

## The 33rd Seiwa Festival in Japan

Eiji Tokuno  
May 24, 2015



*Those who have lost a loved one in the past year offer a flower at the Oze ceremony.*

On May 24, at Oze Cemetery in Katashina Village in Gunma Prefecture, where the fresh green leaves had a sheen to them, we held the thirty-third annual Japanese *Seiwa* (ascension, Seonghwa) Festival to express gratitude and respect to blessed family members and other Unificationists that have ascended to heaven. From all parts of Japan, around two thousand people came, including family members of those that had ascended, people from our national headquarters and the congregation of our church in Oze. Concurrently, our members held ceremonies at Hongkyoden (“hometown” or “palace”) Cemetery in Shizuoka Prefecture, Naka Nihon (central Japan) Cemetery in Mie Prefecture and at Osaka Peace Cemetery, Kochi Cemetery and Kyushu Cemetery in Fukuoka Prefecture.



*Oze, one of several sites that held the festival*

Many church congregations in Japan watched the ceremony through an internet broadcast; in that way, many more members could participate in honoring those who have gone ahead of us.

A human being’s death entails leaving one’s body and departing on a journey to a new world, the spiritual realm. Thus, our Unification Church regards “death” as “ascension.” Every year around this season, we hold Seiwa Festivals for family members, relatives and friends to come together and remember the deceased.

This year’s festival began with entertainment at 10:20 AM. Thirty-nine Seonghwa students from the South Tokyo area did a dance with a heart of praise based on their faith, which was clear from the title, “The Glory of True Parents.” From our church in Kawasaki, the White Lily Choir sang in clear voices three songs including, “Everybody is in Cheon Il Guk in 2014.”



*President Tokuno leading four cheers of og mansei*

Following the entertainment and after all the assembled had prayed in silence, Rev. Eiji Tokuno, president of FFWPU Japan, offered a representative prayer before he and his wife Hisae offered flowers as an expression of good wishes for all Unificationists in the spiritual world.

Mr. Hiroyasu Tomaru, the president of Oze Cemetery, spoke about the history of the burial ground and cited the number of people interred there each year. He also expressed with enthusiasm, “I want to enhance and expand all of our cemeteries in Japan.”



*The festival in Oze drew two thousand people.*

Next, President Tokuno addressed the audience, giving thanks for and recognition of the service and hard work of the people who had ascended.

He then read a message from Yong Cheon Song who is president of the Blessed Family Associations in

Japan. Rev. Song emphasized that True Parents have accomplished and resolved Heavenly Parent's six-thousand-year providence of restoration through indemnity. "On September 3, 2012, after True Father's Seonghwa, True Mother inherited God's will to realize Cheon Il Guk and is leading from the front to accomplish this," he said. "Regarding all problems, such as the need for nuclear weapon eradication, terrorist incidents stemming from radical ideologies, and family collapse, if people do not accept God, True Parents and the truth, no other way remains to solve them."



*Seonghwa Students performing*

In conclusion, President Tokuno stressed, "Our blessed members are objects to True Father, Hyo Jin Moon and Heung Jin Moon in the spiritual world and to True Mother on earth.

They also are to inherit the spirit of filial piety from Sun Jin Moon, who supports True Parents; therefore, let us determine to move ahead with fresh spirit for victory in our heavenly tribal messiah mission."

After family members that had lost loved ones in the past year placed individual flowers on an oblong table draped in white cloth, unison prayer was offered for those that had recently ascended.

Mr. Yokoi Tsutomu, chief director of Oze Seonghwa Family Association, representing the families, said, "To realize True Parents' wishes, I want to make this a new starting point in doing my best to respond to God's expectations." The ceremony concluded after Rev. Tokuno prayed and Mr. Kaisuke Kamiyo, director of Area Four in Japan, led four cheers of *og mansei*.



*Rev. Tokuno delivered a sermon.*



*General Affairs Director Yano was MC.*



*President Tokuno and his wife offer flowers.*



*Hiroyasu Tomaru, president of Oze Cemetery*



*Seonghwa Family Association President Tsutomu*



*Mrs. Otsuka gives a representative prayer*