

FFWPU Japan: Bang Sang-il: Proud Pioneers of God's Kingdom

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*On February 18, the 24th Anniversary of the Leda Project and Special Gathering for a New Spring was held at the Shoto Headquarters in Shibuya, Tokyo, welcoming Mr. and Mrs. Bang Sang-il, Regional Group President of the Heavenly Japan for the Heavenly Parent's Holy Community, and senior families, who had been involved in pioneering Leda (northeastern Paraguay) in South America, were in attendance. In his congratulatory message, he looked back on the history of the pioneering work in America and proclaimed that if "each one of us holds True Parents' wish in our hearts and takes on God's will with a pioneering spirit like the Pilgrim Fathers, we will surely be victorious."
Editorial Department*

Leaders received the most grace from the workshops held during the first 40-day course

Hello to all of our senior families. Congratulations on the 24th anniversary of the Leda Project.

All of you here today are brave men and women who are willing to go to the ends of the earth to fulfill True Parents' hopes. I cannot help but respect all of you who have devoted your lives to fulfilling the will with a spirit of absolute faith, absolute love, and absolute obedience.

Actually, I have a bond to the number twenty-four. This is because that was my attendance number when I was in the first grade, as well as in my first year of middle school, and even in my first year of high school. It is really strange. Remembering such things, this 24th Anniversary of the Leda Project and Special Gathering for a New Spring is also deeply engraved in my heart.

True Parents wanted to create a model of an ideal world on earth. For this purpose, Japanese national messiahs were called together to push forward with the Leda Development Project. Today, many second generation have joined the project.

I would like to take this opportunity to make a new determination and tell the whole country of Japan about the hard work of our senior families and the activities of the second generation. (Applause)

In Japan, there are many blessed second generation, Jacob's children, and young first generation members who have been witnessed to. We still have some work to do in terms of connecting the second generation back to the church, but we have a youth and student base that other religious organizations would be envious of.

Currently, the Family Federation in Japan is going through the Second 40-Day Special Cheongseong Course for the Heavenly Japan to Start Anew (January 29 - March 9).

As the church leaders conduct the visitations and visit the homes of the members and blessed families one at a time, the relationship of mutual trust is further deepened, and the realm of first generation is being greatly revived by the love poured out from heaven and the connection with heavenly fortune. As grace multiplies, the way for the second generation to contribute to the providence of heaven will undoubtedly open up more in the future.

During the first 40-day course, workshops were held by leaders at churches throughout Japan. It was probably the first time in the history of the Family Federation in Japan where lectures on the Principle and True Parents' life course were given for forty days simultaneously throughout the country.

Some of the leaders have been giving lectures for thirty or forty years. When we asked how they felt over the first 40-day course, they testified about the grace they received and said things like, "This is by far the most grace I've received during my life as a church leader," and "I feel the lecturers received more grace than the members who listened to them."

Many of the leaders of the women's department (formerly known as women representatives) from around the country even said they were moved by the lectures given by the church leaders. Similarly, it seems that those who are out working onsite, such as church staff and foundational leaders, also received the most grace.

Newly appointed second-generation leaders devoted cheongseong to prepare for the lectures

I also received a lot of inspiration from the leaders when I attended their lectures. Among them, I was deeply moved by the newly appointed second-generation leaders.

About four months ago, twenty second-generation members were appointed as leaders to True Mother's great hopes and expectations. Soon after they were appointed, the first 40-day course commenced.

I had the opportunity to see all of their lectures as I toured their churches or attended online. I was able to see the age of the second generation in action.

They know they lack experience. For this reason, they devoted cheongseong into preparing for their lectures. They had a lot of experience speaking to the youth and students, but not much in terms of speaking to senior families.

One second generation leader was not accustomed to using a whiteboard. Therefore, he would write things on the whiteboard in advance and then proceed with his lecture accordingly. During the lecture, he added several pointers each time he explained a different point, so after the lecture, the whiteboard was covered in his writing. I believe that because he was so careful in his delivery, the members were able to understand his lectures easily.

There was another second-generation leader who recorded his own lectures and asked his fellow members to watch them. Perhaps he was anxious about suddenly being asked to speak in front of his members. He had to retake his lectures several times, partly because he wanted to make his video lectures better. He then watched his own lectures with his members. Afterwards, he would have a Q and A session where they could all share what they learned.

The lectures were prepared with such sincerity that members said they never received such wonderful lectures.

