

Lend your ears and run forward!

Tomihiro Tanaka
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On January 4, the Opening Ceremony for the Regional Group of Heavenly Japan of the Heavenly Parent's Holy Community in 2023 was held at Shoto Headquarters in Shibuya, Tokyo. In the presence of the national and headquarter leaders, as well as senior members, Bang Sang-il, Regional Group President of the Heavenly Japan of the Heavenly Parent's Holy Community, gave a message in which he looked back on the progress made in 2022, and presented the slogan as well as five points for the year 2023. He called on everyone to "lend your ears and run forward to testify about God and True Parents' love to the whole nation."

Happy New Year, everyone!

As we look back on the year 2022, the first six months allowed us to carry out our activities as planned and we received positive responses that showed we were getting closer to the realization of Cheon Il Guk. However, after the assassination of former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe on July 8, the winds changed completely. Criticisms were fired at the Family Federation from all angles.

In order to explain the efforts and ideas of the church to the public and to protect the blessed families and members throughout Japan from biased reporting of the mainstream media, President Tomihiro Tanaka, as the head of the religious body, held two press conferences. Then, Hideyuki Teshigawara, Director-General of the Headquarters for Church Reform, held three press conferences to answer questions from the media. I would like to express my sincere appreciation to both of them and all church staff who have been going through hardship on the frontlines.

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

Let me to show some pictures as we look back on the previous year.

On January 11, we started the New Year with an opening ceremony at Shoto Headquarters. At that time, I declared that the age of second generation was about to begin in earnest.

After assuming the post of Regional Group President of the Heavenly Japan for the Heavenly Parent's Holy Community in October 2020, I began a nationwide tour and completed my visit to all 67 districts with the visit to Hyogo District on December 18 of last year.

On February 6, I attended the Pledge and Commemoration Ceremony of Cheon Il Guk for the Anniversary of the Holy Birth of True Parents of Heaven, Earth, and Humankind held at HJ Garden Hall in Chung Pyung, Korea, where I gave the representative prayer. I was very nervous and my legs were trembling because it was my first time to pray on behalf of all world leaders of Cheon Il Guk in the presence of True Mother.

The Korean Peninsula Peace Summit (February 13) brought world VIPs on the same stage. When I look at this photo of True Mother together with those representatives, I can picture Jesus and the twelve disciples 2,000 years ago. If the twelve disciples had been united with Jesus, God's ideal world would have been realized. The VIPs who have gathered with Mother over time are walking in perfect oneness with her. Ban Ki-moon, former Secretary General of the United Nations, Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen, and former U.S. House Speaker Newt Gingrich have testified to the whole world about True Parents. Whenever you see them, I am sure that you also feel that a Heavenly Unified Korea and Heavenly Unified World are approaching soon.

True Mother is committed to nurturing future human resources. In response to her wish, we have been sending Cheon Il Guk youth missionaries overseas, but last year we had to stop dispatching them due to Covid. So, symbolically, I visited Yonaguni Island (Okinawa Prefecture) - the closest Japanese island to Taiwan - with the youth missionaries (March 13-15).

On April 16, I participated in the Pledge and Commemoration Ceremony of Cheon Il Guk for the 55th Heavenly Parent's Day and 63rd True Parents' Day held to commemorate the 62nd anniversary of True Parents' Holy Wedding. Ladies and gentlemen, what do you think True Mother is most concerned about now? It is none other than the consecration of Cheon Won Gung.

Yesterday (January 3), the 2023 New Year's Celebrations of Cheon Il Guk Leaders was held with HJ Garden Hall as the main venue, where the entire world was connected through the internet. I joined remotely from Shoto Headquarters and offered a representative prayer. One third of the prayer was about Cheon Won Gung because I was convinced that True Mother's wish is nearly fulfilled.

A resolution ceremony for the consecration of Cheon Won Gung was held at the site on April 17 of last year, and the interior is now being finished at a rapid pace.

During the Special Education for World Leaders of Cheon Il Guk (April 19-22), district leaders from Japan were given the opportunity to sing the Cheer Song of God's Will before True Mother. On the last day of the program as I was praying with the district leaders at Cheon Shim Won, Mother came to the training center and took a picture with us with beautiful azalea flowers in the background. She also presented the district leaders with neckties.

The day when True Father first came to Japan for his studies (April 1, 1941) is celebrated as Nichirinsetsu and last year we held the 81st Anniversary Memorial Rally of Nichirinsetsu (Shimonoseki City, Yamaguchi Prefecture) on May 28.

Twenty-one days after that on June 18, Yun Young-ho, Director-General of International Headquarters, was invited to hold the Special General Assembly for Leaders of the Heavenly Japan in Shinjuku, Tokyo. Church leaders and women representatives from all over the country gathered and received many blessings. Then, another twenty-one days later, the shooting happened.

