

Greeting by Masaaki-sama
Beginning of Spring Service
Tenshu Hall, Hotel Nagoya Castle, Japan
February 4, 2019

Congratulations, everyone, on the Beginning of Spring Service.

As I watched the video just now, I recalled how I met with all of you around the country last year and I was overcome with emotion, or you could say I was once again moved.

For us, it was a difficult year last year, but each and every one of you, even in adversity, was so cheerful. And from your cheerful spirits, I, myself, was very inspired. Because of all of you, I was able to get through last year and this year, I want to go forward together with all of you once again. I renewed these thoughts as I watched the video.

Truly, again, I would like to express my gratitude to all of you for your invaluable and noble spirit of faith. Thank you.

As I was looking at all of you, I thought that this must be what the faith of members was like when Meishu-sama had originally founded the church.

As all of you already know, Meishu-sama was born into a very poor household and spent his childhood and adolescent years with many illnesses. Then, Meishu-sama's father passed away and with what little inheritance his father left him, he started a business, earned success and became a businessman.

However, afterward, amid failure and various other circumstances, Meishu-sama sought God and then met Him.

From then on, he turned over his business, Okada Enterprises, to his head clerk. Meishu-sama dedicated everything to God and fully committed himself to divine work.

I believe that the spirit of the pioneer ministers who congregated around Meishu-sama was the same as the spirit with which Meishu-sama originally founded the church. Through Meishu-sama, they felt God. I believe that they carried the spirit of faith of wanting to give all to God and wanting to serve God.

Due to the invaluable spirit of Meishu-sama as well as the pioneer ministers, a

church that believed in Meishu-sama was established. However, once an organization was made and the years went by, somewhere along the line, things like maintaining the organization took precedence. And rather than giving all to God, we thought of things like only receiving blessings from Him, or rather than the God that cannot be seen, we pursued only things and matters we could see and feel – this posture was probably within us.

Meishu-sama saw our posture from heaven and I believe he thought and said, “I want for all of you, once again, to recall the spirit of faith that I and the pioneer ministers around me had. Won’t you accept these feelings of mine?”

And last year, Meishu-sama cast this question to us. “Are you going to place importance on tangible things and matters? Or place importance on the intangible thoughts and feelings of joy? Which one?” And to that question, I believe that it is all of you who determined that there is something more important than the world we can see.

In that sense, I believe that Meishu-sama and the pioneer ministers are now, truly, in heaven, very happy. Meishu-sama went through all that difficulty to establish the church, but the spirit with which he established it was about to die out. However, I feel that Meishu-sama is very happy that all of you who succeeded his will, now, in this way, are going forward.

On the other hand, with the various things that happened last year and even now, we also ended up doing things like being attached to our centers or to our churches. And then we blamed ourselves for being attached because we thought it was a bad thing. We ended up thinking that we weren’t able to believe in the invisible church nor the invisible Sacred Grounds within us because we were lacking in faith and we felt regret and apologetic to Meishu-sama.

However, I believe that this is nothing to blame yourself about. When we think about the will of God, He has prepared this wonderful Sacred Grounds, this wonderful world within each and every one of us. But before we knew it, we ended up coming to assume that matters like salvation and light were only found in the visible, like a church or the visible Sacred Grounds rather than the magnificent world within us. There was probably this side of us that ended up seeking only the visible.

God, who saw this within us, is saying to us, “I want *you* to remember. The truth

is, this magnificent world is within you.” God’s own thoughts, His own attachments to things like the invisible church or the invisible Sacred Grounds have reached our hearts and minds and He is making us feel them. So isn’t that why we think and feel these attachments toward the visible churches and Johrei Centers?

And so from now on, should thoughts and feelings of attachments well up toward these visible churches and Johrei Centers, rather than denying them, replace them with, “Ah, these are not my own thoughts. God has enveloped my heart with His love and in one way or another, He wants me to remember this most important place within each and every one of us – the true church, the place where the light of true salvation exists. He is making me feel His wishes.” Why not try thinking in this way?

Also, because most people still very much have thoughts that are mainly focused on the visible world, if you are able to feel God’s thoughts, I believe it would be good if you could think the following: “I would like to be used so that these thoughts of God may be shared with many others.”

Just as we saw in the video a moment ago, currently, there are centers opening around the country as well as Divine Scroll Dedication Services taking place. At those times, we become very happy. We become happy, but rather than thinking that you lost your previous center and now are joyful for having a new center, I believe it is important to think in the following way: “This joy must be the joy of encountering the truly magnificent church and the invisible Sacred Grounds that exist within me.”

That is to say, even amongst you, there are also those who still haven’t found facilities, or various reorganizations have taken place and churches had to close. Then, when a new center opens, we end up being joyful for having been in contact with the visible church. That joy ends up being limited to only those people.

It is not that. If you are able to participate in an Opening Ceremony or a Divine Scroll Dedication Service and feel very happy about it, think, “This joy is the joy of coming in contact with a magnificent church that was already within me from the very beginning, a world filled with light.” And because there are many who are not able to feel the same way nor able to experience the same thing, I believe that if we participate in Dedication Services and frequent our churches with the thought that

“I would like to know this joy together with those people,” all of us can truly become one and be able to cheerfully go forward.

Kyoshu-sama has for many years been guiding us, saying, “It is within you; this magnificent world is within all of you!” But we have not actually been able to feel it. We have not been able to feel it but last year, people had to leave their visible centers and search for new centers, having difficulty. With all the various hardships, we were guided by Meishu-sama and for the first time we came to know that this magnificent world is within us.

And now, if we are able to think that there is this magnificent world within us, I believe that each and every one of you can become a prototype of paradise on earth, so to speak.

And if we are able to convey to those around us, “Actually, this magnificent world is within you, too,” then people all around the world could think, “Ah, I am a prototype of paradise on earth.” Then those who think, “I am a human existence but within me is heaven and I myself, am a prototype of paradise on earth,” would increase. Isn’t this what Meishu-sama was wishing for – a paradise on earth that spreads and the construction of a paradise on earth?

And so, truly, from last year’s course of events, now, through all of you, I feel great joy that the spirit of constructing a paradise on earth and saving humanity that Meishu-sama was truly wishing for is rapidly moving forward. I believe that Meishu-sama must feel the same way.

Around us, there are things like visible Johrei Centers and other things of the visible world, but there is one thing that each and every one of us carry that is a most sacred thing and no one can violate it. Each and every one of us has it – *heart*. No one can take this away from you. No one. Our hearts are truly sacred.

And for myself, personally, being able to walk together with all of you, my heart has felt no greater joy than what I feel now. Carrying that joy, this year, too, together with all of you, with Meishu-sama guiding us, I would like to serve in God’s divine work.

Thank you.

※ This greeting is a composite of the morning and afternoon services.