

As our life increasingly depends on science and technology in modern society, it becomes a challenge to human beings living between Heaven and Earth on how to address this dependence. We, at the Konkokyo International Center, would like to consider this issue beginning with the following article contributed by Reverend Michiyo Iwasaki, former Director of the Konkokyo International Center and currently the head minister at the Konko Church of Shizuoka.

For Faith To Be Born

By the Reverend Michiyo Iwasaki



There is the Holy Shroud at St. John's Cathedral in Turin. The holy shroud is said to have wrapped the crucified body of Jesus Christ. The Catholic Church has not officially tried to appraise the authenticity of the cloth. It is not that they are afraid the appraising might conclude the cloth is fake. Even if the cloth turns out to be fake, the result would probably do no damage to the Catholic faith. On the contrary, their faith would be impacted if the cloth is proven to be authentic and the Catholic Church accepts the result as the cornerstone of their faith. It means they are moving away from the cornerstone of their lives, which should be their faith, to a dependence of science and technology. This could be interpreted as a loss of faith, since one should have unwavering faith in all things, whether proven by science or not. We need to jump to accept the faith even when it was uncertain.

What I surmise from the story of the Shroud of Turin is the moment one accepts something only because it is scientifically proven, one has lost the cornerstone of faith. In other words, if you require scientific proof for the things you believe, your beliefs might become less than certain. This leads to several questions: People ask, "What is the reason for a person's belief in Kami?" One might respond, "because I received the blessings"; The second question, "Why does a person believe in Kami and pray for help." One might answer the reason to believe by saying, "because I received teachings from the minister at the church" or "because my parents practice faith, and I learned from them"; Then the third question, "Why could the minister or the parents believe in Kami?" Tracing the path of our faith in this way, we will end up with our Founder, Konko Daijin; Then we will have the final question, "Why did the Founder believe in Kami?"

Our Founder was stricken with a critical illness at the age of 42. At that time, Kami said to him, "You tried to avoid misfortunes in various ways." On receiving the revelation, the

Founder realized that Kami had been watching over him and praying for him throughout his hardships. Up to this point, the Founder had not realized Kami's prayers and function for it was beyond his secular understanding. His realization became the cornerstone of the Founder's faith. The Founder was now more aware of his shallow thoughts and his primal ignorance. Compared to the Divine Parent of the Universe, he was very small. This realization by the Founder led him to develop a heart to believe in Kami. This was the cornerstone of his faith for the remainder of his life. Using his faith as a cornerstone, the Founder abandoned every aspect of his secular life and took a leap of faith into Kami's arms. His faith saved himself and brought salvation and his salvation led him to perform Mediation.

The Founder's way of life reminds me of the first penguin in his flock to jump into a stormy ocean sea leading the other penguins to follow and be saved. When we, the followers, believe in the Founder's way of life and his story of salvation, or teachings, we are also jumping into arms of the Divine Parent of the Universe, just as the flock of penguins jump into the sea. Some of the followers have also jumped further, so to speak, by becoming ministers and even establishing a place for Mediation.

When you believe in the Founder's way of life and his teachings, and take the leap of faith, you will encounter the vast and limitless way of the Universe like our Founder. At the same time, you will find how small you are. You realize the difference between you and the Divine Parent, which will make your faith deeper and stronger.

We recite "Kami Prayer" that consists of two parts. The first part begins with "Reverently, we pray," and the second part does with "Humbly, we pray." Whenever we recited this prayer, the vast and limitless Divine Parent and small humans would be presented at the same time. At that time, our faith were renewed and reborn.



From the Collection of the Reverend Yasutaro Yukawa's Sermons

The Reverend Yasutaro Yukawa (1870-1944) was the founding minister of Konko Church of Tamamizu, Osaka. He led his life with Kami-Sama at the center of his world and continued to convey the True Way of Faith through which people are saved. Within his words filled with humor, we can see his deep understanding of faith that went far beyond common knowledge. Here, together, let's study about how to practice this True Way of Faith and receive salvation.

Anything that occurs to us in the Universe is an implicit message from Kami-Sama.

Our Founder said, “Just listening to the teachings is not enough. You should develop faith from within yourself”(Gorikai III 41-1). Whenever I encountered any difficulty or challenge, regardless of what they were, I tried to seek the Divine message in them, and worked hard to comprehend the teachings, trying tenaciously to think how to grow a true faith and/or how I could develop my faith from these endeavors. If you pray to Kami-Sama to let you realize the Divine message whenever you do something, you can extract precious teachings from anything. It is not enough to just see or listen to things. It is important that you consider any teaching by seeing and listening, and then sublimating them into faith.

