

Interview of Japanese FFWPU President Eiji Tokuno

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March 28, 2016



[Weekly Kyunghyang]

[Interview] Japanese Family Federation President Eiji Tokuno Visits Birthday Celebration of Reverend Moon, ‘Believers of the Unification Church: 300,000 in Korea and 600,000 in Japan’

“In Korea, we were accused of practicing heresy, but because the foundation of Christianity in Japan was weak, settling was easy. In addition, another cause in our favor was that religious leaders of rising generations from prestigious universities listened to the teachings of Reverend Moon and united together.”

Commonly known as the “Unification Church,” the Family Federation for World Peace and Unification (Family Federation) is receiving a bigger response overseas. Japan in particular yields a greater Family Federation following than Korea, where the Family Federation was originally founded. Japan is said to have about 600,000 Family Federation members. Because the relationship between Korea and Japan is close, and yet distant, at the same time, the Family Federation has supported peace movements that transcended national borders, and has poured its interest into improving the friendly relations between Korea and Japan. The Family Federation considers the period from the Birthday of Reverend Sun Myung Moon and Dr. Hak Ja Han on the 13th of February (lunar, January 6) to Foundation day on the 20th of February (lunar, January 13) as their actual New Year. Japanese Family Federation President Eiji Tokuno has also visited Korea numerous times to lead various events and activities. We took the time to hear about the peace movements and family movements of the Family Federation from President Tokuno, who proclaims that religious barriers must be put aside.

Question: We heard that the Family Federation of Japan has 600,000 members, and that it is even more active than in Korea, which yields 300,000 members. What do you believe to be the background for the membership in Japan to exceed that of the country where the religion originated?

“Even though Japan was one of the countries that responded to the Family Federation the most, the time where the official name of the organization changed from the ‘Holy Spirit Association for the Unification of World Christianity’ to the ‘Family Federation for World Peace and Unification’ was very recent, as of August, 2015. This was because of the strict policies on the separation of religious organizations and social movements by the Japanese government; but after the change in title, the peace and family movements called the ‘realization of an ideal family as the foundation of peace’ started to be staged, where instead of only emphasizing the salvation of others in the tone of religions, the process of husband and wife and parents and children becoming one was stressed instead. In Korea, the Family Federation was accused of so-called ‘heresy’ and was highly frowned upon, but because of the weak foundation of Christianity in Japan, it was rather easy to settle there. In addition, when the activities of Reverend Moon began in Japan from 1959, the fact that many religious leaders of prestigious universities from the rising

generation listened to and concentrated on the teachings of Reverend Moon was one of the reasons that the current congregation exists today.”

Question: We heard that various meetings and forums took place beginning with the Birthday Commemoration Ceremony of Reverend Sun Myung Moon and Dr. Hak Ja Han.

“First of all, the most magnificent event that the Family Federation hosts is the Birthday Celebration of Reverend Sun Myung Moon and Dr. Hak Ja Han, which both fall on the same day. 150 active congressmen from Korea, Japan and all over the world participated in the International Leadership Conference event that took place after this celebratory event, and together sought solutions to issues relating to world peace, such as ‘climate change’ and ‘Peace and Stability in Northeast Asia and on the Korean Peninsula.’ In addition, through the Wonmo Pyeongae Foundation, a scholarship presentation ceremony took place where Dr. Hak Ja Han herself presented a total of 10 billion won to 500 people in Korea and 1,500 people from over the world, and the World Unification Movements General Assembly event was hosted as well.”

Question: How do you introduce the activities of peace movements by the Family Federation to guests from all over the world that visit to attend this event?

“The Peace Ideology of Reverend Sun Myung Moon and Dr. Hak Ja Han supports the overcoming of religions, races and national boundaries. 300 political leaders, nongovernmental activists and scholars from North America, Europe, Africa and various countries that follow or show interest in these ideologies, entered our country to attend the conference. And recently, thirty representative journalists from eight Southeast Asian countries such as Indonesia, Malaysia and Nepal, where the teachings of Reverend Moon and Dr. Han are spreading on a national dimension, visited Korea and not only covered a story about Korea, the mother country of the Family Federation, but also by going on a field trip to the Imjingak Pavilion, we had them experience the reality of division through such international peace activities.”

Question: It is said that the Birthday Commemoration Ceremony of the Reverend Moon also becomes an opportunity to promote the culture of Korea.

“In the ‘Events and Festivals’ held in Korea, 4,000 people from Japan and 1,000 people from all over the world, as well as over 30,000 people from Korea, attended. In Japan, events where families, relatives and local neighbors are invited often take place. By opening cultural events, such as celebratory services, panel exhibitions and choir performances, and preparing and serving various Korean dishes like rice cake soup and *adzuki*-bean gruel, we were once again able to pass on the culture of Korea.”

Question: What distinct policy plans has the Family Federation prepared for the enhancement of the friendship and relations between Korea and Japan?

“Korean and Japan are in a way so close, yet have had many historical conflicts. From the Japanese Invasion of Korea in 1592 to the more recent Japanese Colonial Era, many wounds were inflicted throughout the history between Korea and Japan, so thoughts of repentance are ever present. With so many methods to improve the relations between the two countries, the Family Federation is seeking measures to activate exchanges between people on both sides, centering on culture, tourism and trade. Just as how the 2002 World Cup was jointly hosted smoothly, another effective measure would be for Japan to first help Korea in the 2018 Pyeong Chang Winter Olympics, and then for Korea to help Japan in the 2020 Tokyo Summer Olympics two years later. Other than that, as there is nothing stronger than the familial connection in a relationship between people, if international marriages happen between the two countries, then they can contribute toward creating peace in the world. In this process, the most important and necessary thing is for Japan, in the position of the oppressor, to empathize from the position of the victim and then march toward the future together after showing a humble and apologetic attitude.”...