Family Federation of Japan's hope: Twenty second-generation district leaders take a stand

As mentioned at the beginning of this report, President Tanaka held two press conferences, one on July 11 (at a hotel in Tokyo) and the other on August 10 (at the Foreign Correspondents' Club of Japan). Amidst a barrage of tough questions from reporters critical of the Family Federation, many people, including senior family members who saw President Tanaka respond sincerely, called to give him encouragement.

Then, in order to promote church reform, the Headquarters for Church Reform was established, and Director-General Teshigawara was given the responsibility of dealing with the mainstream media.

On August 12 at the Summit 2022 and Leaders' Meeting (Seoul, Korea), time was set aside to mourn former Prime Minister Abe. At the Cheon Il Guk Leaders' General Assembly (August 16), which followed the Commemoration Ceremony of the 10th Anniversary of Cosmic Seonghwa (August 14), I reported on the situation of the Family Federation in Japan. We held an Emergency Special Meeting for Leaders of the Heavenly Japan (October 7, Isshin Special Education Institute) to make a fresh start, and kicked off (a new age) with leaders and women representatives with unity of mind.

On September 4, True Mother called me and encouraged me to utilize the second-generation leaders positively. Based on her wish, twenty second-generation members are now standing as district leaders. They are the future of the Family Federation in Japan. I saw them giving lectures at the Special 40-day Divine Principle Workshop, and they are very capable. Although their experience as public leaders may be limited, their passion and ability more than make up for it.

On the other hand, there are those who have ceded their position as district leaders to them. They are public leaders between the ages of 61 and 65. I invited them to Shoto Headquarters for a dinner party (October 21). When I asked each one of them what they thought (about the transition), they replied that they were really happy that the age of second generation had arrived. That moved me to tears.

The 40th Seonghwa Festivities for the Heavenly Japan (November 3) was held at Shoto Headquarters with an altar decorated with beautiful flowers. The National District Leaders' Meeting (November 8, Shoto Headquarters), the second Speech Contest of Cheon Il Guk Language for Official Workers (November 16, Shoto Headquarters), the National Workshop for Districts' Witnessing and Education Department Heads (November 22-23, Isshin Special Education Institute), and the twelfth Workshop for Districts' Women Representatives (December 5-6, Shinjuku, Tokyo) were held successively in November and early December.

With the culmination of my touring project, which lasted about a year and a half, a national soccer tournament called, the PEACE CUP JAPAN Regional Group President's Cup, was held in Kamisu City, Ibaraki Prefecture (December 10-11, 2011). Despite the cold winds, representatives from each subregion played league and tournament matches over two days, and as a result, West Kanagawa VIGO, representing Region 1, won the championship.

On December 12, the Awards Ceremony Commemorating the 63rd Anniversary of (Family Federation Japan's) Founding was held at Shoto Headquarters, where the True Parents Award (for 33 years of pastoral and public ministry work) was presented to four families, and a total of 170 people were given Distinguished Service Awards in the categories of public leadership, women representation, witnessing excellence, world contribution, and staff service, with certificates and commemorative gifts being presented.

The way towards our destiny: Be victorious on the path of heavenly tribal messiahship

True Mother spoke yesterday at the New Year's celebrations. I would like to share some of her words as

we begin the new year.

"All of your earnest desires will be a beacon of hope that will light up all of humankind in a tangible way."

This means that she hopes all blessed families in the world will put God's words into practice, become the substance of true love, and become a light that illuminates the world.

"We have entered the year of the black rabbit, the year of the water rabbit, which should be full of thrills, joys, and delight."

Last year was the year of the water tiger, and in these years it is said that fortune will come from the north-northwest.

Last year, North Korea launched a record number of missiles - about 70 - at a cost of over 80 billion yen. Despite being a poor country, North Korea launches missiles in this manner, perhaps because it believes that time is ripe for its nation.

"The color black, in particular, absorbs all light. No one can deny that the more heat we receive from the sun, the more warmth we generate."

The color black includes every color.

Also, the first word that appears in the Thousand Character Classic (a long Chinese poem used to teach Chinese characters to children) is "Heaven and Earth, Dark and Yellow." The meaning of this phrase is that the sky is black and the earth is yellow. When you think of the sky, you probably think of the color blue. That is true when the sun is up, but it is dark at night. Which comes first, the God of the night or the God of the day? As True Father often said in his later years, the God of night comes first. In other words, everything begins with the color black.

So what color best reflects off of black? White. True Mother said that black absorbs all light, and I think that is because God is there. And I feel that white symbolizes True Parents.

"I hope that you will all be proud and be respected as victors before heaven and humankind."

