

## **MESSAGE BY REV. WATANABE President, Sekai Kyusei Kyo**

(Grand Autumn Service, October 1 & 2, 2006. Hall of Worship, Atami, Japan.)  
(English translation from the Japanese tape transcript.)

Good morning, and welcome to today's Grand Autumn Service. We just observed our autumn service solemnly, and I offered my sincere gratitude, together with you, to God and Meishu-sama for granting us many wonderful blessings and miracles through "Sonen practice," or, "the practice of faith through our daily reflections." And I offered my pledge for further service in God's work.

### **[Testimonial]**

[October 1] We also had a wonderful testimonial by Ernestina Coimbra from Angola. Thank you Ernestina for sharing your experience.

[October 2] Testimonial by Ms. Etsuko Suetsugu of Aratama Johei Center in Japan.

### **[Introduction of members from abroad]**

[October 1] Now I would like to introduce to you those members who are attending today's service from abroad: 23 from Angola, 4 from South Africa, 4 from Mozambique, 3 from San Tome and Principe, 1 from Congo, 5 from Korea, 10 from Thailand, 2 from Australia, 2 from the United Kingdom of Britain, 1 from Portugal, 2 from the United States, 3 from Bolivia, 1 from Peru, 1 from Chile, 1 from Mexico, and 161 (including 106 Sangetsu instructors) from Brazil, totaling 224 members from 16 countries. Please welcome them to the Sacred Grounds with your loud applause.

[October 2] At the service yesterday, 224 members from 16 countries attended the service from abroad. Today, 2 from Australia are here, one of them is Rev. Nakajima, head of our Australia church, and another is Meagan, who is helping our expansion work in Vietnam from Australia.

### **[Miracle in Angola]**

You are daily observing Sonen Jissen, or "the practice of faith through our daily reflections," in order to end the cycle of our ancestors' sufferings and in order for us to serve in God's work together with our numerous ancestors. And I am sure you are witnessing many blessings through this practice.

For about a month and a half, beginning near the end of July, I traveled to Brazil, Angola, South Africa, Mozambique, and Germany, attended the dedication of an altar, and attended membership meetings. Wherever I went and with whomever I met, I always talked about this "practice of faith through our daily reflections." I talked about the importance of accepting all our sufferings as messages from our ancestors and surrendering them to God, of understanding that each one of us has a divine essence within and is a precious existence – and has to perform a mission given from God.

Whichever country I visited, I prayed that Meishu-sama's wish be realized here in this country. This is what Kyoshu-sama taught me directly, in person, and I

tried to practice his guidance. Wherever I was, whenever and with whomever I met, and on whatever occasion, I first prayed strongly that Meishu-sama's wish would be realized here, and I inhaled deeply, with the idea of accepting Meishu-sama's heart within me with my breathing. Then I tackled my given mission. Finally I exhaled, with the idea of my returning to Meishu-sama and leaving the results in Meishu-sama's hands.

Wherever I went, I listened to detailed reports on the status of our Johrei work, and I tried to confirm these reports with my own eyes and ears; and I felt strongly that God's work was expanding steadily in these countries. Particularly in Africa, I was able to observe that many remarkable blessings are happening from Sonen practice, which directly leads to the expansion of our Johrei work. When I first visited Africa 6 years ago, the membership there was only 2000; but since then it has increased 10 times, and now the Johrei members in Africa number over 20,000.

The membership in Angola is now 19 thousand. The dedication service of the altar for the Central Church of Africa was held on August 27, and about 30,000 people attended the service.

Do you know how large the African continent is? You might think that Africa is about the same size as the South American continent, but that is not correct. According to a brochure prepared by the Japanese Government on Africa, the African continent is about the same size as the U.S. and China combined. It is much larger than the combined size of India, European Union, Argentina, and Mexico. There are 53 countries in Africa, which is 28% of the total number of countries in the world. Angola is 3 times larger than Japan in size. Mozambique is twice the size of Japan. It is such a big continent, and the anthropologists say that Africa is the place where the human species originated. Now, the light of Johrei has been lit in this Africa.

Mr. Pascoal, a young man of 29, reported his testimonial on the occasion of the dedication of the altar. He heard from somebody that his cousin had suffered from cerebral thrombosis, or a stroke, 3 years ago. Since then the cousin could not see, could not talk, could not walk, and just stayed in a shack at the corner of the yard.

