

Ultimate Stage of True Happiness

Message by Rev. Tetsuo Watanabe, President of SKK Izunome Kyodan

October 1-2, 2011, The Grand Autumn Service

Hall of Worship, Atami Sacred Grounds, Japan

Good Morning! Welcome to the Grand Autumn Service!

October is the season to change our wardrobe to winter clothes. As we learned from Kyoshu-sama today, we should give up our old mind-set regarding faith as if we are taking off our summer wear, and “put-on” a fresh, new mind-set for the rest of the year.

(On the 1st)

I would like to introduce to you the overseas members attending today’s service.

114 people from Thailand
26 from the United States
1 from the United Kingdom
1 from Taiwan
120 from Brazil

In total, we have 262 people from 5 different countries. Please welcome them.

(On the 2nd)

I would like to introduce to you the overseas members attending today’s service.

8 from Korea
4 from the United Kingdom
2 from the United States
2 from Australia

Including yesterday’s attendance, we had a total of 278 people from 7 different countries. Please welcome them with your warm applause.

I would also like to joyously announce that 44 retired ministers have gathered for an Honorary Minister’s Conference. I would like to give my respect and acknowledgment of their past contributions by dedicating their lives to Meishu-sama and for creating the foundation of this spiritual movement. I am honored to welcome them. Please give them a big round of applause. Thank you.

The 50th Anniversary of the Holy Sanctuary in Atami

This month is the 50th anniversary of the completion of the Kyusei Shinden, the Holy Sanctuary behind the Hall of Worship in Atami. It was completed in 1961, and was a significant milestone in the history of our organization. This was marked by its construction soon after Meishu-sama's transition to the spiritual realm in February 1955. It was one of the most challenging times the church has had to endure. A significant number of members forsook their faith and abandoned the church because they did not understand the true meaning of Meishu-sama's transition and the essence of his Teachings.

Nidai-sama, Meishu-sama's wife and the second Spiritual Leader, took over the position of Spiritual Leader after his death. She was a great and patient leader, and she never exhibited pessimism nor complained about her situation. She was successful in organizing and compiling the foundation of Meishu-sama's spiritual views regarding the Universe. With her dedicated effort and love, she educated and trained the ministers and core members about the Teachings so that in the future there would not be any misunderstandings or misinterpretations of the basics of Meishu-sama's philosophy.

To restore the faith of the membership, Nidai-sama traveled throughout Japan, and gave guidance pertaining to what they could do as followers of Meishu-sama regarding the upcoming, dramatic spiritual events including the transformative change from Night into Day.

Meishu-sama once shared his vision of building the Kyusei Shinden, Holy Sanctuary, when visiting the Atami Sacred Grounds construction site. Nidai-sama strongly encouraged all the ministers and members to manifest his idea by saying, "By constructing the Holy Sanctuary in Atami, Divine Power will be unleashed, and in accordance with this change, blessings from God and Meishu-sama will intensify, and the mission of our organization will become more significant."

As a result of her determination and wisdom during the trip, the members' passion for the construction of the Holy Sanctuary was ignited. Finally, in 1961, the Kyusei Shinden was miraculously completed even though it was considered an impossible feat at its inception. During the construction, members throughout Japan were happily united and they put forth a valiant effort to expand the membership. Amazingly, this resulted in a four-fold increase in the membership in a short period of time.

Years passed, and when the plan of redesigning the gardens at the Kyoto Sacred Ground was proposed, Sandai-sama, Meishu-sama's daughter and the third Spiritual Leader, stood up and declared that the construction of the Sacred Grounds was vital as it was the lifeline of the organization. She also stated that as the construction of the Kyoto Sacred Grounds progressed, worldwide expansion would be successful. She firmly explained this concept with her strong kotodama, or the spiritual power of her words. I believe that her strong conviction in the idea of the construction was derived from what she intimately learned from Nidai-sama. If we are successful in

restoring faith, we can also miraculously accomplish the construction and expansion of membership as well.

