

Vision of Praise

December 2016

From the editor

The House of Life was built as a monastery of *Kohitsuji no Mure* in 2016. It is a place for each one to come before God in quietness and give prayer to God and to worship God in the *Church of the Wind*.

This time let us share with you "Oath of New Monastery" written by Pastor Peter in 1999, which seems like a prophecy for the vision of the *House of Life*.

From the *House of Life*, may God's peace be conveyed to this wounded time, and the history of all nations.

Oath of the New Monastery

Peter

Monasteries, as you know, started as a kind of church reform movement which became active in medieval Europe. In the beginning only a small number of people left their towns and had a secluded life to seek Christ genuinely, but in due course many people, moved by the faith of those hermits, joined as their disciples, and thus monasteries were established. Among the famous leaders were St. Benedict and St. Francis; the former became the founder of the Order of St. Benedict and the latter the Order of Franciscans.

You may associate monasteries with an ascetic life and assume that you cannot possibly live such a life. In the long history of Christianity, the image of a monastery as an austere place was fixed, but what they really aimed at was pure worship by each individual. Many regulations were established only to protect the pure worship, and to obey them was never a goal in itself. Although the original aim

was the pure worship, it was also a sad fact that monasteries were utilized by those in authority and fell into parochial asceticism, straying far from the realm of abundant love and grace of Christ revealed in the New Testament.

While in the United States as a young pastor, I became unsatisfied with established Christian churches, and searched history to find people of pure faith that I yearned for. I was most drawn to the books by the believers of Christian mysticism marginally passed down in the medieval European monasteries: St. Francis of Assisi, Thomas a Kempis, St. Therese, St. John of the Cross, Johannes Tauler, Meister Eckhart, and so on. My soul's thirst was quenched and comforted by their words as if secretly drinking vintage wine. What I saw in them were not austere ascetic monks but sincere souls purely questing for the Lord. They simply longed for the presence of the Lord, not seeking intellectual or emotional satisfaction.

What the monasteries aimed at, I believe, was nothing but untainted praise worship which we are now experiencing in Kohitsuji no Mure. "The love of Christ alone is sufficient" is the faith we seriously stand on. We do not have such rules of asceticism or hierarchy as in the medieval monasteries. What exists here is our sincere desire to praise Christ the Lord alone. We are actually experiencing the pure worship which the monasteries were striving for but could not attain.

I often say in the headquarters staff meetings, "To work here is just like to lead a monastic life." Of course, you are free to marry, go to movies, or have hobbies in your spare time, so it looks far from a medieval monastic life. However, what I want you to experience here is the pure worship which monks in the monasteries aimed at. I believe it can be easily experienced here.

In the medieval monasteries, a prayer life of each individual was important. They prayed in rooms like isolation cells for many hours, and valued a time of silent prayer in the chapel.

We do not need such formalities, but I want you to maintain an attitude of worshipping the Lord at all times, while printing copies, making CDs, going out to house church gatherings, visiting hospitals, cleaning or cooking on duty. The faith of praising the Lord is always required of you. In fact, for the one who knows the flow of the life of Christ, there is no turning on or off faith like a light switch. Whatever you do, the praise of Christ shall always flow at the bottom of your consciousness. Even joking and laughing, you know that you are in the same stream of the Spirit as being moved by the word of the Bible.

Among medieval monks, there was one named Brother Lawrence. Working as a cook in the monastery, day in and day out he gathered firewood and cooked for others. Not many would recall the names of kings and abbots at the time, but the faith of Brother Lawrence has been handed down for several hundred years until now. He could care less whether his name would survive, and he did not even wish for such a thing, yet since his life was radiant with the light of Christ, his name is remembered still to this day.

He left a little book, “The Practice of the Presence of God,” as the product of his unceasing conversations with Christ in his everyday work. He was conscious of God’s presence all the time. It was a journey of the soul who gathered firewood, thinking of the Lord, and prepared meals, while being moved by the love of the Lord. After his death, the record of his life came to comfort many souls and encourage them to live. The faith of the one who knows the

presence of Christ is throbbing forever both in this world and in the other.

Monasteries are indeed where the presence of God is most cherished. At least it is supposed to be their original purpose.

“Pray at all times,” says the Bible (Ephesians 6:18 NAS). If you take this word as an aim to achieve by effort, you will be exhausted by praying. Prayer may have become one of ascetic trainings in the old-time monasteries. However, seen from the faith, “Everything is completed in Praise,” prayer is nothing but the stream of the life of Christ. It is very natural and free. Our everyday work itself is worship, praise and prayer. It literally is so.

In terms of valuing each individual’s prayer life, I believe Kohitsuji no Mure is the best place. One of the rules to respect prayer in the medieval monasteries was to prohibit idle talks. The Kohitsuji no Mure staff workers are instructed not to speak abruptly to others during their work. Since we work together in a small room, it is easy to start conversations, but we make sure to ask, “May I interrupt you?” or “Can I speak to you now?” Such a little consideration makes a big difference.

