

43 elder couples from Japan visited sacred sites in America's West

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Japan Unification Movement: At the invitation of True Mother on the occasion of the Dedication of the International Peace Education Center (known as Peace Palace) in Las Vegas, USA, and the special commemorative service for the 1,000th day from True Father's Seonghwa, Japan's founding 43 elder couples including Ms. Tetsuko Kuboki (one of the 430 Couples) went on a pilgrimage in America's West from May 25th until June 3rd.

The pilgrimage delegation was led by Dr. and Mrs. Eiji Tokuno, President of the HSA-UWC Japan, consisting of 19 members including 15 senior couples and Dr. Gimman Lee, Executive Director of the HSA-UWC Japan. They toured along True Parents' footsteps in America's West around Las Vegas, receiving so much love from True Mother that they could re-commit themselves to going forward as filial sons and daughters.



On May 25th at 5:10 pm, the delegation left Narita International Airport, crossing over the Pacific's dateline and arriving in San Francisco at 10:25 am (local time) of the same date.

San Francisco is the first American city where True Father reached in his first World Tour in February 1965. That historic tour covering 40 nations had begun at the end of January 1965 with a providential

objective of dedicating up to 120 holy grounds around the world, starting with Japan, where eight holy grounds were determined before going to the USA.

The pilgrimage delegation first visited San Francisco's Twin Peaks which was America's first holy ground. As San Francisco is dubbed 'City of Fog', the Twin Peaks on a hill 270-meter above sea level had strong winds blowing with low clouds hanging around.

Stepping out of the bus, they climbed up to the northern peak, where they offered prayer thanking for the tour's start. As the cold wind was blowing even late May, they were reminded of a harsh climate when True Parents had come to this peak in February 50 years back.

Tracing True Parents' footsteps

On the second day of the tour May 26th, the delegation left a hotel in San Francisco and took a flight to Phoenix, Arizona. Met by the local members at the airport, they headed to its holy ground under the clear blue sky.

The originally-designated holy ground of Phoenix now submerges under a pond in a park. A local member had shared an interesting interpretation: "Since Arizona is the state of deserts, its holy ground under water indicates God's blessing of a sort." Just like a word 'phoenix' meaning a wonder bird with perpetual life, the holy ground was resurrected from a fate of extinction to a splendid site.

Near the holy ground's pond, the tour members made a circle, offering a unison prayer and four cheers of eok mansei altogether.



In a bus heading to the next destination of Sedona, they shared their testimonies. Rev. Ken Sudo recalled why True Father had to come to America, referring to what he had heard personally from Father in the 1970s as follows:

"As they came over to America, True Parents pledged two things to God. First, they would install a president who could eliminate world communism. It was President Reagan, whose innovative military strategy eventually overcame communism without bloodshed.

The second pledge was to establish a theological school. Although Father did not clearly stated its objective, I believe, it was to restore Christianity."

Rev. Hideo Oyamada elaborated a background of True Parents' course in America from a different angle. "True Father invested a lot for nearly 40 years since the end of 1971. He used to say, "I have come to America for the sake of God who had raised America!"

America stands on 4,000-year Judaism and 2,000-year Christianity. Having spent for nearly 40 years in America, True Father even dealt with 1,400-year Islam, later crystalizing such foundation into 'Jerusalem Declaration' in May 2003 as a threshold of religious unity. As a consequence, such efforts oriented a

project for the Inter-religious Council at the United Nations.

In two-hour bus drive from Phoenix through what is known as ‘the most beautiful highway’, namely; Interstate Highway Route 17, they reached Bell Rock and Airport Mesa in Sedona, the two world-renown power spots. In Sedona, there are four sites of ‘Vortex’ (meaning ‘convolution’ in Spanish), known as the energy sources springing out of the earth, including Bell Rock and Airport Mesa.