What is currently happening is that under the guidance of Kyoshu-sama, the fourth Spiritual Leader, we are re-examining the basics of faith from Meishu-sama's Teachings. The construction is progressing both at the Atami and Kyoto Sacred Grounds, e.g., in Atami, the renovation of the Crystal House, and the earthquake reinforcement work at the Hall of Worship, and in Kyoto, the extension of the Shunju-An Villa, and the construction of a new tea-ceremony house.

Learning from this, we can first restore and refresh our own faiths. Secondly, with rejuvenated faith, and with gratitude in our hearts, we can participate in the construction projects at the Sacred Grounds. We can concurrently expand our membership so the many people can receive abundant blessings from God and Meishu-sama.

Kohda Rohan's Three Ways of Attaining Happiness

Switching topics, there was a famous Japanese author during the Meiji-period named Kohda Rohan (1867-1947) . One of his notable short stories was translated into English and was entitled, "The Pagoda in 1891." He also wrote an essay called the "Theory of Effort." In this book, he wrote about three kinds of effort necessary to maintain and expand our happiness. One is Sekifuku (Saving Happiness), Bunpuku (Sharing Happiness) and Shokufuku (Planting Happiness). I thought this might be of interest to you, so let me further explain his theory.

1. Sekifuku-Saving Happiness

In Japanese, the word "seki" literally means not to waste, or to save. It means to hold and treat everything around you in the spirit of "mottainai (not wasteful)." Mottainai became a universally famous word from the environmental perspective, and is a useful expression as it can also describe a love and respect for nature.

In traditional Japanese thinking, it is believed that all things, even leaves on trees, have spirit. Meishu-sama also practiced this in his daily life. For example, before going to bed, he checked his residence to see if there were any lights left on. He did this to conserve energy. (I started doing the same after the earthquake on March 11th; however, Meishu-sama had already done this during his life). His suits and clothes were mended many times. Many other examples were observed in his daily life when he was alive.

2. Bunpuku—Sharing Happiness

The word, “bunpuku” reminds me of an old Japanese folktale “Bunpuku Chagama (Fortune sharing teapot).” It said that the story occurred 450 years ago. The story line goes that a raccoon was at one time trapped but saved by a human being. To show his repayment of kindness, the raccoon magically took the form of a human being and then became a monk. He went to a temple in a village. Once, when a large traditional tea ceremony was held, he offered a small mysterious teapot. The teapot miraculously, provided limitless water. He told people that drinking this water would provide them good fortune and eternal life, thus it was called, “Fortune Sharing Teapot.”

The idea of Kohda Rohan is similar to the folktale. He explained that Bunpuku means sharing your happiness with others. Monopoly of happiness can make you become selfish, stingy and sad. Contrarily, sharing happiness can give you both materialistic and mental/spiritual happiness; thus it can contribute toward the betterment of human society.

After the recent March Earthquake and Tsunami disaster that occurred in Northeastern Japan, many of you sent donations and emergency supplies to the stricken areas. Many also went to the disaster site and volunteered your time by helping those afflicted. These are all considered a form of Bunpuku.

I think that the concept of Bunpuku was fully demonstrated by Meishu-sama’s daily life. When Meishu-sama was running his business, he gave higher salaries to his employees in comparison to the salaries of his competitors. Meishu-sama also adopted a commission system to share his profits, and to compensate his employees for their positive contributions to the company. He was thoughtful and generous regarding his employee’s benefits as well. Meishu-sama owned a private resort which he let his employees use during the summer months.

Always practicing love for others as written in the Teaching, “A Pleasant Person”, he said, “Whenever I find a wonderful art object or come across a place of superb scenic beauty, I cannot enjoy it by myself. The desire begins to well up within me to share the pleasure with as many people as possible so they can be happy as well. It gives me the greatest joy and satisfaction to be with other people and watch them enjoying those things and feeling happy, rather than appreciating nice things all by myself. (Teachings of Meishu-sama, Vol. 3, pg.5) “ This is the reason he established the museum of art and the Sacred Grounds. It was his desire to always make others happy. It was also his pleasure to share this happiness with everyone, anytime, anyplace.