If we are diligently willing to understand faith and ask Kami-Sama to let us do so by all means, we can learn faith from anything. Sometimes, however, we tend to see and think without really having this willingness for close attention, and we end up not learning anything. The same can be said when you listen to a sermon at church. If you listen as if it is a story for others, you are not prepared to deeply understand the teachings and therefore you will not receive Divine messages.

It is far from correct to assume that you can only learn faith at church. Kami-Sama, or Divine Parent of the Universe, is our own parent. Although Kami-Sama does not say words in a way we can hear, Kami-Sama shows us

various things and teaches us faith. Anything that occurs to us in the Universe is an implicit message from Kami-Sama. Nevertheless, we often fail to receive Kami-Sama's messages, unconsciously overlooking them, and we miss the opportunity to learn faith.

Once I learned a lesson of faith from a beggar. It was a New Year's Eve in a year when I was still engaged in my own business. The beggar stood in front of my house at a most hectic time. “Today is such a busy day and I am totally occupied. Your visit is so untimely. I don't have a moment to deal with you”, I said harshly to him. The beggar then said “Thank you very much, sir. Thank you always for your patronage,” and left. That evening, I recalled him saying “Thank you very much, sir. Thank you always for your patronage”, and I came to realize that my faith was far from true faith. I become very happy when I receive Divine blessings. But, then, what happens if just one out of the ten wishes I pray to Kami-Sama does not materialize? How will I react? I will forget about the nine Divine blessings I received and complain to Kami-Sama about the one wish I did not receive. My faith being like this, I felt ashamed toward the beggar who taught me faith through his attitude that day. I made a sincere apology to Kami-Sama and said to myself, “When he comes here tomorrow, I will give him alms for two days to thank him for the lesson he taught me.”

KIC Table Talk

“Anything that occurs to us in the Universe is an implicit message from Kami-Sama” exactly represents a feature of Konkokyo.

Receiving things that occur in everyday life through what we see or hear as Divine messages is very important for us in practicing our faith, I think. By so doing, we vividly feel the real/active Workings of Kami-Sama, don't we?



Through the things that occur to us, we come to understand what kind of Divine wishes exist and the reason for the Universe, etc. Further comparing them with any teaching, we notice the meaning of this teaching. Thus, we come to realize "I see, this is what Kami-Sama has been teaching me".

Teachings are not something to memorize but are opportunities for us to realize the teachings in daily events. It means there are teachings in everything that occurs in our lives.



Just as the Reverend Yukawa said, "You can extract precious teachings from anything", we can induce teachings from daily life. Through our own experiences, we learn to understand what is faith. "To grow a true faith", we have to develop faith within ourselves.

Does "to grow a true faith" mean that what we do naturally leads to faith?



I think it means that by continuing to practice faith, we discover or create something within ourselves which will grow into a true faith.

In other words, there are no prescriptive/established norms in faith. Each person meets Kami-Sama individually and faith is born within himself or herself. Right?



I think so. In addition, the Reverend Yukawa said "I came to realize that my faith was far from true faith."

The Reverend Yukawa always wished to understand faith truly. Therefore, even from a talk with a beggar, he looked at his own way of being again and I think he realized the nature of his problem.



If we see things that way, anybody can be teacher to us.

Yes, we can see others as our mirrored selves.

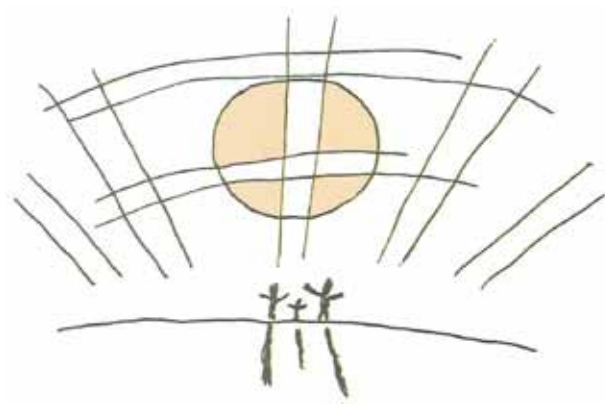


The Reverend Yukawa said, "Pray to let you realize the Divine message whatever you do something, you can extract precious teachings from anything." I think it is important for us to request this first of all. If we pray "Please teach us, let us perceive the message", Kami-Sama will guide us through matters in everyday life.

If we pursue faith with the "Please teach us, Kami-Sama" attitude, our sensitivity level to receive Kami-Sama's messages will also rise.



If we tenaciously consider this each day, we might find it interesting to realize the message that is given to us. I wish I can receive messages without missing any.



