

260627 - Video Prayer Gathering – Yuka-sensei and Rika-sensei

【Yuka-sensei】

Good morning, everyone. Thank you so very much for joining us again today for the "Video Prayer Gathering."

As you all know, typhoons and earthquakes have been continuing, and I hear that there are now several places where evacuation shelters have been opened. With new typhoons still on the way, we are able to connect with you all like this, and today's main program is precisely the Practice of Gratitude to Nature. I am truly grateful that, at this very time when we can all become one and send out a great prayer together, we are able to hold this Video Prayer Gathering.

It really has been a long time, hasn't it. That is also a sign of how many events have been held one after another at Fuji Sanctuary. I will speak about Fuji Sanctuary a little later, but once again, through this "Video Prayer Gathering," I am truly grateful that, transcending time and space like this, we can pray together no matter where we are.

【Rika-sensei】

Yes. The first half of 2026 is about to come to an end, and right at this turning point, the very midpoint, we welcomed the summer solstice. Earthquakes, typhoons, and the very axis of nature are all moving in various ways; but as Yuka-sensei just said, I feel grateful for this time when we can gather like this and, in such an important period, offer our prayers together. Thank you very much for being with us today as well. Now, please lead us in the prayer.

<Prayer for World Peace>

Thank you very much.

【Yuka-sensei】

Thank you. As I mentioned earlier, over the past month various events were held at Fuji Sanctuary, beginning with SOPP. Looking at the photographs together, I would like to take some time so that those of you who were unable to come to Fuji Sanctuary can also experience what it was like as if you were there, and to share with you how we ourselves felt about it all.

Of course, there will also be a SOPP feature in the Byakko magazine, which I hope you will look forward to as well; but since this is the "Video Prayer Gathering," I would like to take this time to talk with you while looking at the actual photographs.

So, let me share my screen as I speak. This here is a photo of SOPP (Symphony of Peace Prayers) 2026. A SOPP that could actually be held at Fuji Sanctuary was something truly special.

It was held for the first time in seven years, and we brought about a number of changes, little by little. The first change was that we made the starting time a little later. That gave us more time to spare, so that those who arrived early could enjoy Fuji Sanctuary more, and we set up various tents.

This is the "Inori Card" (Prayer Card) tent—Maki-sensei is in the photo too—a booth where those who came on the day could have a little hands-on experience, like an information session, where you could buy a Peace Pole, and so on. There was also a Fuji Sanctuary tour booth, for touring the grounds together, and tents that served as places to hand out various pamphlets and booklets—there were all sorts of tents. All of this was made possible thanks to everyone who eagerly raised their hands to volunteer. That is how we were able to hold these booth activities.

The volunteers truly took part with such joy, and that energy was conveyed to the participants as well; I heard that exchanges kept arising even when people went on the tour. It really was all thanks to everyone.

Also, for the first time, about four kitchen cars—food trucks—came, so people could buy pizza and various things on the day, and we set out white benches and the like where everyone could relax and have a meal. That kind of SOPP atmosphere, which we had never had before, came about for the first time this year.

Thankfully, everyone seemed to enjoy it, and we ourselves were so glad and relieved.

And then, this scene, right? (showing a photo of members sitting at the outdoor venue under the blazing sun) Truly, seeing this scene, my heart was already full from the very start. To see all of you, after such a long time, sitting and praying so earnestly in the heat—I was overwhelmed with emotion.

There was also a talk by Masami-sensei, and this year's religious leaders were all wonderful people. Truly splendid people, each offering their own prayers.

Another new attempt this year was that, after each religious leader offered a prayer, that person would remain on the stage and pray for 30 countries together with us. This year we prayed country by country in English, which was yet another new attempt; whereas until now the religious leaders' prayers and the prayers for each nation had been separate, this became an integrated program. So the flags, too, came out 30 countries at a time, each time after a religious leader's prayer—that was the form it took this time.

This year, a wonderful taiko drum performer named Harada-san performed at the beginning and the end. The resonance of this taiko reverberated together with the earth. She, too, is someone who truly connects with the heavens as she performs, so this was wonderful as well.

