

Greeting by Masaaki-sama

New Year Service

World Church of Messiah Headquarters Altar Room

January 1, 2021

Happy New Year everyone.

For us, for the Church, what a grave day today is, don't you think?

The divine name—we have been chanting it for decades, and now, today, it is going to change.

This is possible only because we have Kyoshu-sama, wouldn't you say so?

I think it would be really difficult for people to simply come together, think and decide on a divine name, something so sacred.

Things like a divine name can only be changed by Kyoshu-sama. That's what I think.

Until today, the divine name was *Miroku Oomikami*. From today, it will be *Sushin naru warera no Kami* (Our God, Lord God).

Miroku is a name from Buddhism, isn't it? When Meishu-sama founded World Church of Messiah, Kannon, also a Buddhist deity, turned into Messiah. Japan *Kannon* Church became World Church of *Messiah*. And at the same time, Japan *Miroku* Church also became World Church of *Messiah*.

Meishu-sama removed the Buddhist names like Kannon and Miroku from the names of his Churches and made them into World Church of *Messiah*. Meishu-sama said that Buddhism was something limited to the East and not something global. That was why he made this change.

Still, why had Meishu-sama kept the Buddhist name Miroku in the divine name until today? I think it is because Meishu-sama looked upon us Japanese and thought that we still carried Buddhist elements within us and that he needed to wait just a little longer before changing the divine name.

Just to be clear, Meishu-sama already took down the Buddhist names like Miroku and Kannon from the identity of his Church 71 years ago, but there was still a small Buddhist element left in our Church in the divine name. But last year, World Church of Messiah

resurrected, and the time had finally come for God to manifest His true self. That is why the divine name has been changed at this moment when the time is truly ripe.

Then there is the Lord's Prayer. Regarding it, I talked about various points at Meishu-sama's Birthday Service. But as it was decided for all of us to offer it from today, the "Hallelujah" chorus has been on my mind for the last few days.

Meishu-sama really loved the "Hallelujah" chorus. He loved Handel's *Messiah* and the "Hallelujah" chorus. When it was decided to offer the Lord's Prayer starting from the new year, that fact constantly came into my mind.

The "Hallelujah" chorus is a musical work that symbolizes Christianity, isn't it? Why did Meishu-sama love it so much?

For a long time, I lived in Western countries, and when the Christmas or Easter seasons arrived, "Hallelujah" chorus was sure to be heard. Even when you turned on the television, "Hallelujah" chorus would be on.

If you asked anyone in the world about it, they would probably say something like, "Hallelujah' chorus? That's Christian." That is how symbolic of Christianity it is.

But here is what Meishu-sama says: "Handel made this piece for World Church of Messiah. It is a piece prepared by God for World Church of Messiah. And Jesus was suffering because he was being praised too much in the music."

Meishu-sama says this because, in short, the "Hallelujah" chorus that Christians understand and the "Hallelujah" chorus that Meishu-sama understands are two separate things, and because Meishu-sama believed that there is a true meaning of the "Hallelujah" chorus.

So normally, this is how Christians understand the "Hallelujah" chorus: It is a piece that praises Jesus Christ. The entire oratorio, Handel's *Messiah*, praises Jesus Christ. The part "King of kings, Lord of lords" refers to Jesus, meaning it is praising Jesus and Jesus *only*. This is how Christians understand the "Hallelujah" chorus, right?

Now, how do we understand "Hallelujah" chorus? What is "Hallelujah" chorus for World Church of Messiah? To start with, it praises Jesus. I want to be clear on this: we, World Church of Messiah, do not deny this. But we go beyond that. We believe that the soul that rested on Jesus—the soul of Christ, of Messiah—is not something exclusive to Jesus. We believe that each one of us is endowed with the soul of Christ, of Messiah, and

that the Second Coming of Christ the Christians have been waiting for has already been accomplished within us. For us, the “Hallelujah” chorus, and in fact the whole of Handel’s *Messiah*, is a piece of music that praises exactly this. This is how we, World Church of Messiah, understand it.

