

Establish A Close Relationship with God

Message by Kyoshu-sama
(Fourth Spiritual Leader, Yoichi Okada)
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Hall of Worship, Atami, Japan

Greetings to you on today's Risshun (beginning of spring) service.

I have a deep sense of awe and respect when I speak about God as being alive. We are individual particles of God's Soul. We have been given the mission to become God's children, in harmony with God's Will. Meishu-sama was newly born as a true child of God so we call him Messiah. We are connected and guided by Meishu-sama so that we can also be newly born. At today's service, I express my gratitude for this and offer my praise to God who is with Meishu-sama.

God has His own yardstick to measure things. This yardstick is beyond the concept of "good or evil" as we are in habit of perceiving things with our limited human abilities. This perception is unimaginable for us humans to grasp; Meishu-sama called it "total freedom without limitations." God also possesses the "absolute power" which can unite opposite forces: positive and negative, yin and yang, right and wrong, good and bad. Instead, God brings harmony. We are grateful that we are being nurtured and raised to the level of great harmony under God through Meishu-sama.

The Reverend Watanabe said in his New Year's message: "We look up to Meishu-sama as our ideal. With Johrei and his teachings as our guide, we would like to continue the 'Sonen practice of love for others,' and try to help as many people as possible walk the path of happiness." I understand that many of the members of the Izunome Kyodan are trying to put this message into practice.

Meishu-sama must be very happy to see your sincere attitude when you do "Sonen practice of love for others" and also train yourself to live the motto of "practicing a little more love for others each day." Through these practices and trainings, you can come closer, even one step or half a step, to being a "person living in paradise."

Resident of Heaven

Meishu-sama used the expression: "a person living in paradise" or "a resident of heaven." What kind of person is a resident of Heaven? I believe that residents of Heaven are persons who have freed themselves from their lower, baser nature and elevated to

godliness. Meishu-sama said that human beings exist somewhere between the divine and the beasts. We humans possess both the divine and the animalistic natures. He said that “the progress of civilization depends on the elevation of human beings from the level of vice to the level of virtue,” and that “Paradise on Earth is a place where only individuals who have reached such a level reside.” (140, “Good and Evil”)

God placed mind—our consciousness—within each one of us, in order to guide us to become this divine person. Therefore, our minds are not our own. But God allows us to use it as if they were ours. This consciousness is a very precious thing created by God. It is filled with God’s limitless love. Without consciousness, we would not sense the joy of God in accomplishing His Work of creation as our joy; we would not feel any inspiration or gratitude; we would not have any love or compassion for others.

Through this consciousness within us, I believe that God is trying to express His equanimity, harmony, and abundance to humanity. In this sense, our consciousness is an important foothold on which God manifests Himself on this earth. Because of this mind or consciousness, God can accomplish His plan of creation, that is, to let each one of us be newly born as a true child of God. For that purpose, in order to nurture us and raise us, God is making us feel that this mind, this consciousness, is our own. I believe that this is the deep love of God, who is the parent of our life.

Divine Consciousness Shines Brightly Within Us

We and our ancestors and parents, have regarded our mind or consciousness as ours, and therefore, we thought of good and evil as a constant conflict within our minds, and we have had to struggle to survive in this world. In such a situation, Meishu-sama taught us that at the center of our mind there is a consciousness called *heaven*, our inner divinity. Meishu-sama is guiding us, with patience and forgiveness, so we can awaken to this divine consciousness shining brightly within us and be able to serve in the divine work of reflecting heavenly activities to the Earth.

For this reason, Meishu-sama gave us the teachings “Control Your Ego” (58) and “Ego and Attachment” (59). He advised us to “release” and “discard” any undue ego and attachment. What did Meishu-sama mean by this? Through these teachings, Meishu-sama is advising us that, although we regard our minds as our own, they are really God’s creation, and we must not put too much confidence in our limited human power and wisdom. We must leave our egos and our attachments in God’s hands instead of being too self-indulgent and arrogant, blaming others for our problems, and leading self-centered lives.

