

Farewell Address

Dear Seicho-No-Ie Northern California Holy Mission Fellowship Members,

As of August 7, 2008, I was selected to be the Vice Bishop of the Seicho-No-Ie United States Missionary Headquarters at the Top Level Conference which was held at the International Headquarters on July 30, 2008. At the same time, it was decided that I would be released from my current duties as the Chief of the Northern California Missionary Area and appointed the Chief of the Southern California Missionary Area as of October 1, 2008. The good thing is that I was promoted. The challenging thing is that I will probably be busier than I am currently because I will wear two hats simultaneously. In addition, the Southern California Missionary Area is twice or three times larger than the Northern California Missionary Area. I will miss all of you but I will not disappear from the United States. I will be in Los Angeles. As the cliché says, "Time flies quickly." It will soon be 8 full years since I came to San Jose, in October 2000. Thank you very much for your support and help for such a long time. The second Sunday, September 14, 2008 will be my last English Sunday Service, and the fourth weekend, September 28 and 29 will be my last Japanese Spiritual Training Seminar as the Chief of the Northern California Missionary Area. I hope I will be able to see you at these meetings.

Rev. Masayo Tsuruta, Chief of Southern California Missionary Area, will take over the office of the chief of the Northern California Missionary Area. He is a very spiritual person and at the same time a skillful teacher of Seicho-No-Ie. He currently works as the executive editor of the *Truth of Life* magazine. He will continue this duty after moving to the Northern California Missionary Area. I will ask you to help Rev. Tsuruta as much as possible the same as you did for me.

Again, I send my heartfelt appreciation to you who have helped me and promoted our Seicho-No-Ie Humanity Enlightenment Movement and International Peace by Faith Movement in the Northern California

Missionary Area. I pray for your health and happiness. Thank you very much!

Mario Kawakami
Chief, Seicho-No-Ie Northern California Missionary Area

Message of This Month

Earlier this year, the Northern California Board of Directors decided to have an English Ancestor Memorial Service on October 5, 2008. The Board also asked me to explain the importance of this service in English. However, I was promoted in early August and will leave for Los Angeles at the end of September. So, I won't be able to have this service and explanation. I will go to LA and take over Rev. Masayo Tsuruta's duties in early October, so he also won't be able to do this. I know many members who don't understand Japanese looked forward to attending this service. I am sure you will be able to find another opportunity in the future. A fortunate thing is that before hearing the personnel changes' announcement, I had already prepared this lecture at the end of July, so today I will write about the Seicho-No-Ie Ancestor Memorial Service to you as my last lecture as the Chief of Northern California Missionary Area.

When I came to San Jose and began my missionary work at the San Jose Truth of Life Center in 2000, I started to conduct the Ancestor Memorial Service on a monthly basis. Many Seicho-No-Ie members realized how important it was to memorialize their ancestors, but the Ancestor Memorial Service was not regularly held at the San Jose center. In SNI, we memorialize our ancestors at the church once a month and at the same time memorialize them daily in our homes. Do you know why we memorialize our ancestors? We are all children of God. Although our physical bodies become old/sick and die, our real selves never die. Therefore, we memorialize these spirits which are indestructible and deathless. Even though our physical lives are over, and our physical bodies are cremated and become ashes, our individual souls still continue their activities in the spiritual world. We do not become nothing when we die. In the *Divine Message of Return*

of the Soul to the Spiritual World it states, "All people must someday lose their physical body, but they do not die. Man is a child of God and therefore deathless. The form of your temporary existence will change according to your thought's musical score. The temporary existence of all people will differ according to the differences in their thought. When a major change occurs in the form of your thought your temporary existence will manifest itself in another world and your physical body—the manifestation of your thoughts until now—will quickly disintegrate. People call this 'death,' but it is not death. It is as if *Life* has finished the performance of one musical composition on the strings of thought and turned to another." Our true selves which are children of God will never die; therefore, from the standpoint of the True Image World, death means just an end of one performance by a child of God. He begins another performance in a different time and place.

To know that we are not physical bodies but spiritual existences is the quintessential reason for us to memorialize our ancestors. If some of these spirits didn't realize that their physical bodies had died, they would still believe that their physical lives continue in this world. For example, classic literature, religious texts and world folklore depict ghosts who continue to suffer from their illnesses or injuries that existed before their death. Since their physical bodies do not exist anymore in this physical world, the sufferings of their physical bodies also should not exist. Then, why do ghosts suffer? Many spiritual communication dialogues describe the condition of spirits or ghosts in this manner. This is because these spirits do not realize that they are children of God and that their physical bodies have already ceased to exist and became ashes. Therefore, those spirits need to be taken care of by others to be awakened to the Truth. Those spirits who have not realized the Truth ask for help from their immediate family members or relatives in this physical world. Through memorializing our ancestors, these spirits will realize the Truth that they are already healthy, wealthy children of God as they are by reading the Holy Sutra at the memorial services. Reading the Holy Sutra

is a great help for those spirits. At the same time when they realize their true selves, they will increase their spiritual power and help and guide their descendants like guardian angels.