There may be some people who think that this is not why Meishu-sama loved “Hallelujah” chorus. They may want to say, “‘Hallelujah’ chorus is not praising Jesus. It is praising Meishu-sama *only*. That’s why he loved it.”

In that case, wouldn’t it mean that when Christians are listening to it during the Christmas or Easter seasons, they are completely mistaken? It is like saying, “In reality, this is a piece praising Meishu-sama only, but Christians are listening to it believing that it is praising Jesus. They’re mistaken.”

Are we really going to say to Christians, “You are wrong. This is a work praising Meishu-sama only, not Jesus!”

And would the Christians say, “We were wrong! The ‘Hallelujah’ chorus is not a work praising Jesus! It is a work praising Meishu-sama!”

Do you really think that the Christians who are said to number around two billion would ever say something like this one day? No matter how hard I try, I cannot imagine this kind of thing happening, their denying all their history.

But what if we were to say to Christians, “The ‘Hallelujah’ chorus is indeed praising Jesus Christ—the Jesus Christ that you respect and worship. But the soul of God that existed in Jesus has also come to us! Christ has already returned to all of you!” Then perhaps someone within the Christians may awaken and think, “Ah, the ‘Hallelujah’ chorus actually meant that!” I don’t think this is something impossible.

From the start, Meishu-sama didn’t have to choose the “Hallelujah” chorus. He could have chosen something unrelated to Christianity, perhaps even composed a song or had one made for himself, saying, “This song is praising me.”

But he didn’t do that.

“Hallelujah” chorus—this is a work that not only Christians but people of the whole world believe to be praising Jesus. Despite this—despite all of this—Meishu-sama chose this piece of music and said that it was prepared by God for World Church of Messiah.

When I think about this, if Meishu-sama had prepared a song that was totally unrelated

to Christianity and said, “This song is praising me,” there is no way that it would awaken Christians, is there?

For Christians, too, it would simply end with them thinking, “Those people are *that* kind of religion,” “World Church of Messiah has nothing to do with Christianity” or “They’re just using the word ‘Messiah’ as they please—what weird people.”

But Meishu-sama made it a point, by the will of God, to choose the “Hallelujah” chorus that is so symbolic of Christianity. And when you look at old records, it is said that in his last years, Meishu-sama listened to it almost every day. He treated it with respect, entrusted it to us and wanted us, his followers, to sing it.

Why did Meishu-sama entrust us with the “Hallelujah” chorus? It is for us to save the Christians! As it was also mentioned in today’s Sacred Word, Meishu-sama says, “In order to save the whole of humanity, my World Church of Messiah came into existence.” Don’t we need to save the whole of humanity? Doesn’t humanity include the two billion Christians?

In that sense, World Church of Messiah has to treat the “Hallelujah” chorus with a lot of respect. And through us, if Christians can be awakened to the true significance of this musical work, doesn’t that mean we were able to respond to the will of Meishu-sama who entrusted it to us?

Meishu-sama said that Handel composed the “Hallelujah” chorus for World Church of Messiah. What does he mean by this? It means that God, through Handel, composed this piece of music for us members of World Church of Messiah, who carry the mission of saving all Christians and all humanity. Isn’t that why?

Do not end with thinking, “God prepared the ‘Hallelujah’ chorus for World Church of Messiah. Ah, we’re so great!” World Church of Messiah has a great mission—that is why it was prepared for us.

The true significance of the “Hallelujah” chorus and the true meaning of why Jesus came to this world—these are what we have been entrusted with by God.

Right now, we hear so much about whether we, followers of Meishu-sama, accept Jesus as the Redeemer or not, right? Or about whether Jesus is the Lord of Forgiveness and the Savior or not, right?

You are afraid that if you accept Jesus as the Redeemer, you will become a Christian,

right? But I tell you that that is not going to happen. You know why? Because our understanding of what *to be redeemed* means is completely different from that of the Christians.