Then there was the Flag Ceremony. This is always a moving, wonderful scene that brings everyone to tears. As we mentioned on the day, this Flag Ceremony always enters the outdoor venue like this—but in fact, there had been a possibility that it might not be able to take place.

That was because there were not enough people who could carry the flags, so it had become a matter of, "perhaps it will proceed only on the stage." This is a behind-the-scenes story, but Maki-sensei said, "That won't do." She told the person in charge: "There are people coming for the first time, and it is a scene where everyone is moved by the sense that the world is one, so here, no matter what, I want you to do your very best."

【Rika-sensei】

Until now, it had been possible because HSK members, researchers, and instructors took part each time, but there came to be not enough of them. It became a matter of, "Then let us put out an open call to the members to serve as flag-bearers," and although it was no longer possible for them to stay overnight from the day before or to rehearse as they normally would, we held various briefing sessions for the members over Zoom.

And then the day itself, the actual event, was just wonderful. A friend of mine who came for the first time was moved by the sight of flag-bearers walking while shedding tears, and told me how deeply moved they were by an atmosphere that held both a sense of unity and, at the same time, diversity. Truly, thanks to everyone, that globe of flags was so beautiful, and we were able to reach that wonderful finale.

That is the story of SOPP. Rika-sensei, how about you—is there anything you remember, or

anything you would like to share?

【Rika-sensei】

With COVID in between, we had online events continuously, so this was the first time in seven years; and truly, along with the flow of the times, I could feel the changes in SOPP very vividly within myself. The flow itself, yes, but also a sense that something is changing, that something is opening.

Also, with the religious leaders' prayers, this year I really felt that the religious leaders sent forth such essential prayers, and from there—this will lead into the reports to come as well—I had the sense that it connected to "the prayers of the Indigenous peoples." It felt as though this year's SOPP had invited that in, had opened to it. For me, I feel it became a very special SOPP.

【Yuka-sensei】

Indeed, at SOPP there really was a sense that the "open Fuji Sanctuary" is beginning. I don't know whether people will like this expression or not, but it has become a little more festival-like, in a way—more open, with an atmosphere where more people are welcomed—and yet the essential essence of SOPP does not change at all.

That, after all, was a SOPP that let me feel that this is the Fuji Sanctuary that has developed and opened, the Fuji Sanctuary of the times to come, and our role.

After that, in June, there was the "Opening the Door to Divinity" ceremony. For this one, it actually rained. In the light rain, everyone was sending out their prayers with all their heart, weren't they. On this day, both Masami-sensei and Hiroo-sensei were present, and it was an event where we all offered prayers and formed the mudras together. It is a very simple photo, though.

【Rika-sensei】

Being able to form the mudras face to face with everyone was such a joy for me at this time. I felt them so close. I felt that I had become one with everyone, much more than before, and a smile just kept spilling out—I was grinning the whole time.

So, after all, through the "Inori Card" and various other opportunities, the chances to touch the depth of the members' prayers and to have dialogue with them have been increasing recently, and I could truly feel that "we are one." That moment of this "Opening the Door to Divinity" ceremony. So when, by some connection, I get to speak with and touch a member, an amazing love comes pouring through, I can feel their prayer, and lately I find myself happy to feel that "we really are one." I felt the "Opening the Door to Divinity" ceremony was wonderful, too.

【Yuka-sensei】

Until now, Masami-sensei would often come down from the stage and go in among everyone, wouldn't she. I always watched it thinking that it must be that everyone wants to meet Masami-sensei. But at SOPP, too, it had been so long that she came down from the stage. And then she was just so happy. I truly thought, "Ah, that is Masami-sensei wanting to draw close." And in fact, in June as well I wanted to come down, but I wondered—is it all right to come down?

【Rika-sensei】

Come down, come down.

【Yuka-sensei】

So really, that grinning feeling Rika-sensei talks about—I want to be close to everyone too.

【Rika-sensei】

I was just so happy, so happy, that I ended up forming the mudras while grinning, and a few people said to me, with a look like, "...what's gotten into you?" But lately I can really feel each person's resonance, you know. I truly feel grateful.

