. She spent about two hours talking about True Family and all the issues she had been dealing with.

True Mother, the Mother of humankind, accepts us, her children, with a heart that is wide and calm like the ocean. However, she carries loneliness in her heart and carries the cross in her heart. While revealing her heart and circumstances, Mother asked us to people that can understand her. It was an honor for us as a children, but at the same time, it was accompanied with heartache.

The closer you are to True Mother, the more you will be exposed to her hardships and heartache. Vice President Lee Seong-man is already in such a position, and he shares a world of heart and emotions with Mother that younger leaders cannot understand.

Vice President Lee Seong-man has been given the position of "Chairman of the construction promotion committee of Bird Flower Garden" and he will be in charge of a special project of HJ at the World Headquarters. Some of you may have thought, "Well, he is good at poetry, so he should be in charge of building an elegant facility where people can enjoy the beauty of flowers and birds." At this point, we do not know what the project will be, but what is clear is that True Mother has asked him to be by her side.

She told him, "Come work by my side at Cheon Jung Gung (Museum). I need a secretary that can help me restore the nation, restore the world. I want you to fully understand and grasp the domestic and foreign affairs, especially the church and its affiliated organizations in Korea. I want you to report these things to me."

Some people may question, "Aren't Jeong Won-ju, Secretary to the President, and Yoon Young-ho, Director-General of International Headquarters in such a role?" That's absolutely correct, and they will continue to play these important roles in the future. But at this moment when the providence of heaven is coming to an end, more assistance was required.

When we visited her, there was a newspaper beside her. Mother said, "Lee Seong-man, who is going to read the newspaper that has been placed before you? I'm afraid my eyes can't read small letters." Mother wanted him to serve as her eyes, ears, and feet, observing the domestic and international situations, gathering information, and taking necessary action.

True Mother went so far as to say, "There's a room available at Cheon Jung Gung (Museum), so you can use it. You can live with me there." Ms. Jeong Won-ju entered the room right at that moment, and when she was told of what Mother had said, she offered rescue and said, "Mother, that room is uninhabitable. It's like a storage room. It doesn't even have a window. How could anybody live there?" But Mother would not budge. "That's not a problem. He's going to sleep at night, anyway. Anywhere you go, it's going to be dark at nighttime." Vice President Lee Seong-man was so humbled by Mother's offer that he dropped to his knees on the floor and made a request.

(He said,) "I have many shortcomings. Those who serve by Mother's side must be praiseworthy. They must be a model whom no one can criticize. I have three daughters, but only one has been blessed. If there are people like me who have such shortcomings, there will be room for criticism. I cannot cause any inconvenience to you (Mother)."

True Mother then replied, "You don't have to worry about your family. Don't you know that your problems can be solved just by being around me?"

The way has been paved for the Family Federation in Japan to become one with True Mother

How much does Mother love Lee Seong-man? When I tried to join in on the conversation and spoke one word, Mother interrupted me and said, "You don't have to say anything."

When she says something like that, you can't really say anything in her presence. Lee Seong-man replied, "Yes, I understand." Mother looked relieved and said, "You should sort out what you have been responsible for and leave everything to Bang Sang-il and come back to Korea."

Ladies and gentlemen, Lee Seong-man will have the title of Chairman of the construction committee of Bird Flower Garden, but please understand that the mission is completely different from what it sounds like. As a matter of fact, it means starting a new career as a close aide to True Mother.

In some ways, I can say that I will be able to convey the challenges and up-to-date situation of the Family Federation in Japan to True Mother through Lee Seong-man. Personally, I expect to be able to consult with "hyung" and have him convey things to Mother when problems arise.

His real name is Lee Ki-man. True Mother gave him the name Lee Seong-man. She praised him as being more praiseworthy than the poet Tagore, and also gave him the name "Seonggol." No matter how great and famous Tagore is in India, he has not received the blessing by True Parents. The most important figures in human history are True Parents. How honorable is it to have received a name from them?

Lee Seong-man became one with True Parents and invested a lot in our brothers and sisters in Japan. He even took care of every church nationwide to protect the Family Federation in Japan. When I think about that, I feel that something big and heavy will fall on my shoulders, as well as President Tomihiro Tanaka's.

In order to fulfill the mission of the Mother Nation, the brothers and sisters in Japan have made great efforts to make world contributions. At times, members have devoted their whole lives to making these contributions, prioritizing them over food, clothing and shelter of their own families. Vice President Lee Seong-man witnessed these hardships up close.

Children want to see their parents happy. So do you think leaders can make reports that will worry True Mother? When you have a track record and bring in good results, these reports come out of your mouth easily, but when you're in a tough situation or facing a difficult problem, it's not easy to report on these issues. However, if Lee Seong-man is going to be by Mother's side I think he would be able to tell her such things frankly.

Our efforts in partaking in the ancestor liberations and blessings at Chung Pyung have connected to world contributions. Vice President Lee Seong-man paved this way. Together with Song Yong Cheon, then-President of the National Federation of blessed families, and then-President Eiji Tokuno, they openly conveyed the up-to-date situations of brothers and sister in Japan to To Mother.

Heaven's fortune is with True Parents

This time, I went to Korea (May 7-12) with Vice President Lee Seong-man and Lee Chang-mo, Secretary General of the Federation for Peace and Unification. The purpose of our visit was to participate in the

inauguration ceremony of the President of South Korea. On May 11, we attended a dinner presided over by the State Minister (Prime Minister), and when we met True Mother on May 12, I reported the following:

"Yesterday (May 11), True Mother gave us many words of wisdom and gave us great fortune for about two hours. Therefore, I was certain that we would receive blessings under this fortune at the dinner.

In fact, I was able to meet with VVIPs such as President Yoon Suk-yeol, the Prime Minister, Secretaries of State, members of the National Assembly, and heads and former heads of Mindan. Everything was prepared. In just two hours at the dinner, I was able to create relationships that I could not have had in 60 years of my life. I am amazed at the speed of the providence."

My mother was so happy and beaming with joy.

Heaven's desire for the Mother Nation is growing for the realization of the Heavenly Unified Korea and the restoration of the world. To answer this call, the blessed families and members of Japan, who continue to follow the path of God's will, are truly great people.

It is less than a year until the consecration of Cheon Won Gung, which is being led by True Mother with all her heart and soul. She gave me words of encouragement and said, "Bang Sang-il, Lee Seong-man will be gone from Japan, but you will need to work ten times, a hundred times harder." On behalf of the Family Federation in Japan, I replied, "Yes! I'll do my best and give ten times, one hundred times more!"

Today is an important day for U.S. President Joe Biden, who is visiting South Korea, and President Yoon Seok-yeol as they are holding a summit. I think the fact that Lee Seong-man's farewell ceremony is held on this historic day has a deep significance.

Subregional presidents, district leaders, and district women representatives, let us move forward with the words of Vice President Lee Seong-man's farewell firmly in our hearts. We will be able to protect True Mother by doing our best, and give relief to Vice President Lee Seong-man, as well. Let us do our best.