

Greeting by Masaaki-sama

“Rejoice, rejoice, rejoice”

World Church of Messiah – Beginning of Spring Service

Hotel Okura Kobe, Kobe, Japan

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Hello everyone.

Gratitude gives birth to gratitude; complaints attract more complaints—this is truth indeed. For a grateful heart reaches God and a complaining one reaches the Devil.

Four years ago, on this very day, February 4, no matter what hardships would be awaiting him, Kyoshu-sama courageously stood up to protect the truth and the true salvation Meishu-sama left for us. He stood up for Meishu-sama of course, but at the same time, I believe he stood up to protect the members who love Meishu-sama deeply.

On that day, Kyoshu-sama openly made clear to us his own feelings on the true state of the Church.

After this happened, there were those who were unhappy about it and didn't like it. As all of you know, Toho no Hikari/MOA group had secretly followed and filmed Kyoshu-sama.

This was all to keep Kyoshu-sama from openly making his feelings clear. They wanted to silence him by saying they had something on him—or to say it more clearly, by threatening him.

Then they thrust the information they got from secretly following him right at him. They figured that he would become afraid and do as they say from then on. But Kyoshu-sama did not give in to that kind of cowardly behavior against him. Instead, Toho no Hikari/MOA's actions—the secretly following and filming of Kyoshu-sama—came out into the open, especially through the efforts of Rev. Shirasawa and Rev. Kawatani.

So what information did they obtain from secretly following him? As you know, it was nothing but the fact that Kyoshu-sama had a Christian friend and that he was studying the Bible.

Those of Toho no Hikari/MOA must have thought that this information could be

used as material to threaten him. But Meishu-sama, I repeat, *Meishu-sama* said that World Church of Messiah would become extremely close to Christianity; that it would advance the salvation of humanity by working in concert with Christianity; and that we of World Church of Messiah would be the ones to fulfill Jesus's prophecy. Also, regarding the Bible, he said that from among all the religious books in the world, there is no other book more powerful than the Bible to lead people to repentance; that he was envious that every household in the US had a Bible; and that Bibles should be placed in every prison cell. So the information they got from secretly following and filming Kyoshu-sama was simply useless for threatening. Actually, it was more like anti-climactic content.

Of course, if Meishu-sama never said those words, then it would be a big problem, right? But Meishu-sama did say all those things.

So in the end, MOA's threats were ineffective, and instead, their acts of secretly following and filming came out into the open, much to their surprise. Desperate, MOA and those who agreed with them then felt they needed to prove that Kyoshu-sama was a worse existence than they were, worse than people who secretly follow and film others.

What did they do? They were so desperate to degrade Kyoshu-sama that they heaped slander and abuse on him—they conveyed distorted information from what they got by secretly following him, spread the photos and video they secretly took, and circulated false information about him.

And eventually, claiming that Kyoshu-sama committed a terrible violation against the teachings of Meishu-sama, they first began saying that World Church of Messiah—Su no Hikari Church at the time—was no longer part of Sekai Kyusei Kyo. They said that the ties between Sekai Kyusei Kyo umbrella corporation and member organization Su no Hikari Church were cut, that Su no Hikari Church was no longer related to Sekai Kyusei Kyo.

And then there were the many ministerial staff members of Izunome Kyodan who were connected to Kyoshu-sama—if they didn't listen to the Church, they were threatened to go through training and eventually were forced to resign or were fired. Then there were places of worship that all of you came to be familiar with over the years. There were even places that were just built, and you had hopes of beginning divine work there. Many of you were thrown out of those places, from your very own churches. And at the very end, they one-sidedly asserted that Kyoshu-sama was no longer Kyoshu.

Now then, regarding all of this, if God asks us, “Are you grateful for what has happened to the Church in the last four to five years? Or do you have any complaints? Which one is it?” what are we going to say to Him? And if we are not allowed to give a gray answer and we have to be black-or-white, what are we going to say to Him? Isn’t our only answer, “I am grateful”? Make no mistake that God loves us, right? So I believe that we have nothing else other than to say, “God, I am grateful.”