We live in the bountiful loving care of Kami-Sama, but it will not help us if we don't appreciate it as our reality.

From "*Manazashi*"

A teaching by the Reverend Nobunao Yukawa,
the former Head Minister of Konko Church of Ginza

Things I learned from Japanese honey bees

By Reverend Masaaki Kimura, Konko Church of Kariyaura

I believe that Kami-Sama teaches me of the mysterious workings of heaven and earth through my keeping of Japanese honey bees (*Apis cerana japonica*), the native bees that live in the wild.

Every day I enjoy seeing my honey bees returning to their hives from their daily foraging, their stomachs full of honey, happily collected from many flowers. Each bee seems to be on a mission, conversing with fellow bees, making decisions by communicating with each other.

These bees collect and store enough honey in their hive, mostly in spring when many flowers are in bloom. Their colony grows until they are ready to nurture a new queen bee. When they are ready, the former queen brings half of the working bees to the new hive. But this can be done only with some preparation. First, a large number of search bees would fly out to seek a new, good hive.

When the search bees find a prospective hive, they investigate it carefully, again and again, flying around it and getting into it. After finding the most favorable one, they go back to the old hive, lead other bees to the new one, and check out the new hive again. The bees repeatedly investigate and bring other work bees to several new hives. Finally, the queen brings a swarm of working bees, moving like a cloud, to the new hive.

Just like a proverb, "Strike the stone bridge to make sure it is safe before walking on," many bees strike the new hive to make sure it is safe, before deciding to move there. Bees behave like humans although they are insects. I will not be writing about it here, but the biological makeup of bees is very interesting. They have the ability to overcome certain threats and dangers such as enemies, extreme heat and cold, disease, and food scarcity. I am indeed impressed by them.

To start keeping Japanese honey bees, you need to make a hive and invite bees to venture in. I take the maximum care in selecting the ideal place, shape, material, and even smell, for my bee hive, to attract them and keep them there. They like hives which other bees had previously lived in. To create that environment, I put beeswax, made from melted bee hive.

My greatest pleasure of bee keeping is in seeing a new swarm of bees coming to my bee hive. In the beginning, preparations were based on trial and error so I feel relief when all my efforts, beginning from winter, are rewarded. When the season arrives, I anxiously go out and check the hives which I'd put out for new bees: A bee taking a glance of the hive and going away, a bee checking me out, a bee absorbed in his quest, and finally, a bee bringing its companions. I can watch them endlessly, not realizing the passage of time. Through my observations, I have been surprised to discover that bees have their own personalities, such as being short-tempered or good-natured.

A working bee becomes an adult in about 20 days after it hatches, then lives about a month long.

It doesn't have a brain to think like a human; there is a saying, "The fly has her spleen, and the ant her gall." A creature with no brain and really short life thinks something and lives wisely. It makes me think where the soul comes from.

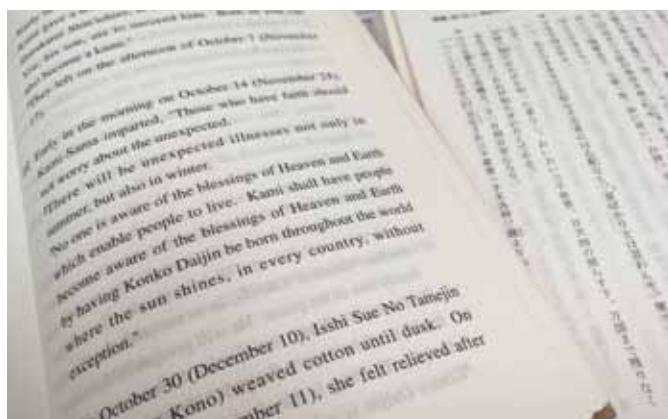
Here in our universe, there is a wondrous and profound world of things that we humans will never know. Here I feel the mysterious workings of the Divine Parent of the Universe, and I think of how, we humans, exist as a creature in its midst. I had not known of this world of creatures until I started to keep honey bees. Between heaven and earth, I keep finding new discoveries and surprises every day.



翻訳 次 Translation as “Mediation”

By Reverend Nobuhiro Kusuki, KIC Staff Member

“No one is aware of the blessings of Heaven and Earth, which enable people to live. Kami shall have people become aware of the blessings of Heaven and Earth by having Konkō Daijin be born throughout the world where the sun shines, in every country, without exception.” (*Oboe-cho: Book of Revelations*, 26-22-3) This is a divine message given by Kami to the Founder.