【Yuka-sensei】

Just as the title says, I thought, "this really is a ceremony that opens the door to divinity." Lately, there is no longer any sense of bringing down the light, or any time for one's own "great accomplishment"; I just truly concentrate on the prayer. And through that prayer, as we ourselves feel, everyone is truly feeling each other's divinity, and that energy keeps opening the door to divinity—and the sense of being one was truly amazing.

Of course, perhaps that was something felt only by those who could come on the day, but I believe that energy surely resonated with those who were praying at home on the day as well, and that you all received it too.

【Rika-sensei】

I also felt those who connected from home on the day, and I think, "After all—ah, it really is amazing."

【Yuka-sensei】

I am truly grateful. Forgive me, the reports still continue. Next is The Japan Convergence 2026. I wondered how best to explain this, but I happen to have a pamphlet from Tenkawa Shrine here, so let me explain using it a little.

Here are Mr. and Mrs. Okano. The performer Hiromiki Okano and the former announcer Junko Okano—the two of them, a married couple. Through our connection with this couple, this time, within The Japan Convergence 2026, we received a request: "Please, by all means, let us offer a prayer at Fuji Sanctuary, facing Mount Fuji."

It is written on the left side of the pamphlet, but taking this summer solstice as the starting point: "Indigenous peoples of the Pacific Rim and practitioners for the future gather at the sacred site of Tenkawa." This is a flyer from Tenkawa Shrine, so Tenkawa Shrine is the center of it, though.

"A new dawn of the 26,000-year cosmic cycle is occurring"—so for the Indigenous peoples of the Pacific Rim, this year's summer solstice carries enormous meaning, the dawn of a new cycle, and they wanted to pray for it in Japan.

This aligns completely with what Masami-sensei always says about "the Japan to come." So various races and tribes came to Japan like this; even people who had never left their own villages, let alone their countries, decided, "This summer solstice has tremendous meaning, so I am going to Japan."

Originally, about 90 Indigenous people were scheduled to come. But about half of them could not get visas. The Okanos, too, shed many tears; while everyone had wished to pray here, more than 30 Indigenous people came to Japan and offered their prayers with that feeling.

They first offered a water prayer at Tenkawa Shrine, and then asked to come to Fuji Sanctuary to offer a prayer toward Mount Fuji. In fact, over two days—Wednesday, and also, with the permission of the members, we made the following day a holiday as well—over those two days, we held, at the grounds of Fuji Sanctuary, the prayer rituals that these Indigenous people needed for the new dawn. That is the background.

Of course, the Indigenous people also experienced the 721. According to the staff who were in charge of the 721, since there were people from South America and North America—some who spoke English and some who spoke Spanish—they divided into groups to experience the 721.

The staff said, "There have been many times before when people from overseas experienced the 721, but I felt, for the first time, such stillness—exactly the quiet atmosphere that arises during Byakko's sacred ceremonies." The Indigenous people, too, once they entered that space, instantly became one with that prayer and feeling, and offered their prayers quietly, I was told.

I believe there were also many members who were very interested and curious. I am truly sorry, but this time we held it in a closed format.

In fact, the idea of whether we could pray together with the members was proposed many times by the Chairman as well, and we all considered it.

But the Indigenous people's rituals involved various circumstances, and since we were not the organizers, there were parts that we could not know in advance about what would be done and how.

In such a situation, if we welcomed the members, it was conceivable that we might keep them waiting or be unable to guide them adequately, so this time we decided to hold it in a closed format.

【Rika-sensei】

At this timing, in the 26,000-year cycle—the cycle the Maya speak of—a new era is finally being born from Japan; the fact that they caught wind of this and gathered was truly wonderful.

We listened to and prayed along with several kinds of prayers from those tribal, Indigenous people. They had a resonance completely different from our prayers—a "prayer" that was a song, or powerful, physical movements, stamping their feet firmly on the earth, dancing—there was an intensity, like a "prayer of the earth," using the body tremendously.