First-generation leaders have given many sermons and lectures, so naturally they are used to the occasion. Some may be confident in giving lectures and be able to give a talk on the spot with great vigor and without much preparation. In this aspect, they may lack a sense of urgency.

However, the second-generation leaders must have been very nervous because they had to give lectures every day for 40 days immediately after being appointed, and before they could establish cordial relations with their members. Tears welled up in my eyes when I realized that they had spent every waking moment praying and preparing for their lectures.

Senior family members, the future of the Family Federation in Japan is full of hope. As long as there are second-generation leaders, who love heaven and earnestly strive to pass on the word to the members, and the second and third generation members who follow them, there is no need to worry.

During the first 40-day course, I reported everything to True Mother: how leaders, church staff, and members nationwide were being restored through the word; and how the recently appointed second-generation leaders were exerting themselves in their new posts. True Mother was very pleased.

The 40-day workshop was filled with grace, but not all members and blessed families were able to attend, and I think there were some shortcomings in terms of how they were managed. As we make improvements, I'm sure that this tradition will be firmly established where leaders will give (Divine Principle) lectures at these workshops, and that we will make progress in building churches full of the Holy Spirit and truth.

America started out with the desire to build a nation that can freely worship God

Let me go back to the Leda Project.

"Leda" in Korean sounds like "neda" (I am). From this, we can say that the Leda Project is "my project."

Furthermore, "kai (開)" and "taku (拓)" in "kaitaku (the Chinese characters used as 'project' in the name 'Leda Project' - レダ開拓)" both mean "to open." And the Chinese character for "taku" is made up of "hand (手)" and "stone (石)." In other words, pioneering is not something you do with your head. It is something you do with your hands, feet, and body in order to realize the ideal.

Let us look back on the history of pioneering in America.

In 1620, Puritans who had been persecuted by the Church of England sought religious freedom, and a hundred and twenty-two people traveled to the North American continent aboard the Mayflower. They are known as the Pilgrim Fathers.

The starting point of America was the desire to build a nation that can freely worship God. This is the pioneering spirit that made America. They risked their lives to create a God-centered church, God-centered schools, and God-centered families. They never sought money or power. Their motives were blessed by God, and thus, today's superpower, America, was born.

On the other hand, many people from Europe traveled to South America. They had ambitions of building a fortune by acquiring minerals, such as gold and silver.

The North American continent was settled in an attempt to build God's kingdom. The South American continent was pioneered in an attempt to build upon wealth. Today, there is disparity in many aspects, not to mention economics, between North and South America.

One of my spiritual children lives in South America. It seems to be a common occurrence, but many people are not punctual or even break their promises. From a Japanese point of view who are very much industrious and diligent, this is unimaginable, but many things like this happen over there. Perhaps there is a difference in national character and spirituality.

The United States was founded in 1776. It took about 150 years after the Pilgrim Fathers began pioneering the country. About 200 years later, the United States became the world's reigning superpower.

Striving to achieve your dreams, goals, and visions enriches your life

Since the beginning of the Leda Project pioneered by national messiahs, accommodation facilities, including True Parents' official residence, farms, fish farms, and even an airfield has been made. We are deeply appreciative of the hard work of the senior families who have built such facilities over the past 24 years.

In the secular world, people often think how they can live without having to work. Can a person truly be happy if he or she does not have to work? I don't think so. Although we may face difficulties, work allows us to grow mentally as well as to develop our skills. Above all, it gives us a sense of accomplishment. Although we live in a world where working diligently is frowned upon, I believe that striving towards your dreams, goals, and visions enriches your life.

As people get older, they often wonder about the afterlife. Many elderly people are driven by a vague sense of anxiety, wondering when they will be taken to the spirit world and what will happen to them after they die.

No matter how much power you have in the physical world, when the time comes, everybody will have to go to the spirit world. Unless you come to a point where you can say, "I want to go to the spirit world," you will always have anxiety (about death).

If there was only a gloomy, hellish image of the spirit world, no one would want to go there. On the other hand, if we can imagine a heavenly place where beautiful flowers bloom and people with whom we loved gather, then we may be willing to go to spirit world whenever our time comes.

The Heavenly Parent (God) and True Parents love us, the blessed families, and are trying to raise us to the position where we can be registered in Heaven, which is to be victorious in the heavenly tribal messiahship. This is the path of our fate, so let us continue to push through and bring victory in heavenly tribal messiahship in order to give reports filled with our joy to True Father in Heaven.