Mr. Pascoal wanted to help this person somehow, and visited the house. But the cousin's sister said that she has been a member of another church for 17 years, so she prayed fervently for her brother, but to no avail. So, the whole family decided just to wait for his transition. She said bluntly that praying to another God at this time would not help him, but if Mr. Pascoal would like to pray for his own satisfaction, please go ahead and do that.

Mr. Pascoal said, "your brother and your whole family are having a really difficult time now. But let's pray to Meishu-sama now. I am sure Meishu-sama will help your brother." The sister asked who Meishu-sama is. He explained, "Meishu-sama is the savior who can forgive everything and who can save everybody. Let's surrender the brother's suffering to Meishu-sama's hands. But since your brother cannot see nor can he talk, can you read and chant it on behalf of your brother?" He gave her a piece of paper with the following note written on it.

1. I believe that Meishu-sama is the savior awaited by humanity, and I accept that my brother's suffering is the message from my ancestors.

2. I surrender the sufferings of numerous ancestors connected with my brother to Meishu-sama's hands, so that they can be purified and saved by Meishu-sama.
3. Meishu-sama, please accept the sufferings of our ancestors, who are connected with my brother, and please purify them and save them.

Mr. Pascoal recited this Sonen Jissen with the sister, then gave Johrei to her brother for about an hour and a half. After Johrei, he found out through conversation with the sister that their father had died 4 years before from the same thrombosis. So he told her, "your brother's suffering must be the reflection of your father's," and urged the sister to chant the practice of Sonen every morning and evening.

The next morning, Mr. Pascoal visited the cousin and was surprised that he was talking, after 3 years of not being able to do so. Then, on the 4<sup>th</sup> day, he was able to take a shower and to use the toilet, and began to walk around the house with the support of a pair of crutches. He regained his eyesight, and is now living happily with the family.

I met this cousin during the service. I asked him, "Can you really talk now?" And he said, "Yes, I can." I asked, "Can you see my face?" And he looked at my eyes and said, "Yes, I can see." I asked, "How is your appetite? Can you eat normally?" And he said, "Yes, I can eat." He had been bedridden for 3 years, so the muscles of his legs were quite weak, and he has to use crutches. But on this occasion of the dedication service, he walked toward me slowly without using the crutches, but with the help of Mr. Pascoal.

When the family members and the neighbors saw this miracle, they realized that Meishu-sama is really a special person, and began to receive Johrei and began the practice of Sonen. So far, Mr. Pascoal has been able to guide 31 people (including the former thrombosis patient's family) to the Johrei membership. In this way, many among the membership in Angola now believe that Meishu-sama is our savior, and their firm faith is the driving force in the growth of Johrei in that country.

### **[Nature Farming in Angola]**

On another subject, just a while ago you saw the video of the land that was donated to us by the Angola Government, about 680 acres, for the purpose of doing nature farming. I visited the property. It is only 20 miles from the center of the Capital of Luanda. When I stood on the property and looked at the vast expanse of the land, I felt that Meishu-sama had prepared this place for us.

The flat area is about 500 acres, and from now on we will develop a farm to practice nature farming. We will also open a school to teach nature farming – to educate about 3000 leaders who can help spread nature farming. This country of Angola suffered from 27 years of civil war, and many former soldiers have no jobs; this is a serious social problem there. Most of them were forced to carry rifles and were taught to kill people since childhood. Our plan is to teach them nature farming, and help them to contribute for the recovery and prosperity of the country, with the motto of "replacing rifles with hoes."

A few days after the dedication service in Angola, returning from Mozambique I got off the plane in South Africa. Rev. Francisco, the head minister

for Africa, came to me with a gentleman. I was wondering who he might be, and the gentleman took out his business card and said, "I am the former President of Mozambique. Rev. Francisco sat next to me in the plane, and he explained about the plan to bring prosperity through nature farming. Please teach nature farming in our country of Mozambique, too. I have an agriculture foundation named after me. Can you send us some experts to teach us nature farming?" And he extended his hand to me to shake my hand.

Right after we discussed our plan to do nature farming in Angola, one of the leaders of Mozambique asked us to teach nature farming in that country. Why does this kind of chain reaction happen? Don't you think it is mysterious? No matter how great an effort we make, this kind of mysterious occurrence does not happen. I really feel that everything is moving forward according to Meishu-sama's plan, and we are being used in his plan. Meishu-sama said in effect that once nature farming spreads to the world, Johrei would be more readily accepted by the public in general. I feel that the future of our Johrei expansion in Africa is going to be open widely now.

### **[100,000 members, and the construction of the Sacred Grounds]**

African members have a strong desire to develop the nature farm with the accompanying agriculture school first, then to build the Sacred Grounds on a hill that encompasses about 200 acres.