And so, because it is called a "Convergence," I was watching, wondering how this prayer and Japan's spiritual Shinto prayer—a rather quiet prayer—would converge, with these completely different resonances.

But at a certain moment, in between that prayer, that intense dancing and singing, there was a moment when they paused, closed their eyes, and took a quiet time. That felt so pleasant. Ah—this moment, truly just an instant—but a "convergence" is, rather than first mixing together, more like converging sharply, then welling up and flowing again, and then softly settling. That image came to me.

While each retains its own color, individuality, and the working of its prayer, even if it is not a matter of melting completely into one, I thought it might mean that prayer converges sharply, just for an instant. I got the impression that, in this kind of form, it may well open out to the world.

It is quite different from Byakko's prayer, but somehow, each has its own working and role that it upholds. They are very sensitive to natural phenomena, their antennae are up, so I thought that was truly wonderful.

【Yuka-sensei】

Indeed. But once again, the members had been continuously...

【Rika-sensei】

Yes, yes. Oh, I'm sorry. You see, at the time of this summer solstice, from the day of the solstice, it was conveyed from Tenkawa Shrine in Nara—the WPPC, the World Peace Prayer Ceremony, had been carrying out its prayer too, at the very foundation, the deepest level, all along. So I wanted to say that I offered that prayer with gratitude, feeling also the resonance of those who keep carrying it on in that solstice relay.

【Yuka-sensei】

Toward the day of the summer solstice, yes, that's right. So what I wanted to say, too, is that all of that is at the foundation—that the resonance of our prayer is always there: at Fuji Sanctuary, so many members continually uphold "peace for the world," "the divinity of humanity," and "gratitude to nature." Truly, Fuji Sanctuary itself is the place that, from now on, no matter who comes and no matter what ritual is performed, embraces everything. That embracing capacity, that love—it opposes nothing.

That is precisely it: because it is the resonance of the very source of prayer—that sharp settling after the intense prayer—there is the joy of being able to watch over things while opposing nothing. Even ways different from one's own, even things one did not know, it delivers the light of divinity to all of them, and love is sent forth. I felt the greatness of Fuji Sanctuary.

But all of this, too, is truly thanks to the members. The Okanos, too, are asked by those around them, "How were you allowed to use this place? Everyone asks us." We even told the couple, "Well, even though we will be opening up from now on, we have no intention of opening it that much at all."

It just happened that this time, the feelings of this couple—they, too, truly understand the importance of Fuji Sanctuary and our prayer so deeply. As they said, precisely because they spoke of prayer toward Mount Fuji, of the changes to come from Japan, of the new dawn, it was truly an important collaboration for us and for the Divine Resurrection.

Going forward, too, I don't think we have any intention of frequently making it an "open Fuji Sanctuary," but I was very glad to learn that everyone was so pleased that it was held at Fuji Sanctuary as it was this time.

And so, it became a bit long, but that was the report on Fuji Sanctuary lately. Truly, everyone, thank you very much.

Now, next is the main program.

【Rika-sensei】

Yes, then, let us begin. As I mentioned during the greetings as well, right now the Earth's climate, great nature, is erupting in various forms. At a time like this, borrowing the power of all of your prayers, I would like to quietly, carefully, and wholeheartedly offer prayers to this great nature, to the Earth, to life itself, and to all living things.

First, let me read a passage by Goi-sensei, and then I would like to move on to the Practice of Gratitude to Nature that we always do; so first, please listen to this passage by Goi-sensei.

Today, I will read from this book of his, "Toward the Sacred World," page 113, the part titled "The Grace of God," so please listen.

<Reading from Goi-sensei's Book>

By Masahisa Goi, "Toward the Sacred World"

The part titled "The Grace of God," in the chapter "A Life of Receiving Anew"

It is a certain fact that human beings, beginning with life itself, which is most precious, receive everything from God and live by it.

God, at times becoming a fisherman and at times a farmer, works to supply people with food; at times becoming a weaver or a builder, God devotes Himself for the sake of people.