For us, our destiny is the path of the heavenly tribal messiahship. In his last prayer, True Father earnestly prayed for the victory of the heavenly tribal messiahship. If we call ourselves children of True Parents, we must fulfill their wish.

The path taken by Jacob was also taken by Moses. And the path that Moses followed was also taken by Jesus, and the path Jesus followed also taken by True Parents. The formula (in this path) is to bring victory in the foundation of faith and foundation of substance, and then establish the foundation for the Messiah. Everyone must go through this formula.

Let us serve our families, tribes, and communities by being heavenly servants and believing in and practicing God's words. Then, let us fulfill True Mother's wish that all blessed families be victorious in the heavenly tribal messiahship and become prestigious families that are respected by all. Mother said, "I ask that you become filial sons and daughters who can fulfill the dreams of the Heavenly Parent substantially." No matter how much history may change, there is nothing more beautiful than filial piety.

Heaven's Teachings Found in the "Rabbit"

For the past few days, I have been thinking about what the slogan for 2023 should be. One of the traits of a rabbit is its large ears. I feel that God is teaching us, through the rabbit's ears, the importance of listening to others. So, I decided to make this year's slogan, "Lend your ears and run forward!"

Let us promote the Shimbang (Visitation by pastor) Project and actively visit homes and listen to our brothers and sisters. The target is not limited to second generation. We should also visit blessed families who have not been coming to church and those who have been restored through witnessing.

Rabbits are small and quick, so it is not easy for foxes and other animals to catch them. However, there is a drawback. Because their hind legs are longer than their front legs, if they rush escaping down a mountain, they will lose their balance. Therefore, they flee going upwards.

When I was a small child, I once saw a rabbit hunt. About 50 villagers gathered at the foot of a mountain and climbed up the mountain, clanking something like money, and the rabbits gathered at the top and we were able to round them up. This trait where rabbits aim towards the top is also something we need.

Rabbits are also very fertile. They are able to reproduce about four months after birth. Their gestation period is about one month, and they can give birth to four to eight kits in a single litter. Furthermore, rabbits do not have a fixed breeding season and can mate and give birth year round. Originally, there were

no rabbits in Australia, but they were brought over from England, and now there are so many that there is a "war" with the rabbit (population).

In Japan, the story of the race between the hare and the tortoise is well known. In the story, the tortoise wins, but in reality, it is impossible. (Laughter.) The hare will win a hundred percent of the time. We should cherish the lesson that "even a tortoise, who walks slowly, can win if he continues to work diligently and without rest," but at the same time, we should run as swiftly as the hare.

When True Parents ask a favor from us, become people that can answer, "Yes!"

This happened about twenty-one years ago. True Father stood in front of me at a workshop and asked me, "How old are you?" When I told him I was forty-one, he looked envious and said, "That's a good age," and then he said, "With the foundation I have right now, at your age, I would have unified the world! Are you confident (you can do so)?"

I was unable to respond. Even now, I regret not giving an answer. I wonder how pleased he would have been if I had answered him with an emphatic, "Yes!"

I have a picture of that (workshop) at the front door of my house. It is to remind me that no matter what True Mother asks me to do, I will definitely say, "I can do it!"

True Mother told us that heaven's providence will be completed with the completion of Cheon Won Gung. Completion of the providence. Doesn't that sound terrifying? If the Cheon Jeong Gung Museum is the most holy place centered around True Parents, then Cheon Won Gung is the central office, the sanctuary of the providence of restoration. The most important part of Cheon Won Gung is Cheon Il Sanctum. Cheon Il Sanctum is located in the main building of Cheon Won Gung. In the history of mankind, many religions have built sanctuaries to welcome God, but has there ever been a place where God could actually be present? Cheon Won Gung is the one and only sanctuary where God can reside, and it is a treasure that Korea, a united Korea, can boast to the world.

When True Mother toured the world, she visited museums and art galleries to examine how Cheon Won Gung should be constructed. Because it is a sanctuary that will welcome God, she believed that it must have more beauty and dignity than any other structure in the world, and each ornament was elaborately crafted over time. On the side of Cheon Il Sanctum is an art gallery, lined with huge paintings in mother-of-pearl inlays. The largest one is said to be about 8 meters high.

The third floor of the main building is also equipped with a large conference room and a presentation hall, as befitting a central office. When I think that one day, we will be holding meetings there, it only raises my expectations. In addition, an open-air museum will be built, where works by famous foreign artists will be exhibited.

There are only four months left until the consecration ceremony of Cheon Won Gung, which will be May 5. I hope all blessed families and members in Japan can become one in heart and offer prayers of Cheonseong every day, keeping True Father in Heaven and True Mother at the Cheon Jeong Gung Museum in mind.

In the year of the fertile hare, let us multiply witnessing tenfold!