Our essence exists primarily in the divine nature within our minds. This divine nature comes from God. We need to recognize and believe that there is this divine essence

at the center of our mind. Meishu-sama lives within us and sees everything that is happening in our mind and listens to all our appeals.

We do not have to distance ourselves from our human mind and then try to discard it as something troublesome and dirty, which is bound by ego and attachment, in the midst of ignorance and doubts. Since all actions and thoughts are already forgiven and accepted, we need to acknowledge this and ask that everything be forgiven, purified, saved and revived in God's light. We should leave everything in God's hands, through Meishu-sama, and ask that our mind be used as His, by Him.

We have been entrusted with this mind, which is a precious gift from God and we are allowed to grow through this mind. We can be grateful for this fact and wish to serve God that He may manifest within us. In the past, we may have used our mind as our own, but if our mind becomes one with the divine nature which exists within all of us, we can find true fulfillment of God's relationship to humans.

Practicing Love For Others A Little More

Everybody wishes to attain happiness and good fortune. At the service this morning, we listened to Meishu-sama's teaching titled: "Fate Can be Changed at Will" (120). In this teaching, Meishu-sama tells us that a sure method by which good fortune could be truly attained is to "sow the seeds of virtue."

"The seeds of virtue all come from love for others, expressed in deeds that bring happiness or are beneficial to them." He says, "We should work to help develop in everyone's mind a firm belief in love for others and the strength to adhere to this belief. Only a spiritual path rooted in truth is capable of achieving such a goal."

On this matter of faith, Meishu-sama explained in a talk to members in 1953 that when we request for God to help or save someone or to be saved ourselves, we must be vigilant that the request not be too strong and fervent. Our strong attachment is a hindrance in receiving God's blessing and produces the reverse effect of what we desire. Meishu-sama advised us to trust God's profound love and leave the outcome in God's hands.

He also said we need to change our way of thinking about our relationship with God. He said that there is a fundamental difference in attitude of those who want to go to heaven themselves, and those who want to help others to go to heaven. He said that those who want to raise people to heaven would surely go to heaven. We have been connected to Meishu-sama and are being guided by him even today so we can move one step ahead from

this previous attitude of expecting reward and payback in return for our faith and service.

You are now trying to “practice a little more love for others.” The purpose of this practice is not for you to be satisfied only but to make God and Meishu-sama happy. You will eventually be pleased with that knowledge. I believe that such a faith would become stronger within yourself if you work on this practice earnestly. Through this practice, you can grow more spiritually, as a follower of Meishu-sama, and that would be a path to find happiness and good fortune.

Serve in the Vertical Current Between Heaven and Earth

We are permitted to have communication with God through our words and thoughts because they come from God. We can be thankful for this relationship and report to Meishu-sama whatever happens to us and whatever thoughts we have and leave them in God’s hands. Thus, we can share the blessings of heaven to many others. And then, we can report our blessings and thoughts to Meishu-sama. If we constantly report our everyday practice to Meishu-sama as part of God’s work, this process will become our habit and will give us more joy.

In this manner, we become the vertical current between heaven and the earth with the breath of life and the living words and thoughts of God. This might be our primary mission as someone whose principal residence is heaven. Any human activity can be likened to rotation. When a person’s vertical axis is firmly established, the rotation of his activities goes around smoothly and vigorously. Working on this practice of love for others earnestly, we can come closer to Meishu-sama, and establish firmly the vertical axis of faith that never wavers within ourselves.

In concluding my message for today’s service, I pray that, just as Mother Nature revives in the fresh breeze of spring, everything will be revived in the constant flow of energy from God who is with the Messiah Meishu-sama. I also pray that all of humanity, in unity with all the other creatures, be used in this reviving work of God. May God’s new work of creation flourish and thrive. Thank you very much.

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