What I said to them was this, "Once you reach a membership of 100,000, I can ask Kyoshu-sama for his permission. By the way, when can you reach that goal of 100,000 members?" To this, Rev. Claudio, the assistant head minister for Africa, replied, "3 years." I asked, "Are you really sure you can reach that goal in 3 years?" Claudio smiled and promised, "Yes, we are sure." It is not because he is confident of his ability as a minister and a pastor. On the contrary, he believes that he himself should not be the main player; but he believes that he has to ask Meishu-sama to manifest his wishes, and then he is confident that Meishu-sama will achieve that goal.

Where does he get this confidence? Rev. Claudio's explanation is this: In Africa, they formed "24-hour Johrei" teams to care for people with very serious purifications. Since they started doing Sonen Jissen, however, many unimaginable miracles began to appear. For example, there have been more than 15 cases in the past 6 months where a person whose heart stopped beating and whose breathing stopped and pupils became dilated – showing a definite sign of death – returned from death and recovered.

Do you believe such a thing? Unimaginable miracles! So, it is only natural that many of you cannot readily believe that. But Rev. Claudio says, "there are many cases where a medical doctor observed and the person recovered in front of the doctor." Then, Claudio introduced these people to me one after the other. "This person returned from death, and that person was revived."

Ms. Ernestina (whose nickname is Tininya), shared her testimonial just a while ago (on Oct. 1), having come here as the leader of the African pilgrimage. She is a Johrei Center head, and also works as a doctor. I wanted to confirm these cases, and asked her, "I heard that 15 people were revived from death in the past 6 months. Tininya, did you observe and witness all these cases?" She answered, "Not all of them." I asked, "So you witnessed some cases?" She said, "Only three

of them revived while I was channeling Johrei," and she described the details of each case. She then said, "To the other 12 cases, there are many eye witnesses. So, they are not lies or exaggeration." I murmured, "Probably many people would say they cannot believe that." And Tininya said, "Why? Can't they believe that Meishu-sama is our savior?" So I replied, "I am talking about how non-members would think about this. Of course, all of our Johrei members believe that."

My point at this time is not just to emphasize the fact that some people had recovered from certain death. One's life or death is all governed by God. Whether a person dies or returns from death, it is equally the result of God's deep love and intervention. The important point I want to emphasize here is that through these wonderful miracles many of our members in Africa have awakened to God's existence and to the marvelous power of God. They have come to have a firm belief that Meishu-sama is our savior and is alive and is raising us and nurturing us. Under this firm belief, they are thoroughly doing Johrei, and also doing the practice of Sonen. And from this, a remarkable growth and expansion of Johrei work is being allowed to occur in Africa.

### **[Belief in our savior]**

Meishu-sama taught us that the spiritual realm is a world of Sonen, or consciousness. Sonen Jissen can change the spiritual world. Our Sonen, or consciousness, from moment to moment reflects on the consciousness of our ancestors in the spiritual realm, which, together with Meishu-sama's wish to save this world, reflects and comes back to this physical world. Once you really understand this truth, can you start living a life of the spiritual preceding the physical – a God-centered life.

Meishu-sama talked of the importance of our guiding people to the innermost room of faith. But first we need to guide ourselves to the innermost room of faith. In Africa, when a member says he or she would like to guide people to Johrei membership but cannot do that easily, Rev. Claudio asks this question: "Before you can guide others to faith, you have to guide yourself to faith. How much and how far have you guided yourself into faith?"

If somebody says, "I feel a little embarrassed to channel Johrei to a stranger in front of people," Rev. Claudio gives this clear guidance: "If you feel ashamed of and embarrassed by channeling Johrei, that means you feel ashamed of and embarrassed by Meishu-sama. Meishu-sama is the one channeling Johrei. Meishu-sama is responsible for this action, and is responsible for its result and outcome. Let us do Johrei as much as possible, with courage and without feeling embarrassed."

In addition to the traditional folk religions in Africa, Christianity and Islam are predominant, both being monotheistic religions. Therefore, a great difficulty is involved in telling people that Meishu-sama is our savior. However, Rev. Claudio says, "We cannot save people or receive great blessings unless we relay these teachings clearly. Because, only Meishu-sama, as a savior, can purify, forgive and save all of us." In this way, he tries to relay his belief and conviction to people.

Many members in Africa say, "The fact that we encountered Meishu-sama, have awakened to our mission of building Paradise on Earth and have been awakened spiritually, is our biggest happiness and joy, bigger than merely being healed of sickness by Johrei or being saved from financial difficulties."