Finally, I'd like to review the five points to consider as we start this year.

The first is the tenfold increase in witnessing. This year is the year of the rabbit, which symbolizes fertility, so the fortune from witnessing will surely arrive. A ten-fold increase is what True Mother emphasized when she called us. Mother is advancing heaven's providence without change, even when we are in a phase where we seem to be weak in faith. She is only thinking about returning joy to God and True Father.

The second is to promote the Shimbang Project. Let us make this initiative a part of the church's culture. This will also play a major role in the tenfold increase in witnessing.

The third is a return to the pioneering spirit with the Holy Spirit and the truth. In this regard, let us first thoroughly study the Principle based on the Divine Principle.

Let me tell you a little about my experience with the Holy Spirit. I was a pastor for three years in Mokpo, located in the southernmost part of Korea. The senior families of 430 and 777 couples repeatedly testified of the grace they received during the pioneer days. Mokpo is about 60 kilometers from Gwangju, the central city (in that province). When they were informed that True Parents were coming to Gwangju, they walked the 60 kilometers, singing the Song of the Garden instead of taking a bus or train. During those two days, spiritual blessings poured down from heaven to those who were walking, longing for True Parents, and tears flowed down their faces without end. Even before they received True Parents' words, they were already satisfied, spiritually, and shed tears of joy. This is the power of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit will never descend on a place that lacks Cheonseong.

When it comes to supernatural phenomena, there are both good spirits and evil spirits. Evil spirits are nearby when we hold on to resentment against others or act in ways that are rooted in fallen nature. Every time a tragic event occurs in the world, we become aware of evil's presence. We must be diligent before heaven and live for the sake of others so that we can receive heaven's help and assistance.

You have probably heard the story of True Father witnessing to the twelve in Hungnam prison. Father did not go to them directly. These people were led by the spirit and were told that the Great Teacher, the Second Coming of the Messiah, had come. The reason we cannot witness is because we lack Cheonseong in prayer. We have not been able to move the spirit world.

The Family Federation will compete utilizing True Parents' words and the Principle. The 40-day education of God's words has revived the members' spirits, and they are rejoicing all over the country. These workshops have clearly demonstrated the power of the Principle.

There are many second generation members who have been greatly converted after participating in the 21-day workshops in Chiba. In some cases, second generation who grew up not knowing they were second generation until they participated, were deeply moved by God's words and connected with the church. With such testimonies being given, there is no choice but to send your child to the 21-day workshop. Although 21 days is a short period of time when looking at a whole lifespan, it is a significant turning point that will affect their lives.

The fourth point I'd like to review is to be victorious in our destiny, the way of heavenly tribal messiahship, and become a prestigious family that is respected by all.

Fifth, we will surely overcome this ordeal. The Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology has exercised its right to ask questions to the Family Federation, and all we can do is answer the questions sincerely while proceeding with church reform. Also, the so-called "Victims Relief Law" will go into effect tomorrow (January 5). If we comply with the new law and live for our neighbors, community, nation, and the world as we have been told, we will win the trust of the nation.

As we look forward to the day when many people will say, "Japan needs the Family Federation," let us lend our ears and run forward, and testify about God and True Parents' love to the whole nation this year.

Greetings from Mrs. Kazuyo Fujinohara, wife of Regional Group President Bang Sang-il

A Year of Hope Abounding in Heavenly Blessings

Happy New Year to you all! I look forward to working with you this year.

I always pray before standing at the podium and I always receive some kind of inspiration. This is something that happened at the beginning of this year when I came to Shoto Headquarters to offer the midnight prayer. Before the meeting prayer, I had my eyes closed and was praying to myself. But I felt a sensation as if heavy rain were falling like an evening shower. I pondered what this could possibly mean, when it suddenly dawned on me that this was a shower of grace. I felt that 2023 would be a year of hope, and that there would be a complete change from the beginning of the year!

The hymn we sang at the beginning of the prayer meeting was the Song of the Garden. The words "showers of grace" are mentioned in the first verse. Through these lyrics, I was happy to receive confirmation of what I felt.

As we begin the new year, I was thinking that we must be aware of heaven's blessings in any environment. When I saw True Mother's face as she gave her words at yesterday's New Year's celebrations, I was convinced that we should focus on hope.

My husband and I have shortcomings, but throughout the past year, we have often felt the reason why we were placed in the position we were in. There is a meaning to why each and every one of you are in the positions you are in, as well. There were many times when I felt, "Only so and so can make this or that department great." At this current moment in time, we have all been prepared by heaven, and when I think that that is why we were able to get through this past year, I am filled with gratitude to all of you.

Although my husband and I have many shortcomings, we will, again, do our best this year as a couple. Thank you very much for your support.