What is going to happen to us once we are redeemed? Once redeemed and forgiven, we will be God's, and we will walk the path of being born anew as God's children, as Messiahs. That is why we are atoned for, redeemed and forgiven.

Now, the Lord of Salvation. What is this "salvation"? It is our true Father. We were like children who left the home but returned to our true Father—that is salvation. And can you imagine what a reunion this would be! You are meeting the Parent that you were apart from and couldn't meet for a long time—the joy of that reunion is our salvation!

So our understanding of words like *salvation*, *atonement* and *forgiveness* is completely different from that of the Christians. When we say, "I accept Jesus as the Redeemer," it is completely different from how a Christian says it.

When we hear about the need to accept Jesus, it is not "now we're going to end up getting closer to Christianity." Christians do not understand Jesus as the Lord of Redemption, Salvation and Forgiveness like we do, because for them, Jesus is the only Messiah.

But we are trying to be born anew as the Messiah just like Jesus! This is who we are, and our model is Meishu-sama. What a precious example Meishu-sama left for us! Our aim is to be born anew as the Messiah, and to reach this goal, we are redeemed, forgiven and saved. How different we are from the Christians!

So in that sense, this Lord's Prayer—why is Meishu-sama having us offer it now?

When we say Lord's Prayer or "Hallelujah" chorus, what do you think of? They are symbolic of Christianity, right? "Hallelujah" chorus? Christianity. Lord's Prayer? Christianity. Right?

The fact that we have come to offer it is not simply from "working in concert with Christianity."

At Meishu-sama's Birthday Service, Kyoshu-sama and I referred to the Lord's Prayer at length, but the true meaning of the Lord's Prayer is completely different from how Christians understand it. "Hallelujah" chorus is the same.

Do you know what would be amazing? That is if Christians were able to think, "The

first line of the Lord's Prayer that we have been offering is not about calling out to God from the earth, 'Our Father in heaven.' It is actually a question posed to us—the Father is in heaven, and where are we?" This would be amazing, don't you think? But Christians are not thinking like this now.

Or it would be amazing if they thought, "When we receive our daily bread and are nurtured, what are we aiming for? We receive it to be born anew as Messiahs." But, now, Christians don't explain it this way.

Or "Forgive us our sins"—what if they thought, "This *us* includes the sins of all the ancestors in me"? Well, Christians aren't thinking about it like that either, are they?

But if Christians can be awakened to the true significance of the Lord's Prayer through us, doesn't that mean that the Lord's Prayer, along with the "Hallelujah" chorus, will be something truly important for the salvation of Christians and the whole of humanity?

Meishu-sama said that "Handel prepared the 'Hallelujah' chorus for World Church of Messiah." If so, I want to say that "Jesus prepared the Lord's Prayer for World Church of Messiah so that all Christians can be led to the true path."

That is to say, Christians believe that the "Hallelujah" chorus is theirs. That's only natural, right? But Meishu-sama is saying, "It is mine."

I have no doubt that Christians think that the Lord's Prayer, too, is theirs. But if we can grasp the true meaning of this prayer, wish to convey it to the Christians and all of humanity, and wish for them to come in contact with the true salvation, then the Lord's Prayer, in fact, is ours. What Jesus prepared for us, what God prepared for World Church of Messiah—that is the Lord's Prayer.

As Kyoshu-sama mentioned at Meishu-sama's Birthday Service, almost all the members around the world who are connected to World Church of Messiah were already offering the Lord's Prayer by last year.

How should we make sense of this? It is true that there are many members in Christian countries, yet at the same time, we have the example of Brazil. They had offered it for a while but stopped doing it, and it had been a long time since then. But through Kyoshu-sama's guidance, they came to know Meishu-sama's true message of salvation of working in concert with Christianity to save humanity. Wanting to serve in this divine work, they

wanted to once again offer the Lord's Prayer and made a request to Kyoshu-sama at the end of February last year. Kyoshu-sama approved the request, and it has been offered in Brazil since then.