If we aren’t grateful, then let’s take a look at the people of MOA and those who agree with them. When Kyoshu-sama openly made his feelings clear four years ago on Risshun (Beginning of Spring), they thought it was unacceptable for Kyoshu-sama to express his feelings. He didn’t do as they told him. They didn’t like it; they were displeased; they grumbled. All their complaints piled up, and just as Meishu-sama says, “A complaining heart reaches the Devil,” their complaining hearts manifested into an act of the Devil, that is, the act of secretly following and filming someone. If we aren’t grateful, this is how it would end up, wouldn’t it?

Now, think. Meishu-sama is fundamentally someone who taught about love for others and wanted to construct a heaven on earth, a pure, Crystal World.

If there had been any violation of the teachings, the worst was definitely in the act of secretly following and filming someone.

It is really disappointing that our fellow believers of Meishu-sama would fall to such a low point. But I believe that God and Meishu-sama will definitely prepare for them a day when they can repent and say, “We truly did a terrible thing bringing shame to Meishu-sama’s name.” There is no doubt in my mind that this day will come.

While on one hand, there is everything I just spoke about. On the other, there are things that have happened since the resurrection of World Church of Messiah last year. Today, we have the new Church symbol. Now, we no longer offer the Amatsu Norito. We offer the Lord’s Prayer. We also presented the song “Amazing Grace.” All kinds of changes are happening all the time and at great speed.

How do you feel about all this?

Some of you may be thinking that all of this is wonderful, some of you not so much or maybe something in between. But regarding these changes, if God asked us, “Are you

grateful? Or are you unhappy and complaining that things are changing at such a rapid pace that you can't keep up? Which one is it?" How would we answer?

First, we must think about something. These roller-coaster changes, these changes occurring all in just a year at this speed, are not things that can be done by human power, can they? This was only possible by the absolute power of God, the absolute power of Meishu-sama—don't you think so? So for all these things that have happened and will happen, what we must do, I believe, is thank God.

If we don't and simply continue to have complaints like "Oh no, not another change" or "Why do we have to do this?" we don't know how those feelings will manifest in form, for Meishu-sama said, "A complaining heart reaches the Devil."

Yes, it is true that Kyoshu-sama has been teaching us on the importance of surrendering our various thoughts and feelings. And that is why we say things like "I surrendered what I felt" or "It was hard for me to accept it, but I surrendered that feeling" or "I didn't understand why the Church needed to make that change, but I surrendered that feeling," right? Yes, I know that surrendering our various thoughts and feelings is really important, but at the same time, I think we are forgetting the importance of making a decision.

I think there is something that each one of us needs to decide. Never underestimate the importance of deciding something with a resolute mind.

At the beginning of my talk, the Sacred Word of Meishu-sama I stated was from "It all depends on your sonen." It starts with "Gratitude gives birth to gratitude; complaints attract more complaints." Then it continues, "A grateful heart reaches God," so "one who is always grateful becomes a happy person." Meishu-sama's conclusion of this Sacred Word is "In the *Ofudesaki* of Omoto, it is written, 'If you rejoice, things to be rejoiced will come.' This is well put indeed."

Meishu-sama is saying, "If you rejoice, things to be rejoiced will come." He is not saying, "Rejoice when good things come." He is saying, "If you rejoice, things to be rejoiced will come." So with all the various changes in World Church of Messiah, you may be thinking, "I am surrendering everything I feel. From the feeling of 'I don't understand the changes' to 'I can't keep up.'" But let me say that this alone will not help you go forward.

Rather, first, there is something that each one of you must decide. That is, "The path

of World Church of Messiah is the path of joy.” Each one of you must set this firmly in your hearts first.

