

450-Couple Blessing in Niigata is a milestone in the Unification Church of Japan

Yong Cheon Song
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'The family is the base of happiness and world peace'

Japan Unification Church Headquarters: On November 9th, amidst beautiful autumn colors of mountains, the Niigata Parish conducted 'Cosmic Blessing Ceremony 2015 by True Parents of Heaven, Earth and Humankind for previously married couples'. It was officiated by Rev. Yong Cheon Song, chairman of National Federation of Blessed Couples Association, and his wife Mrs. Hae Ok Lee.

The ceremony was attended by a total of 450 newly-blessed couples including 70 previously-married couples and 380 pairs of single members, who were witnessed by their families, friends and acquaintances. It became the largest Blessing ceremony so far held on a parish level.

On the following day, November 10th, a dedication ceremony of the Niigata Church Sanctuary was held with Chairman and Mrs. Song as well as Rev. and Mrs. Eiji Tokuno, President of the Unification Church of Japan, in attendance. The Niigata Parish thus was filled with double joy from the Blessing and Dedication ceremonies.

'Cosmic Blessing Ceremony 2015 by True Parents of Heaven, Earth and Humankind for previously-married couples' in November was the second in Niigata Parish from the 127-couples Blessing in April this year.



Led by the Niigata Parish director, Rev. Dae Seop Shin, 7 churches (Niigata, Shibata, Nishi, Higashi, Nagaoka, Ken'oh and Jouetsu churches) in turn carried out various programs, large and small, for the past 6 months to promote Blessing and witnessing activities, such as Couples' Seminars, Revivals with Divine Principle and Panel Exhibitions on Blessing.

Central in the witnessing programs, particularly for husbands, were Prayer Rituals for Returning to Origin

(Kangen Kiganreishiki) and Couples' Seminars, for which door-to-door visits were paid. Besides, to enable a wife to convey to her husband what would be difficult through direct conversations, efforts were made to write her feelings. In many cases, such writings opened their hearts, enabling them to have deeper communications.

On November 9th from early morning, quite a few participants from Niigata prefecture arrived in the venue of 'Cosmic Blessing Ceremony 2015 by True Parents of Heaven, Earth and Humankind for previously-married couples'. The bridegrooms were dressed neatly in dark suits, while their brides in beautiful white wedding dresses.

'450-couple Blessing is a monumental victory in Japan's Unification Church

About 600 people including their guests waited on their seats for the opening performance, which began at 11:00 am. 30-member Pure Heart Chorus, comprising youngsters from the parish, heightened mood of the occasion with their opening songs.

The ceremony's emcee, Pastor Koichiro Wada of Niigata East Church, declared the opening, then solemn invocations were offered by representatives of Shinto, Islam and Christianity.

Representing Shinto, the master of religious ceremonies of Shoushu Mure, the chief priest of TAKAMITAMA Shrine prayed: "Under the witness of Heavenly Parent and True Parents, I humbly report that all shall further their pledge as true husbands and wives, support each other and become families of Blessing, who will build and strengthen true families. May you achieve world peace and tread the path of true couples!"

This was followed by prayers of a Muslim couple and a Christian couple respectively, filling the hall with inspiration. As the officiator, Rev. Song emphasized the significance and value of Blessing as follows: "This is the most precious and holiest day in your life, as Heavenly Parent (God) blesses your marriage this day. I firmly believe your decision [of taking part in today's Blessing Marriage] will bring tremendous grace to you. The family is the foundation of happiness and world peace. Rev. Sun Myung Moon taught us that we should welcome God in our midst and receive the Blessing Marriage."

Following the Holy Water and the recitation of the Blessing Pledge, the officiator offered the following prayer: "We are grateful that you have granted this occasion of cleansing our past sins. We are grateful that you have given joys to our ancestors and ourselves, who have pioneered the way for our descendants, granting us with love, life and lineage of the Heavenly Parent. I pray that you help us become people whom Heavenly Parent can eternally take pride in, that we become ancestors who are respected and righteous, and that Heavenly Parent will allow the eternal blessing of these 450 couples. I offer thanks to the True Parents of Heaven, Earth and Humankind who have guided us."



Following the exchange of gifts of thanks (wedding rings), Declaration of Holy Marriage and flower presentation to the officiators, a city council member gave a congratulatory message: "I have been active as an Ambassador for Peace since ten years before. In my career as a city council member, I have experienced an election loss, as well. Yet, my wife always supported me. I wish to thank her again." Another city council member said, "Happiness is not something far away, but it starts from the family, so close by. This is happiness!"

Next, a university professor and Ambassador for Peace gave his message: "Having watched spas' vapor dancing like a waterfall and cranes in the paddies, I felt that today is a blessed day and this place to be recorded in history. May you all be blessed!"

After reading of congratulatory cables from the National Diet members, Mrs. Hae-ok Lee also gave words of congratulations as follows:

"While I was in Europe, I had a chance to meet with Mrs. Margaret Thatcher of Britain for the first time. As she put it, Rev. Sun Myung Moon had taught her that true human happiness lied in the family. She

was sorry she came to know this idea in her late years. She also suggested me to call her if we would need her assistance. Consequently thanks to her supports, there are over 80 Ambassadors for Peace who are active in the British Parliament. I hope everyone believes that this place is a grace through which this country will find happiness.”

After four cheers of Eok-mansei, Rev. and Mrs. Song presented gifts to four representative couples. The ceremony’s venue was filled with joy, laughter and conversations among friends and acquaintances here and there. People congratulated each other and enjoyed commemorative photo-taking.

Reflections of participants

“In retrospect, I wonder how much I have really thought about my family. This becomes a special occasion when I could realize that it was my wife that has always supported someone like me. I shall always remember the warmth of her hands.” (*Jouetsu City*)

“My husband and I were able to attend this Blessing in our Golden Wedding year. What a memorable opportunity! I would like to remember the scenes of this ceremony at home together with my husband, over a cup of tea, perhaps.” (*Ambassador for Peace, Niigata City*)