By becoming one with True Mother, anxiety and fear will disappear

Since last July, the Family Federation has been going through hell, in some respects. Many of you may not have been able to get a good night's sleep for months. I am just like you. I once spent a day wearing a bulletproof vest because I received a letter threatening to kill all the leaders of the former Unification Church. Although things have calmed a bit, there were moments when protesters drove up in front of the Shoto Headquarters and shouted words of abuse at us.

True Mother pointed out that communists and left-wing forces were behind the bashing of the Family Federation from the very beginning. However, I was skeptical and wondered if it was true and thought that she didn't know much about Japanese society. I was only concerned about what politicians and the mainstream media were up to.

As time went by, it became clear that True Mother's insight was correct. Even now, leftist forces are working with the mainstream media and influencing members of the Diet to create public opinion and destroy the Family Federation.

True Mother called me and encouraged me to keep fighting because victory is ours. She then strongly urged me to aim for a tenfold increase (in membership) since it is in times like this where we can witness. She called me right when I was losing hope.

The moment True Mother asked to increase membership tenfold, I clearly felt energy infused into my body from the tips of my fingers and toes all the way to my head, and the dark cloud that was looming over me started to clear. I made a vow and told her, "Yes, I understand. I will surely increase membership tenfold!" My fears and anxieties were brushed away, and I realized that this is what it means to be one with Mother.

The importance of building good relations with local communities as in the past

Recently, a flea market was held at Sagamihara Family Church (West Kanagawa District) and 272 new visitors came. That many people showed up in spite of all the coverage from the mainstream media regarding the Family Federation.

There were so many people coming in and out that police officers became worried and patrolled the area as if something had happened. However, as these officers saw how cheerful and open our church was and how our members treated the visitors with warm smiles, they said their image of the Family Federation changed completely. I was really encouraged hearing this report.

We should continue to build good relations with local communities as we have in the past. As we do so, the image created by mainstream media and their biased reports will naturally dissipate.

In one of the city council elections, a candidate who was a blessed family member was elected despite so many leaflets opposing his candidacy being handed out. That member had been preparing for the election since last February with a passion of wanting to contribute to the community.

Since he had already shared that he was a member of the Family Federation with the local residents, he had expected a difficult campaign, especially since the bashing we've received since last July. Nevertheless, he ran his campaign with the conviction that he wanted to revitalize his community. He received passionate support and was elected as the top vote-getter.

The results of this election clearly show that the mainstream media reports that say eighty percent of the people are in favor of dissolving the church are not to be trusted. There are many people in the world who testify about us and say that there are no people in the world as pure who live for their communities as those in the Family Federation. Let us never let the strategies of the mainstream media get the better of us.

Sincere prayers reach the Heavenly Parent, True Father, the angels and heavenly armies, and the absolute good spirits

The fight against the mainstream media and their biased reports is moving to the courts. I am sure that you are all familiar with Nobuya Fukumoto, the legal counselor of the Family Federation of Japan. Mr. Fukumoto has been giving me various legal advice and explanations in a logical and orderly manner from start to finish, which is very encouraging. He is truly a godsend.

On February 13, we filed a lawsuit against Yomiuri Telecasting and attorney Masaki Kito, who appeared on the program, claiming that we were defamed by comments made on the program. The courtroom was televised, and while Fukumoto was the only lawyer representing the Family Federation, there were about 30 other lawyers with Kito. By all accounts, we were completely outnumbered in terms of supporting attorneys. Under this circumstance, Attorney Fukumoto delivered a defense that overwhelmed his opponents. It was truly a heroic performance, just like David facing Goliath.

So far, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) has exercised its right to ask questions to the Family Federation three times and a fourth time is likely to happen. The headquarters staff has responded in good faith each time and will continue to do so in the future.

In any task, the taste of victory will be sweeter when we work together and overcome difficulties. Now, prayers are being sought out from our brothers and sisters throughout Japan. The Heavenly Parent, True Father, the angelic heavenly armies, and the absolute good spirits will surely listen to our earnest and sincere cries for help.

The number of absolute good spirits far outweighs the population of Japan. The absolute good spirits will not rest and will definitely support us. They will work with the Japanese people and wake their conscience.

Recently, True Mother made a request regarding the objective of the Second Cosmic Cannon Course and that the Heavenly Japan must be victorious by 2025, not 2027. She strongly called on the Heavenly Japan to create a foundation suitable for God's Kingdom within the next three years.

We can make the impossible possible if we become one with True Father in heaven and True Mother on earth. If each one of us holds True Parents' hopes in our hearts and face God's will with a pioneering spirit like the Pilgrim Fathers, we will surely be victorious.