When Meishu-sama says, “If you rejoice,” doesn’t that mean he is leaving room for you to choose to rejoice or not? So even if you find yourself in a situation where at one glance things to be rejoiced are not coming, you can decide to rejoice anyway: “The path I am walking now is the path of light. It is the path of joy,” or not. We must make a decision.

So what are these “things to be rejoiced”? We know of joyful things from a human point of view, but a joyful thing from God’s point of view—this is a far greater joy than any joy we can think of. There is no mistake. So we must decide first, “This path of World Church of Messiah is the path of joy.”

This is not just for matters having to do with the Church. This applies to any kind of matter. Many people say that “even though Kyoshu-sama says we have to be born anew, I don’t feel anything.” Well, if you decide not to rejoice because you don’t feel anything, you will never feel the joy of being born anew.

Rather, we must rejoice first, saying, “The soul of God is within me! Meishu-sama who was born anew is within me! The joy of being born anew is already within me!” If you rejoice like this first, maybe you will be able to feel the joy of walking on the path of being born anew.

You may be thinking, “I’m not actually feeling any of this, so I will diligently study Meishu-sama’s Sacred Word, and perhaps little by little, I will get there.” Well, I don’t think that this alone will bring rejoicing.

Or take this as another example. “We hear about how Meishu-sama and Jesus Christ are working in concert with each other, but we don’t understand what that means. So as we surrender that thought, we study the Sacred Word, Kyoshu-sama’s messages or the Bible, little by little, with the wish that we will one day understand.” Of course, this feeling is important, but with that only, you will not come to understand its meaning regardless of how long you study.

Rather, you must first decide, “Meishu-sama and Jesus are definitely within me, and the two of them are serving God in joy!” and “Within me, too, that same joy of Meishu-sama and Jesus exists! I will rejoice!” Once you say this, perhaps you will be able to experience those things to be rejoiced.

Society in general says, “You must be thankful for everything” or “You must take everything with joy.” But this is not what I’m trying to say here.

That is, doesn’t Meishu-sama say, “A grateful heart reaches God”? I think it is safe to say that we are good at expressing gratitude toward human beings, aren’t we? We can even say we like it, and we place importance on it, don’t we? We think things like, “I forgot to thank that person,” “This person helped me for many years. I have to thank them,” or “I’m so happy when someone thanks me,” don’t we?

But Meishu-sama says that a grateful heart reaches God. In other words, even when we say we need to be grateful, the one whom any gratitude should be attributed to is God, and Him only.

And who is this God? It is not the gods of Shinto or of any other religion, but our God is the one and only God whom Meishu-sama calls Lord God, Father in Heaven or Jehovah, also known as Yahweh. That is, our God is the one and only God who is our true Father. It is to Him that all gratitude should be attributed.

That is, what Meishu-sama wants more than anything is for us to know this one and only God, for all people to meet this God and to feel that joy. This is what Meishu-sama is wishing for the most.

Meishu-sama used the term *ultra-religion* to indicate that his work cannot be defined by religion in the traditional sense. But I feel like we misinterpreted this term and thought that we needed to hide or conceal that we are a religion, along with the very mistaken belief that “to conceal religion is to conceal God.” Let me say this to you: Meishu-sama has absolutely no intention of hiding the existence of God.

In one of his hymns, Meishu-sama says,

“If all humanity does not believe / In the existence of God, / Peace will end like a passing dream.”

He is saying that if all humanity does not believe in God, peace in this world is not likely to be accomplished.

In another hymn, he says,

“I now brandish theism over my head / And smash the erroneous atheism into pieces!”

Meishu-sama says “theism,” meaning “there is God.” This is what he is brandishing

over his head. Then he says he will smash “atheism” or the thinking that “there is no God” into pieces. I believe that Meishu-sama was wishing for all people to awaken to the existence of God by all means.

Meishu-sama also talks about how his work is different from that of other existing religions. He meant to say to us, “A normal religion ends with something like preaching its teachings on morality, doesn’t it? God’s power is not about things like morality, is it? God actually exists in anything and everything, doesn’t He?”