For us, working means worshipping the Lord, so if someone wants to interrupt others’ worship, that person should first ask permission to speak. In the medieval monasteries, each one’s room was locked during prayer lest a continuation of worship and prayer should be disturbed. When several people work together in a cramped space, it is necessary to acknowledge that each one is in a continuous flow of prayer. In the monasteries, they were even told that interrupting others’ thoughts without permission was the work of Satan. I would not say it is the work of Satan, but

when I am concentrating on my work and abruptly interrupted without notice, I feel pain. I somehow feel a sacred flow disrupted. It is the same kind of pain as a flow of praise being suddenly disrupted. We should give the utmost priority to the Lord's worship as if living in a monastery.

In monasteries, there is a strict distinction between spiritual leaders and monks. The governing authorities are regarded as absolute. Among the Kohitsuji no Mure staff workers, there is difference in work, but no hierarchy of rank. Each one shall directly respond to the Lord. You should not work forcedly by someone's command or out of duty. Neither should you assume that it is fine as long as you do the work assigned to you. Whatever the work, it is your praise unto the Lord. That is why I desire you to work not out of a sense of duty, but with the faith to think continuously what is most important and what you can do for the life of Christ to flow more. While doing individual work, you are required to see the entire picture, that is, to have the eye to see the stream of the life of Christ.

In Kohitsuji no Mure you are asked, "Is it fine even if there is no reward as a staff worker? Is it alright with you to vanish as long as Christ alone remains?" Your name will not remain. This means not merely that your work is ignored or your value as a staff worker is not counted. It has a much deeper meaning. What you do will not remain as remembrance, which in a sense resembles the monastic life which does not leave offspring.

To enter a monastery they have to give up marriage and forget about having a family. I hear that nuns have a marriage ceremony with the Lord, which I think is the same with monks. It is not an ordinary decision to completely give up having a family. We ordinary people regard those who enter a

monastery as special because of this strong image of having to abandon marriage.

We have no such rule in Kohitsuji no Mure. As we believe that marriage is the joy of the Lord, it is also our joy to witness new couples united and new families created. Looking at couples who know the Lord's love, I can well understand why God who created man and woman in the beginning of Genesis said, "Be fruitful and multiply." I believe marriage is the most natural human act in the eyes of God.

Although marriage is not prohibited outwardly, you who become the Lord's worker are asked in the deepest sense of the word, "For the sake of the Lord, can you cut yourself off from your wife, your husband, and your children?" The Apostle Paul said, "From now on those who have wives should be as though they had none (1 Corinthians 7:29)," by which he meant that you should seek firmly the cross of the Lord in the form of marriage.

Without the cross of Christ standing between wives and husbands, parents and children, and the world and us, we cannot walk as His workers. In Kohitsuji no Mure you are required to be aware that each of you stands as an individual worker. Therefore, it is quite usual for husband and wife to be sent to separate missions.

Some may say, "What a nonsense! Then what is the marriage for? It is the Lord who has united them, so isn't it His will for the two to give heart and soul to a mission as one?" Especially for those who are taught, "God first, family second, career third," it may be very hard to accept that husband and wife go separate ways.

To put the Lord first, however, means that each of husband and wife comes before the Lord as an individual

worker, and knows the Lord's cross deeply. And in going through the cross, the two who are the Lord's workers shall come to know love for each other in the deeper level. "He who loves wife or husband more than Me is not worthy of Me, and he who loves parents or children more than Me is not worthy of Me. He who does not take his cross and follow Me is not worthy of me (see Matthew 10:37-38)." When you seriously take the word of the Lord, the cross will stand in you and free you from your strongest attachment.

Being liberated, you will become light and transparent, and as a result your family will also be freed and receive the life and light of Christ abundantly. Marriage that does not go through the cross is not yet completed. Paul dares to say, "Those who have wives should be as though they had none," because he wants us to know the power of the cross.

The Kohitsuji no Mure staff workers who lead a "new monastery life" shall walk in the reality of the cross of Christ. While being married and keeping the form of family, you shall confess from the bottom of your heart, "The love of Christ alone is sufficient." When you confess your faith in the cross, "I can vanish in praise," you are making an oath of the new monastery before the Lord, literally returning your family to the Lord and letting go of all your desire to leave your name or your offspring.

When church turned into a big business even possessing political power under the national protection, and became spiritually bankrupt, God spoke to a handful of people, and monasteries were built. Thus the fire of the Holy Spirit was barely passed down in the monasteries.

Now in the end time, a new monastery shall be built through Kohitsuji no Mure. It is not a building or an organization, but for praise to be further lucid. I wish each

one of you to be awakened to the vision of the new
monastery.

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Kohitsuji no Mure Christian Church
3-25 Yoko-cho, Ashiya, Hyogo 659-0034 Japan
URL:<https://kohitsuji.com/english>