

# LEAP OF FAITH

Sunday, January 29<sup>th</sup>—Regional Celebration of True Parents' Birthday

1. Good morning and **Happy** True Parents' Birthday!
2. For those are with us for the first time, welcome, and thank you so much for joining us on this very auspicious day. We call our Founders as **Father and Mother Moon, the True Parents**. Today we are celebrating their birthdays, which fall on the same date, January 6<sup>th</sup> in the lunar calendar, although in different years ago. Two days ago Mother Moon had her 80<sup>th</sup> Birthday and Father Moon, who passed away in 2012, would have been 103. He is always in our minds and hearts a decade after his ascension to Heaven.
3. Last Sunday was the Lunar New Year and there were big celebrations all over the world. Sadly, these were somewhat overshadowed by the tragic shootings in the United States.
4. Anyway, according to the traditional Chinese Zodiac, each year has a different fortune and one way to describe it is according to the animal. This year is the year of the Rabbit. In her New Greeting True Mother urged us to move quickly forward, running, jumping or leaping like a rabbit!
5. But what does this really mean? That question is the inspiration for this short message, **Leap of Faith**
6. As you may know, the term itself is not biblical – it was coined by the Danish philosopher Soren Kierkegaard. But the concept is simple enough: it means BELIEVING and then ACTING on ideas or inspirations that can't be fully understood by reason or logic. Another way of saying this is a **leap into the unknown**.
7. Father Moon himself was always intrigued by the stories of people who **did extraordinary things for God**, leaving their comfort zone and taking a leap into the unknown. He often spoke about such people as
  - a. Noah, who built an ark not by the sea, but on top of a mountain
  - b. Abraham, who left his homeland and everything he knew to travel to a promised land he had never even seen.
  - c. Moses, who took his people out of the known but oppressive land of Egypt into the wilderness where not even water could be guaranteed.
  - d. Jesus, who went to Jerusalem to preach in the midst of his opponents knowing full well that it might be the last thing he would do.
8. And it wasn't just figures from the Judeo-Christian tradition who inspired him. He was also impressed by
  - a. Buddha, who left the comforts of the royal palace and even his own family to find enlightenment.
  - b. Mohammed, who went into the mountains to hear the voice of Allah, and then devoted his life to establishing a community of faith despite great opposition
  - c. Guru Nanak the Founder of the Sikh Faith
  - d. The Pilgrim Fathers (and mothers) who left the Old World of Europe to find the New World – America -- where they could practice their faith in peace
  - e. And in the modern era, he spoke admiringly of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. who paid the ultimate price for the things he believed in.
9. When Father Moon was still a teenager, he became acutely aware of the suffering of his people. At that time Korea was a colony of Japan and he was greatly impressed by his Great Uncle who was a patriot and freedom fighter. One day he read in the newspaper about the suicide of a young man his own age and it shook him to the core. He began to ask, as most of us do at one point in our lives, "How can evil and suffering exist if there is really a good God?"
10. The answer came on Easter Sunday, 1935 in the first of a series of powerful spiritual encounters with Jesus Christ. The young believer came to realize that God weeps for humanity and the world, but cannot intervene unless human beings themselves acknowledge and take responsibility for our own sins and the burdens of others. "Will you be that person?" Jesus asked him. He took the leap and said "Yes, I will"
11. Over the following years, he was led to take many "leaps of faith" and to venture into the unknown.
  - a. At 20, he went as a student to Japan – an honour and privilege in those days – but instead of studies, he made his work for the underground resistance a priority. which led him to frequent arrests, beatings, torture and imprisonment
  - b. At 28, by now married with a young son, he unhesitatingly answered the heart-rending call of God to go alone to evangelize in newly communist North Korea, a call that led him to a forced labour death camp from which he was freed by United Nations forces the day before his scheduled execution.

12. Mother Moon, whose birthday we also celebrate today, faced perhaps her biggest test of faith when in 1960 at the age of just 17, God called her to marry Father Moon despite a 23-year age gap. In her memoir, *Mother of Peace*, she said that when she first met him he reminded her of her grandfather!
  - a. Life in Korea in the 1960s was by no means easy. The country was still desperately poor as it struggled to recover from the Korean War. No one respected Korea or Korean culture.
  - b. Then, in 1970, still speaking almost no English, the Moons moved their entire family to the United States.. They boldly proclaimed that they had been called by God as doctors and firefighters – fighting words for a proud nation that didn't even realize that it was spiritually sick or at risk of being completely engulfed in the flames of immorality, drug abuse, hedonism and materialism.
  - c. Powerful enemies in the United States soon conspired to eventually force Father Moon back into prison at the age of 64. Mother Moon, struggling herself to raise a family of 13 children, still visited him every other day – the maximum allowed – for over a year.
  - d. When that ordeal was over, it might have been natural for them to keep a low profile, but not at all. In 1990, they took another big leap of faith. Despite being outspoken anti-communists they went to Moscow to meet with President Mikhail Gorbachev and the following year to Pyongyang to meet with their arch-nemesis Kim Il Sung who had tried and failed to kill them several times.
13. As I think back on our Founder's lives today, I realize that they always took leaps of faith, not just once, but many times. They didn't hesitate to make difficult choices despite the very real risk of failure, or even death.
14. What about us? For me, and for pretty much all of us who joined the Unification faith as adults, we certainly had to take a leap of faith. Back in the 1970s our community was small and considered strange and controversial, vilified in the press particularly in the West, where there was also a great deal of racial prejudice against all things Asian – the so-called Yellow Peril. Today, it is our community in Japan that is under nationwide attack and persecution. In some senses, not much has changed.
15. Despite facing scorn and derision – and sometimes a great deal more than that in the form of physical and mental abuse, violence and even kidnapping – we determined to follow this path, no matter what. That we are here today is a living testimony to the fact that we all took our own and very big “leap of faith”
16. But is that really enough? The answer must be No. God doesn't want us to live satisfied after one leap of faith in the past, and then settle into our comfort zones for the present. What He surely wants is that we continually challenge ourselves to do new things, difficult things – not for ourselves but for the sake of others. If we do not, how can we really expect that this world of conflict, suffering and war can be transformed into the world of peace we all say we want?
17. This, I believe, is the inner meaning of True Mother's message to be courageous and bold during this Year of the Rabbit. She's not just talking about cute oriental traditions but challenging us to be different, not just to run but to jump and leap.
18. She's guided our leadership that the best way to do this is to put in writing and practice three simple goals
  - a. Do something **completely new** that we never tried before.
  - b. **Improve something** that isn't working as well as it should.
  - c. **Stop doing things** that are going nowhere, unproductive or just dragging us down
19. Leading by example, True Mother has made **her new thing** the **dedication of the Cheonwongung holy temple** this coming May. Therefore, this should be our focus too. Mother is filled with the conviction that this will truly be the dwelling place of God and will be the catalyst of unexpected and worldwide change.
20. Possible? Let me conclude with a favourite scripture taken from II Chronicles. After King Solomon and the people had dedicated that first temple, God answered their prayers in this way—
21. “If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land. Now my eyes will be open and my ears attentive to the prayers offered in this place. I have chosen and consecrated this temple so that my Name may be there forever.”
22. Note, though, that the first word is “If.” If my people. If we ourselves hear, obey and act. In short, it's time for us to take another leap of faith. We must trust that God is real, God is here, and God will answer our prayers and actions today just as and even more faithfully as He did in the past. **LET US PRAY**