3. Shokufuku-Planting Happiness

Literally translated, shoku means to plant, and fuku means happiness. According to Kohda Rohan, this is the most important concept of all. This is because however hard we may try to implement the other two practices, if we work only for ourselves, our happiness is limited. On the other hand, if we try to practice Shokufuku, planting seeds of happiness, we can limitlessly increase our own happiness and the happiness of society. Shokufuku means to create happiness.

Kohda Rohan also used the analogy of growing an apple to facilitate our understanding of this concept. Sekifuku, Saving Happiness, is the process of trying not to harvest more than we need. This will allow the trees to also become more productive, nutritious and healthier. Bunpuku, Sharing Happiness, is the action of sharing the harvested fruit with as many people as possible. Shokufuku, Planting Happiness, is the effort to plant the seed, grow the plants, and graft one variety onto another to improve its taste; then separate to expand the roots to get more people to appreciate the delicious apples in the community.

Applying the concept of Shokufuku, Planting Happiness, to our membership, what does it mean? The answer lies in one of Meishu-sama's interactions:

This is a story of a man who met with Meishu-sama directly one day. Meishu-sama said to him, "A good faith must create salvation, not only your own, but also the people around you. What we teach on this spiritual path is the salvation of others, and this can be practiced by anyone. This is the mission given to you by God. You should always follow this path, and do whatever you can to accomplish it."

The man, however, replied, "I have never thought of faith or helping others before, nor did I do any religious activities. I would say it is impossible." Meishu-sama quietly said, "This is how people generally think, but anyone can master this quickly. You will see it manifested later."

After his conversations with Meishu-sama, the man was taken to a waiting room. What he observed while waiting were people who previously were suffering from debilitating sickness quickly recovered after receiving Johrei. They all happily walked away.

The man was taken back again to Meishu-sama's room. Meishu-sama asked, "Did you enjoy seeing what you saw or not?" "Yes, I did," he replied. What he saw awakened him and initiated his desire to help as many people as possible. It prompted him to become a minister of Johrei.

This interaction made us reflect upon what faith is, and what it really means to help others. When Meishu-sama asked, “Did you like it?” what he meant by “it” referred to “helping others.” In other words, he inferred the question, “Would you like to have a faith that saves people and makes them happy?” This is the kind of question we should ask ourselves from time to time.

We are all human beings. It is very natural to think, “I want to be saved and to be happy.” Meishu-sama, of course, understands and accepts this thought. What he asked the person in his interaction was more complex. I think he was inviting us to another level of faith by saying, “Genuine faith awakens love for others and inspires actions of helping others and making others happy. Would you like to step up and do this with me?”

We need to always spiritually prepare ourselves for this question. If Meishu-sama is asking you now, “Do you like helping others?” we should immediately say, “Yes, I like helping others very much.” Then, we should immediately integrate it in our daily practice. It would be wonderful if we can be examples of love for others and can attract more people to our path of faith so that we can manifest a community of those who genuinely care for others.

Meishu-sama states in his poem:

Know that the happiness
We feel when we bring
Joy and happiness to people
Is the greatest happiness in the world.

He also said, “My thought is always centered on how I can help others to become truly happy.” In order to acquire true happiness, we should be like Meishu-sama, always thinking of the happiness of others, and continuously putting this concept into action.

I am sure you are busy listening to others, giving them Johrei, and taking care of those who have concerns and problems regarding illness, monetary issues, relationships...etc. If these people receive blessings, you yourself will become happy as if they were blessings for you. Consequently, if you are staying at the level that “both they and I are happy and grateful,” you will not be able to reach and open the door to true happiness. If your wish is to have them become truly happy, you must have them step up to the stage of praying and practicing love for others. If they practice this daily, then you can say you have accomplished a big part of helping them to become truly happy. This is the basic principle of helping others and facilitating Johrei expansion. It will facilitate what I call, “a chain reaction of happiness.”

Conclusion

Kyoshu-sama will travel to Thailand and give his guidance to the congregation next month. I will accompany him. I would like you to pray together with me that this visit be an opportunity for opening a new page of Johrei expansion in Asia. In conclusion of my message today, I would like to pray that you may receive abundant blessings in your daily activities. Thank you.