We now need to clearly realize two reasons of the importance of performing the Ancestor Memorial Service. First, we are all children of God; therefore, in essence all spirits do not need to be memorialized. However, some spirits do not realize this truth, so for the secondary reason we memorialize them to help them to realize the Truth. We also need to understand that there are two meanings of our everlasting lives. First, I already described earlier by quoting the *Divine Message of Return of the Soul to the Spiritual World* that we are deathless. Just like the possibility of musical arrangements is fluid and infinite, so are our thoughts that lead us from the phenomenal to the spiritual world to continue fulfilling lives. Second, it means our lives are the result of our ancestors. We cannot exist without our ancestors. If one of my parents had not existed in this world, I would not have been born in this world. In the same way, if one of my grandparents or great grandparents had not existed, I would not have existed here right now. When I trace my family back to my great grandparents, I realize that 14 individual spirits exist. When I trace ten generations of my ancestors, I can statistically figure that there are 2,046 individual spirits. Likewise, I can figure, going back 30 generations, that there are 2,147,483,646 spirits. My current existence flows from my ancestors' lives. I would not exist today if one of my over 2 billion ancestors missed. Likewise, my phenomenal life which is the expression of my everlasting life is not only my own individual life, but the unique infinite life endowed to me through the stream of the lives of my ancestors. So, I feel deep gratitude towards all of my ancestors who, along with God, are responsible for my existence, and my infinite life, and who provide me with enduring strength and support. Therefore, we must memorialize our ancestors to awaken them to their infinite individual lives and at the same time to show our gratefulness because our lives are a part of their infinite life stream.

I will briefly explain how to memorialize

our ancestors in the SNI way at home. I summarized this service which can be adaptable in our present life styles into 7 categories.

Altar: Prepare an altar. If there is no altar, use a clean table/chest/shelf. Place individual and family memorial tablets in the center (Spiritual Registers are offered by SNI centers). In front of these tablets you can place, if you like, a candle, flowers, a glass of water and some food such as fruit, rice, and so on.

Memorial Tablet/Spiritual Register: Spiritual Registers (SRs) are needed to call forth the spirit of the deceased. Spiritual contact is possible even without the use of these Registers, but they are physical reminders that help us communicate with our ancestors. There are three different kinds of SRs: individual SR (for anyone), family SR (for the entire family ancestral line) and special SR (for individual aborted, premature or miscarried child). If you would like to memorialize your direct deceased family members such as your parents or children, it is best for you to write their names in your own handwriting with sincerity on their SRs (Ancestor Memorial Service To Rule Your Destiny, p. 20).

Examples—

Individual SR: Douglas J. Stamford who passed away on May 22, 1988

Family SR: Ancestor Spirit of Kawakami Family

Period of individual memorialization: We usually memorialize individual spirits for 50 years. After that we include these people in the family line. For example, my father passed away 21 years ago, so I call his name every morning when I read the Holy Sutra to him. Currently I call 4 family names (my parents' and my wife's parents') and 13 individual names. Dr. Taniguchi figuratively explained it that we need to call individual names for 50 years because recent deceased spirits will hold back because there are plenty of spirits who wait for the ancestor memorial services. If we call their names, they easily place themselves in front in order to listen to the Holy Sutra (p. 28). Imagine that you are a newly elected mayor and attend a big party invited by the President of the

U.S.A. There are over one thousand mayors who are popular and experienced. It is not easy for you to push these veteran mayors aside to get individual attention from the President. However, when the President calls your name directly, you have no difficulty to placing yourself in front of him.

Food offering: There are two reasons that we offer food to our ancestors during the memorial service. First, the offering of food shows our gratitude. Second, we offer food to our ancestors so that they can receive a form of material world comfort while they discover their true spiritual existences. As Dr. Taniguchi said that we are all children of God, we would not need to be memorialized if our God nature was manifested. However, those spirits who haven't realized their true nature still suffer in the spiritual world. It is described in the Holy Sutra: "There are spirits who suffer from a stomach disorder although they have no stomach. There are spirits who suffer from a heart disease, yet they have no heart of their own." These spirits believe that they still live in this physical world with their own physical bodies. The physical and spiritual worlds are created by our minds (including minds of spirits). So, those who believe that they have physical bodies want to eat because they actually feel hungry although they do not have their physical stomachs. If we read the Truth to them, they might say, "I cannot concentrate on listening to the Holy Sutra because I am so hungry" (p. 25). This also applies in this physical world. Those who are really hungry do not and cannot listen to the Truth. Therefore, charitable acts in religion are important as a means to provide basic material needs for these people before teaching them the Truth.

