

Leaders of Ocean Church go fishing for 21 days to welcome True Mother

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With True Mother coming to visit the East Coast in December, the leaders of Ocean Church decided to go out for 21 full days of fishing and set a goal to catch 50 striped bass in preparation to welcome True Parents back to America. Captain Kensaku Takahashi, Ocean Church Director, also hoped that through this devotional 21-day period, younger Unificationists would be able to inherit True Parents' traditions of fishing and caring for the environment, while fostering a deeper sense of unity with the elders of our movement.

It has been a tradition for Ocean Church Director Capt. Takahashi to go out fishing with captains to scout out fishing areas for True Parents before they arrive in the United States. More often than not, True Father would always want to go fishing whenever he came to Las Vegas or the East Coast. To prepare for this, the Ocean Church leader and captains would do a fishing condition to find out what kind of bait to use and where the fish were biting at that time and season.



The 21 days of fishing began on October 10 and concluded on October 30. Every single day either Capt. Takahashi or Capt. Branch Gaarder, the Youth Director of Ocean Church, took out a Good Go boat to fish in the New York Bay and East River, filling in for each other if either was unable to go. Local New Jersey Unificationists were also invited to join in on any of the fishing days when they could. A total of 68 different people participated during the 21 days. For some, including Pastor Manoj Jacob of the Clifton Family Church, it was their first time ever being on a boat and their first time ever catching striped bass.

The target fish were the striped bass, often mingling with the notorious, sharp-toothed bluefish. The bait used was live eels, which was sometimes harder to get on the hook than it was to hook up on a fish.

On the first day of fishing no fish were caught, but during the next few days as the captains cruised around in their Good Go boats to different fishing spots, fish were found and caught. Almost every day the boat caught their quota of one striped bass per person on the boat. A total of 56 “keepers” (striped bass 28” and over) were caught over the 21 days. Seven fish were 40” and over, which is unheard of. Of these seven fish, two were 40”, three were 41”, one was 41.5”, and one was 42”. Those who caught these fish were Capt. Manuel Liba, Vincente Belmonte, Capt. Takahashi, Capt. Gaarder, and Naria McGee, who caught the largest at 42” and 26 lbs.

Throughout the 21-day devotion, the weather varied from hot and sunny to rainy and freezing. To stay consistent and committed to completing the devotion, Ocean Church members still went out to fish when there were small craft and gale warnings, even if it was just for a short time. On these days, getting to the fishing location was often rough and drenching, but once on the East River, the fishermen and -women were protected and the wind and water were calm.

The most extreme and notable weather happened to be on the very last day of the condition. There was a fishing trip in the morning and one in the late afternoon. Capt. Branch Gaarder took out four guests on the afternoon boat. They started off with the sun shining and the temperature in the 60s. Fifteen minutes into the trip, however, the temperature dropped into the 50s, and 45 knot gusts of wind came in from the Northwest. As they headed to the fishing spot a wall of rain could be seen coming towards them from Manhattan. The downpour made it almost impossible to see and navigate the boat. After getting into the East River where they were protected from the wind by the tall buildings they hooked up on a 40” striped bass just as the rain began to stop. But the extreme weather didn’t end there. The sound of thunder was drawing closer, and then another wave of torrential rain came down, fiercer than before.

“It was raining so hard we couldn’t see the guy standing next to us!” exclaimed Capt. Gaarder. And then it began to hail. Gumball sized lumps of ice were quickly piling up in parts of the boat. Talk about a “it-can’t-get-any-worse-than-this” situation! Capt. Gaarder described it as sounding like bullets hitting the boat, and it felt that way, too, he said, as he scrambled to get people into the cabin and reel in fishing gear but was caught in the downpour because someone had hooked fish on their line.

“I was trying to reel in the fish as fast as I could, then the hail stopped so I handed it back to the guy to reel in.” It ended up being a 34” striped bass.

They had to cut short their fishing trip due to the unpredictable weather and as they headed back to the docks the weather cleared up and became beautiful with calm seas. The fishermen were itching to stay out longer, but knew it would have to be another time.

“We finished the condition safely,” shared Capt. Takahashi. He was also very surprised by the results and sizes of the fish himself. “Heavenly Parent guided us and blessed us. We shared the fish with the community. Rev. Kone, Pastor of Belvedere Family Church in New York, was very surprised and happy. He was inspired by the big fish and now wants to go fishing himself.” The fish from the condition were also shared with the Clifton, Elizabeth, and KEA churches in New Jersey. Ocean Church also contributed fish to the LEDA group and the New Jersey Phoenix Project workshop in late October.

“We can really inherit True Parents’ tradition and bring joy and happiness to our Heavenly Parent,” shared Capt. Takahashi at the conclusion of the devotional period. He wants to encourage everyone to support our True Parents and Heavenly Parent in any way and on any level, especially within the oceanic realm. “Please come fishing and challenge yourself to catch a big fish!”

For more information about Ocean Church and their many opportunities to get involved and learn more, please contact the Ocean Church team at info@ocean.church.