Let’s say a human being falls ill. They may take medicine to sustain their bodies. But by pointing out “poisons in medicine,” Meishu-sama was trying to tell us, “Who is the one that actually sustains your body? Isn’t it God? Isn’t God sustaining your body? True religion is not about morality, is it? Isn’t it about God who lives and works within you?”

It is the same for farming. If crops are difficult to produce, it is not unusual for farmers to apply a lot of fertilizers and use human power to do all they can to produce something. But Meishu-sama wanted to say to us, “Who is actually growing the crops? Isn’t it God?”

Then there are the arts. There are all kinds of art pieces, but Meishu-sama was trying to say, “Who is the true Creator? Wake up to who it is!” In any way he could, Meishu-sama wanted us to awaken to the existence of God.

In short, religion for Meishu-sama is not the “religion” we usually think of. It is not something that small and limited. For Meishu-sama, God existed in absolutely everything, and a true religion should serve in the work of this God.

This means that religion for Meishu-sama went beyond the box that society often limits religion to. After all, God did not prepare religion only, right? He prepared science, too, didn’t He? He prepared everything, right?

At first, Meishu-sama advanced his salvation through activities like Johrei, Nature Farming and Art. Through them, he wanted humanity to be awakened to the existence of God. But, in the final years of his earthly life, Meishu-sama said that “Johrei is not so important anymore” and that “we have entered the world of sonen.” This means that even though at first, Meishu-sama advanced his salvation through visible, physical activities, now, his salvation is being advanced through invisible, spiritual activities.

Doesn’t God exist in each one of our hearts? Doesn’t He actually advance His work of salvation within each one of our hearts? This, I believe, is what Meishu-sama wanted to

teach us.

We have all kinds of thoughts and feelings within our daily lives including about our relationships with others, don't we? It is through what goes on in our hearts and minds that God advances His work of salvation, right? This is what Meishu-sama wanted to tell us.

At first, Meishu-sama taught us how we can serve in the work of salvation through physical activities. But in the end, he taught us that "From now on, God is going to save the world through using each one of our hearts." Didn't he?

Today, people of the world do not know what to do with the various feelings and emotions that arise in their hearts, do they? Be it family-related, work-related or relationship-related, everyone is faced with some kind of an issue, right? And actually, nobody has the true answer as to how to deal with those feelings and emotions, right? Maybe some go out, have a drink and try to forget about them. Or maybe some absorb themselves in the world of their hobbies and try to forget about them.

But we are different, aren't we? We have been made to know that whatever feelings we have, whatever emotions we have, it is for the salvation of humankind, isn't that right?

So, if we are able to share what we have been made to know with the people of the world, that is, with the people who are around each one of us, that would be something truly amazing.

There are so many in the world who are suffering in their hearts, aren't there? Everyone is suffering from something. We may think that we can do nothing to solve that suffering, but that's not true. Because the very fact that you are suffering from something means that God has come down to your hearts and is trying to receive that suffering through His hand of love.

Isn't this what Johrei is? I mean, this, definitely, is what Johrei is. This has to be the true Johrei.

Within us, within the hearts of humanity, there are numerous feelings and emotions. And while extending His hand of love toward us, God is saying to each one of us, "Return those feelings and emotions to Me." This has to be the true Johrei, don't you think? And this saving hand of God exists in every single person!

So, if we can convey this message to the people we meet—those who are suffering from various issues—I am convinced that God will receive those suffering hearts and will

remake this world into a joyful one. God will no doubt create this joyful world, and He will do this through each one of you.

So let's make the decision to rejoice. Let's decide that we are walking the path of joy. God is trying to receive all the suffering in the world and truly create a world full of light. The time has come to walk this path of God's work of salvation with great joy. Today, on the day of the first-year anniversary of the resurrection of World Church of Messiah, let us set off from here with the firm decision: "The path I am walking is the path of joy."

Thank you.