Memorializing spirits who are unrelated: Oftentimes SNI members ask me questions like "May I memorialize a person who is my husband's sister's friend's mother?" You may, but you should first think if you really need to do it. Dr. Taniguchi uses a metaphor of a rich person to explain this. To memorialize unrelated spirits is like a rich person giving charity to homeless people. He can afford to

support a few homeless people, but cannot help the entire homeless population. I once read a magazine which had illustrated that a rich man decided to give 5 dollars to each homeless person that he encountered. He asked a few homeless people to bring a friend the following week and promised that he would give \$5 each to all of them. So, this rich guy prepared one hundred \$5 bills for that day. When he opened the door of his home, about 3000 people had lined up in front of the door. This was a hilarious but sad story. I'm not sure if it was a true story, but it illustrates what I really want to explain here. There are many suffering spirits seeking to be memorialized so they can become enlightened. If an SNI member memorializes an unrelated spirit, potentially thousands of unsaved spirits will rush to be saved by this person. In the process, these spirits could send their negative vibrations towards this person which could negatively affect him/her. If we want to memorialize spirits in case of the question that I have often received, we can write Spiritual Registers for them and memorialize them at the church or a SNI meeting place under the guidance of an SNI ordain minister because the Lord of Seicho-No-Ie always protects us. In general, churches, shrines and temples are the holy places to be protected by the great guardian angels, so that there is no problem doing this memorial service at there. However, in SNI, we do not memorialize spirits who are totally strangers of the participants of our Ancestor Memorial Service.

SNI memorial service: The SNI memorial service consists of reading the Holy Sutra which contains the words of Truth. There are 3 important reminders when we read the Holy Sutra to our ancestors.

- 1) Read the Holy Sutra with great respect and gratitude.
- 2) Explain to your ancestors why you read the sutra before reading it. The following is the words of prayer: "*The Holy Sutra Nectarean Shower of Holy Doctrines/Song of the Angel* which I am about to read to you is the sutra to rewrite the Truth of the religions that you believe in, such as Buddhism, Christianity, Shintoism, etc. in the present day words and

expressions. I will read it at around this time of the day from now on. Therefore, please awaken to the truth by listening to this sutra and manifest your True Image as a child of God" (*Seiko_roku Member's Handbook*, p. 186). When you hold the SNI Memorial Service at the Readers' Meeting, delete the sentence "I will read it at around this time of the day from now on" from the above and add the following sentences to the above and conduct the service. "Please elevate yourself to the higher spiritual realm and guide the phenomenal lives and prosperity of the posterity to your remotest descendants. Furthermore, we sincerely ask for your protection and guidance for our nation and our International Peace by Faith Movement" (p.189).

3) Set the same time for your private memorial service everyday to show respect for your ancestors. Remember, this service is not only for your sake, but more importantly for the sake of your ancestors. Performing your daily memorial service "whenever you get around to it" means that you do not take this practice seriously, nor hold your ancestors in high regard. Furthermore, when you read the sutra for your ancestors at the set time, it becomes your automatic custom. At the same time, your ancestors will anticipate the time that you will read the Holy Sutra and know the best time to visit you.

Procedure for the SNI Ancestor Memorial Service at home:

1. Preparation—

Spiritual Registers (SRs), candle(s), altar, incense (if available), flowers/food (optional), a glass of water/wine/salt

2. Invocation—

"O Parent God who gives life to all living beings,
Fill my whole being with Your Spirit and all blessings.

My life is not my own to claim. It is the life of God who permeates the universe.

My acts are not my own to claim. They are the acts of God who permeates the universe.

May the Lord of Seicho-No-Ie, who has appeared to teach us the Way of God, the Parent of heaven and earth, guide us and protect us."

3. Summoning the spirits—

Take the SPs one at a time and call the name written thereon in the following manner: “Ancestral spirits of the (family name such as Smith) family, thank you very much.” “The spirit of (individual name) who passed away on (date for example, March 24, 1993), thank you very much.” If you have special SRs, please summon them after calling on individual and family SRs.

4. Prayer—

Read the explanation words #2) in the SNI Memorial Service.

5. Read the Holy Sutra.

6. Prayer to return spirits to the spiritual world—

“Dear Spirits, we have completed this service for spiritual awakening through the reading of the Holy Sutra. We ask each one of you, therefore, that you return to the spiritual world and ascend to a higher level in the spiritual realm. God’s light of wisdom radiates ever so brilliantly, leaving no room for darkness and delusion. God’s light of wisdom radiates ever so brilliantly, leaving no room for darkness and delusion. There is only light.”

7. Affirmation—

“The Life of Almighty God permeates the universe and the universe is thus blessed with perfect peace and grand harmony now and forevermore.” (Recite twice)

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