Stepping out of the bus on a hilltop overlooking the bell-shaped mountain Bell Rock, they could view a splendid panorama of Rocky Mountains with red soils exposed under the vast blue sky. They sang ‘Song of the Garden’ and momentarily stayed on for prayer.

Then, they moved to Airport Mesa, which is believed to bear more masculine energy. As if to prove its truthfulness, some people directed their hands toward the mountains and experienced sharp, even painful, heat in their palms.



On the third day of the tour (May 27th), the delegation left their hotel in Sedona for the Grand Canyon. For many of them, this was their first encounter with the Grand Canyon. As they spent time at Mercer Point and Bright Angel, they were overwhelmed by the majestic panorama of God’s great Creation and Love.

Then, they took five-hour bus drive to Las Vegas, Nevada, where they stayed in a hotel.

On the fourth day of May 28th, the tour members participated in the official dedication ceremony for the International Peace Education Center (the Peace Palace). At 8:50 am, True Mother and her entourage arrived in the Peace Palace. At its entrance, True Mother tearfully offered a dedication prayer, followed by a tape-cutting and planting a commemorative olive tree, wishing that the Peace Palace would be deeply involved in peace education.

Having conducted the consecration around the building, Mother cut a cake at the entrance hall under the vaulted ceilings, attended by many participants and guests.

Leaving the Peace Palace behind, the delegates headed to Cheon Hwa Gung, where they would pay respect to True Mother directly. At Cheon Hwa Gung, Rev. Yong Cheon Song, Chairman of the National Federation of Blessed Families of Japan, led big applause to welcome True Mother into the hall. As they bowed, True Mother said, “You are most welcome!” Rev. Tokuno reported about the pilgrimage tour. Then, some tour members expressed their appreciations to the invitation to America. Excerpts are as follows:

Ms. Tetsuko Kuboki: Although I had numerous opportunities to travel around the world in accompanying my husband (Rev. Osami Kuboki, first President of HSA-UWC Japan), this is the first

journey with an exclusive tour driver.

At the Twin Peaks' holy ground in San Francisco, the first holy ground designated by True Parents, I was astonished by its cold climate and strong winds. I learned that America's providence started from there. I am also impressed by the vastness of this nation, as I drove up to Las Vegas.



I am particularly moved by True Father's providence focusing on the restoration of America. As Mother once described that "Father has become crazy for God!", I could realize that indeed Father treaded the path of restoration like someone obsessed.

Members of the 43 Couples are visiting America's holy grounds with indescribable gratitude.

Ms. Setsuko Sakurai: As I could visit the three holy grounds of America this time, I understood that Father had decided them in excruciatingly cold weather of February 50 years before. I sincerely prayed so as to inherit Father's heart, resolve and guts at that time. I could not but cry out.

I also could not but repent as, after 50 years, we should have established much larger foundation. Although I am 77 years old this year, I commit myself once again to becoming the child more in line with True Parents' wishes during my remaining life time.

It was impressive to see Mother's compassionate and embracing manner in calmly but attentively listening to Japan's elder couples who testified out of their hearts of children to True Mother.

Having heard from the tour members, Mother began to speak. Some excerpts are as follows:

"You are now in your 70s to 80s. Your life styles during your remaining life on earth will determine whether you can expand your spiritual realm or not." "From True Parents' standpoint, all the 7 billion human race have to be restored as children of True Parents. Only then, mankind will become one family under God. In your remaining life on earth, you must introduce and testify to True Parents by all means."

Then, on behalf of the tour group, Rev. and Mrs. Oyamada presented a plaque of appreciation to Mother, while Ms. Kuboki offered a commemorative gift.

After wards, the tour participants were graced to have lunch together with True Mother. Then, out of their hearts of gratitude, they sang songs like 'Red Dragonfly' and 'What is happiness?' At Mother's request, they altogether sang 'Furusato (Hometown)'.

Finally, a commemorative photo was taken centering on True Mother. As they offered big hands of appreciation to Mother's abundant love, Mother left the room.