For the fisherman, the farmer, the weaver, and the builder are all beings who have been given a share of God's life and work in this world—divine portions of life. Therefore, all the care needed to fully bring that life to life within the physical body—not only the life working within oneself—is entirely provided by God.

By the power of the physical human being, not even a single drop of water or a small amount of air can be produced without using the basic elements of God. We need to look honestly at that fact.

When we look at that fact honestly and openly, gratitude wells up toward all people and all things.

What has been practiced since long ago is the practice of gratitude toward the sun. The practice of gratitude toward the sun has been carried out since ancient times even by people who take no particularly religious stance, and this kind of simple practice of gratitude can be said to be the fundamental living attitude of a life of receiving anew.

Without the light of the sun, all things cannot grow, and humankind cannot live. The rays of the sun are truly the grace of God. That so many people can no longer look upon this fact with honest gratitude is the tragedy of humankind.

Curiously, the intellectual class of Japan is, strangely, ashamed to speak of God and dislikes expressing gratitude for things. This strange shame is what drives nature and human beings apart.

Munetada-shinjin, the founder of Kurozumikyo, when he had contracted lung disease and death was already drawing near, one day gazed steadily at the sun, and through becoming one with the sun, his lung disease was healed instantly, and he became the founder of a religion. In that way, becoming one with the sun is an important thing for humankind. Munetada-shinjin received anew a physical body that had once been on the verge of perishing, through becoming one with the sun.

Every human being is kept alive day by day, moment by moment, through the grace of the sun, of air and water, and of all sorts of other external workings; so we are living by receiving God's grace day by day, moment by moment.

Why do human beings not notice the folly of believing that a life they did not create themselves is their own life? Human beings are meant to live by receiving anew, and receiving anew, day by day, moment by moment. I am saying that we must clearly acknowledge that fact.

Just as the sun is a manifestation of God's loving-kindness, the earth too, and the mountains, rivers, grasses, and trees—every natural sight and phenomenon—hold the working of God's life; and if only a human being assimilates with God's heart, in a state of mind like becoming one with the sun, everything becomes a power that aids the human being's work.

However, when a human being becomes arrogant, as though they had created their own life and living by their own power, they become separated from God's loving-kindness, grow distant from the workings of nature, and rush headlong toward destruction. Present-day humankind is, by and large, heading in that direction.

"The heart of gratitude is the heart of prayer."

In order not to send humankind toward destruction, we absolutely must adopt the humble—rather than humble, the only natural—living attitude of receiving anew.

All authority lies in God's heart, and humankind has been given a share of this authority and bears the heavenly mission of manifesting God's ideal in this earthly world.

It is because God exists that humankind exists; humankind apart from God becomes a being with no choice but to perish. Therefore, humankind must, as soon as possible, seek oneness with God and maintain an attitude in which God's authority can work directly and straight upon humankind.

For that, an unceasing heart of prayer is needed. The heart of gratitude to God—"God, thank you"—is a heart of prayer. The heart of "May peace prevail on Earth" is also a heart of prayer. "May Japan be at peace" and "May our heavenly mission be fulfilled" are likewise a heart of prayer.

And if, prior to such a heart of prayer, one can live a life of complete gratitude to God—that everything is received from God—then it is beyond reproach.

【Yuka-sensei】

Thank you very much. Truly, you always read a passage that fits perfectly; and for me, the message at the end—the sense of oneness with God—I listened with the feeling that, in that great flow, from Goi-sensei's words of that time, through Masami-sensei, it has been guided further into us as something we can actually feel and experience, and that I can become a self that more fully embodies and feels what Goi-sensei is saying and conveying to us now.

【Rika-sensei】

Because we are always doing the practice of gratitude and prayer, I think those of you who pray live each day with the awareness of receiving anew—that one cannot even control one's own life, and that this is a life that is being kept alive.

But these natural phenomena and disturbances, too, are harmony with nature, or humankind's arrogance toward nature, appearing and then fading away; and within that, taking this as an occasion to once again deepen the heart of gratitude within our own hearts, today I would like to do the practice of gratitude together with all of you. So, let us begin. It is the twelve-part Practice of Gratitude to Nature.