### **[Nature farm in France]**

On September 1, I flew from Africa to Germany. In Germany I attended a study session for Parkinson Disease patients, where about 130 people were present, and also gave guidance to our ministers serving in Europe. During this meeting, a minister in France, Paulo Oyama, gave me the following interesting report.

Paulo Oyama is in charge of the nature farm in France. Several times a year, black clouds come and drop hailstones in the area. The vegetables in the nature farm, almost ready for harvest, become full of holes due to the hailstones. One day, as he was working in the farm, he saw black clouds coming. So, while looking toward the clouds, he took off his hat and prayed: "Meishu-sama, forgive me for my clouds, and the clouds of my ancestors. We created clouds on ourselves, and we deserve to receive the damages from hailstones, but I surrender our spiritual clouds to your hands, Meishu-sama." Soon the black clouds came above, and all the farms around his nature farm were damaged by the hailstorms; but the clouds above him became white, and a little rain fell on his farm and there was no damage. Paulo Oyama had this experience twice.

Every year, when he plants tomato or lettuce seedlings in the farm, many doves come and eat the vegetable plants, and the damage is extensive. Maybe the doves found the nature farming seedlings tasty. He tried to drive away the birds by shooting air guns, but they would soon return; and Paulo did not know what to do.

So, looking toward the doves flying above, Paulo prayed to Meishu-sama: "Meishu-sama, if this is the purification of my clouds and my ancestors' clouds due to our past actions against the laws of nature, please forgive us. And I surrender this to your hands, Meishu-sama." Then, after some time, he realized that there were no doves in the farm or above. Why do you think this happened?

Unexpectedly, a hawk, which is the natural enemy of doves, came to the farm and was staying on the roof of the hot house. Paulo realized that Meishu-sama sent the hawk to save the vegetables. Since then, a worker at the farm visits a market every day and buys one small quail, and feeds it to the hawk as an expression of their gratitude. Apparently, the hawk likes this treatment so much it is now a watch bird for the nature farm. Every morning it comes from its nest in the nearby forest and takes up its position at the farm, and late afternoon the hawk gets its quail and flies back to its nest. The hawk does this every day, and due to its presence not just doves but sparrows stopped visiting, and the harvests of lettuce and tomatoes are up 20%.

Can you act like this, like an innocent child, and bow to clouds or doves and ask Meishu-sama for protection? Many of us adults, who are materialistic, cannot act like this easily. But as Meishu-sama said, being Sunao and obedient to God's Will is best in faith. This report by Paulo Oyama shows that if we become really obedient to God's Will and follow it, then Meishu-sama shows us some signs.

### **[Conclusion]**

At this year's annual ancestor service here this past July, Kyoshu-sama told us that whatever blessings and testimonials we witness should properly belong to God and Meishu-sama. Therefore, we should not keep them to ourselves but should share them with as many people as possible, so that we can bring the light of Johrei to many people.

Following this guidance by Kyoshu-sama, our members in Africa, at every morning and evening service held at every Johrei Center, are sharing and reporting the blessings they received as a result of Sonen Jissen. When these are reported with fresh emotion, even if in simple words, the true joy and gratitude of our faith impress those people listening to these testimonials; and as a result, more people begin Sonen Jissen, the practice of one's faith through daily reflections. As I reported this to Kyoshu-sama, he looked pleased with this result.

Our members overseas believe that this remarkable growth and expansion of Johrei in the world is the reflection of the progress of construction at the Kyoto Sacred Grounds. At this time I would like to relay to you the words of our ministers and members outside of Japan, that "the devotion, hoshi and donation of our members in Japan for the construction of the Kyoto Sacred Grounds are reflected in the world-wide expansion of Johrei." I, too, express my gratitude for your service at this time.

At the Izunome Kyodan Mother Church in Japan, we formed project teams (composed of our Directors, and those lay members who are active in various fields of society and have particular knowledge and expertise). There they are having many discussions to improve our management, to create an open and transparent organization, and to reform and improve our situation in every way. We would like to explore and seek "the path where Meishu-sama can manifest his wish" with an open and clear slate of mind, so that we can be renewed in our faith.

Kyoshu-sama will appear at this Hall of Worship on the occasion of Meishu-sama's birthday service this coming December. We would like to practice Kyoshu-sama's guidance more thoroughly, so that we can give joyful reports to Kyoshu-sama on that occasion. I make this pledge to God and Meishu-sama, and conclude my message. Thank you very much.