If World Church of Messiah Brazil came to offer the Lord's Prayer with this reason, wouldn't you say that we in Japan should have followed suit and started earlier on?

Everyone, we are *World* Church of Messiah and not *Japan* Church of Messiah, nor any other country. At first, we were *Japan* Kannon Church and *Japan* Miroku Church. Japan. But that became *World* Church of Messiah. World.

If we are a part of "World," then we should offer it together with members of the world, don't you think? If not, we would remain a Buddhist-like, Eastern-like *Japan* Church of Messiah.

It is true that the name World Church of Messiah was resurrected last year. But what about in substance? Were we truly one with the members around the world and working toward the salvation of the world? In reality, we were still a long way off, don't you think? Rather than *World* Church of Messiah, weren't we more like *Japan* Church of Messiah?

But as all of you will be offering the Lord's Prayer from now on, we are finally offering the same prayer as the rest of the world. So even though we were World Church of Messiah only in name and more like Japan Church of Messiah in substance, from now, we have become, both in name and in substance, *World Church of Messiah*, don't you think?

And let me tell you this: now that Japan will be offering the Lord's Prayer, the order of service is finally unified throughout the whole world.

This is the order of service all around the world from today on: First, the opening prayer written by Kyoshu-sama—which has been translated to the respective language of each country of course—is read aloud by the officiant. Then, the divine name is chanted by everyone. Words of Prayer and the Lord's Prayer are offered, and then everyone bows in reverence to the divine image of Meishu-sama. From now on, all the churches of World Church of Messiah around the world will carry out their divine work under the *same* order of service. From now on, there is only one order of service in the Church.

Until now, depending on the country's conditions, we would say something like because they are Buddhist, we can't say this; or because they are Christian, we can say this. Or based on the religious atmosphere of the country, religious things could be put out or not. There

were plenty of reasons why the order of service was not able to be unified around the world.

But from today, the order of service of World Church of Messiah is unified around the whole world. This is amazing!

If we were to ask ourselves which one we placed more importance on—Meishu-sama's true wish or conveying Meishu-sama's salvation with a human agenda based on the circumstances of that country—we could say that we prioritized our human agenda. We may have prioritized a way of missionary work over the true will of Meishu-sama, which kept us from saying such-and-such because so-and-so people would not accept it.

But the conclusion of Meishu-sama's life was definitely *to be born anew as the Messiah*. What else can it be? Who can deny this? And we his followers can also walk this path that Meishu-sama took. This is our path, isn't it? This is our *only* path, isn't it? There is only one path that leads to salvation for us followers of Meishu-sama. That is precisely why we were able to unify the order of service, don't you think?

And at the same time, the fact that the order of service was unified, I believe, is evidence that this path of salvation we have been made to know is all the more universal. In short, it is not limited to ethnicity or nationality. To be able to go forward with one order of service that transcends all ethnicity, nationality, religion—everything—is evidence that the path of salvation that we, World Church of Messiah, have been entrusted with now, is global, universal and is truth.

We may still be a small religious group, but Meishu-sama refers to World Church of Messiah and Christianity as two major forces of the world.

Rather than thinking that we are a small religion from Japan with members few in number, let us believe that the mission of World Church of Messiah is this: to save all the Christians and all of humanity and to share the true will of God, Jesus and Meishu-sama with the whole world. Of course, we need to accept and receive their will ourselves first, but God is entrusting us with this mission to share this will with the whole world. What a great world religion we are!

We say that World Church of Messiah acts in concert with Christianity and that we and Christianity are two major religious forces in the world, right? But you know what? It is with us that God entrusted His true salvation. God manifests His true will through us,

World Church of Messiah!

This year is the second year since the resurrection of World Church of Messiah. Until today, we may have had elements of Japan Church of Messiah, but from this second year, the incredible divine work of World Church of Messiah as a world religion that saves the world will begin, in both name and substance.

And there is no doubt that with absolute power and unquestionable authority, God and Meishu-sama will advance this divine work. I would like to keep pace and serve in that divine work with all my heart and soul.

Thank you very much.