<Gratitude Practice for the Earth and the World>

【Yuka-sensei】

Yes, that is all. Becoming truly one with all of you, and completely one with all the deities, in this very moment, together with all of great nature and all the deities, you sent your prayers to great nature—thank you so very much.

Now, lastly, I would like to form The Divine Spark IN Mudra once, together with all of you. Thank you in advance.

<The Divine Spark IN Mudra, once>

【Yuka-sensei】

Yes, thank you very much.

Before the closing greeting, please let me just share some recent news. It is about upcoming events.

First, on Sunday, July 12, the "Prayer Method that Makes Me and the World Shine" will be held at

Fuji Sanctuary. The first half runs from 11:00 to 13:00, and the second half from 13:30 to 14:40. No matter how many times you attend, I think there are new learnings and discoveries each time. The first-half lecture is basically given by Yamashiro-san now, and it is well received as very easy to understand, because she truly conveys her own experiences in her own words. In the second half, there are times when we go to the outdoor venue or experience the 721 or the Seven Stations, so please do take a look at the details this time as well in "News & Topics," and make it an occasion to come to Fuji Sanctuary.

Often, as Rika-sensei also said, the time for everyone to talk together afterward becomes very lively; I think you can feel the connection here very deeply, so I do hope those of you who can come to Fuji Sanctuary will come.

Next, on July 18 from 20:00, the "Inori Card Information Session" will be held online. No application is necessary; likewise, please enter on the day from "News & Topics." This, too, lets us interact and talk with one another, and everyone enjoys it; and whenever we experience it, we always bask in the depth of the members' prayers, their testimonies, and their beauty. It will be held again today after this, starting at 15 minutes past the hour, so please do join online.

July 20 is the "Web Prayer Gathering." This one is online, but application is required. It is a thorough, in-depth course for firmly learning and internalizing the "fading-away appearance (kiete yuku sugata)." So if you still feel, "there is a fading-away appearance," or "I understand the concept of the fading-away appearance, but I can't quite internalize it," and so on, please do apply for this.

I believe it was in the first half of August—at Fuji Sanctuary, we will hold an event called "Play and Connect." This one I recommend for, say, the children or grandchildren of members—those people whom you find it hard to explain about Fuji Sanctuary or about Byakko, hard to convey it to. Please, by all means, have them come to "Play and Connect."

"Play and Connect" targets young people aged 40 and under; it is a very casual setting that even non-members can attend, and the concept is that, by taking part, they can learn about prayer at Fuji Sanctuary and connect with others of the same generation. This, too, has been very popular.

We had even heard from a parent who said, "I sent my child off. They don't understand anything," but that child, not through the parent but directly, connected with Fuji Sanctuary and with the staff's talks, and shared things like, "Now I really understand it," or "I feel I understand what my parent was saying." So if there are young people aged 40 and under who are not yet members, I would be so glad if they came to Fuji Sanctuary on this day.

August 23 is the in-person "Gathering for Those Within Three Years." It is an event where those who have been members for less than three years gather together at Fuji Sanctuary and connect with one another again. Everyone, if you would like, please connect with us online and at Fuji Sanctuary in July and August as well.

【Rika-sensei】

Yes, thank you for joining us today as well. It has taken a little time, but there will be the "Inori Card Information Session" 15 minutes from now; it will make for a long stretch, but please do join.

【Yuka-sensei】

This, too, really—the experience is lovely, isn't it.

【Rika-sensei】

That's right. The other day, I actually joined in a breakout, and the sadness I was carrying—how shall I put it—came out unexpectedly, in the atmosphere of everyone; I hadn't intended to talk about it, but it just slipped out. And the eyes of those listening were so gentle—truly the eyes of prayer. Even without saying anything, even though it was online, there was a sense of being properly received.

【Yuka-sensei】

There is no judgment. Yes, that's right—it is just as you are.

【Both of them】

Somehow, you know, it is healing, so please, by all means. It starts at 12:15. It's fine to be a little late, so yes, please do join.

Thank you very much for today.

That is all.