Translating Japanese material into other languages is indispensable in order to convey the Way of Konkō Faith to people throughout the world. In the past, our headquarters has translated books and movies into English, such as *Konkokyo Kyoten: Sacred Scriptures of Konkokyo*, *Konkokyo Prayer Book* and *Voice of The Universe: Selected Teachings of Konkokyo*. Where we have churches and Activity Centers overseas, the local ministers and believers have actively translated these materials into Korean, Portuguese, Spanish, etc.

Translating is not simply a matter of exchanging words from one language for words in another. It is also the process of explaining the meaning of words within a language, to re-word expressions and to express stories and poems through pictures or narratives with music. In other words, through translations we can become aware of and understand concepts and symbols in other languages.

Prior to retiring from farming and serving Kami full-time, the Founder received the following request on November 15, 1859 called “The Divine Call,” “...There are many people like yourself, who have sincere faith in kamis, but still have many problems. Help these people by performing Toritsugi Mediation.” (*Oboegaki*, 9-3-6). Since then, the workings of the Founder’s Mediation has allowed us to realize a world whereby both Kami and people can be fulfilled, by people sharing their wishes with Kami and Kami’s thoughts being

conveyed to the people. In other words, the Founder, who is the Mediator between Kami and people, could be seen as the “translator” for people around the world to comprehend “The Way of Kami and People,” couldn’t he?

One of the believers who was impressed by the Founder’s way of living and translated from English into Polish: the Sacred Scriptures, the calendar with the Founder’s teachings, and Wikipedia about Konkokyo, said, “I translated these texts because I thought that they could help people who do not speak English or Japanese to become part of Konkokyo. The wonderful teachings of Konkokyo should be shared beyond Japanese-speaking and English-speaking people.”

Another believer who has translated Wikipedia pages into Italian said, “I know that there are few Italian followers, but I also think that if there were more resources in Italian, more people could get to know about Konkokyo.” She offered to translate *Voice of the Universe* or this newsletter, *Face to Faith*, next, into Italian. Another believer who has translated *Voice of the Universe* into German said, “I tried to treat the *Voice of the Universe* as a Christian holy scripture, but I experienced the Konkō scriptures differently. For me, the teachings from Konkokyo try to build up a relationship with Kami/the Universe in order to receive personal answers or solutions to problems.” These individuals follow the Founder and they are trying to convey the “Way of Kami and People” to the world through their translations. There are volunteers around the world who are willing to translate sections of this newsletter as their sacred task, which has enabled this newsletter to be published until this day.

Until now, the Way has continued and has been supported by these believers who encountered the Way through Kami’s Divine Arrangement. These followers have each received blessings and they express one wish to Kami, “What can I do to be useful and serve Kami?” One sacred task is engaging in translation work as a form of “Mediation.”

One of the believers says, “Konkokyo was born in Japan, however it is not only for Japanese people, but also for all people throughout the world.” The fire which the Founder had ignited in the Japanese countryside 159 years ago had spread across the sea. It has been translated and handed down to the world. To contemplate why Kami passed on this fire to you is an important aspect of training in this Way of Faith, isn’t it?

Welcoming the 4th Konko International Gathering at "Goreichi" Back to the Day: inspiring the future

Believers from all over the world and those who are interested in Konkokyo are welcome to join in. Let's get together to celebrate the Konkokyo Establishment Day at the Sacred Place "Goreich".



Faith Enrichment Activities:

Guided tour of "Goreichi", Prayer Service, Party, Workshop, and Konkokyo Establishment Day Service

Date: November 14th 13:00-15th 12:00

Place: Konkokyo Headquarters, Okayama, Japan

Registration Fee:

Free Includes dinner, breakfast and lodging

For further information, please contact KIC.

"VOICE OF THE UNIVERSE"

96. Faith is realized when people and Kami become close. Faith will fade if you stand in fear of Kami. Stay close to Kami.

(*Gorikai III* Konko kyoso Gorikai 23)

97. Practicing faith is easy. It is people who make it difficult. Even if you have practiced faith for three to five years, you can still become easily confused. If you continually practice faith for ten years, then you can celebrate with joy in your heart. Each day is the beginning of all the days to come. Therefore, receive divine blessings each and everyday so everything will go well. You should practice your faith easily.

(*Gorikai III* Konko Kyoso Garikai 69-1, 2)



"Ask Kami-Sama about anything, anytime!"

Message from staff

KIC is fortunate to receive messages from various countries, even those where Konkko Churches are not established now. I'm glad to hear the voices of those who are touched by our faith and would like to seek a stronger tie to it. With the internet and SNS, we are able to contact each other quickly and easily all over the world. I use this technology to spread our faith and deeply pray for Kami-Sama's salvation to be manifested throughout the world. I pray that *Aiyo-akeyo*, mutual fulfillment, can be realized by all of us. I wish everyone a healthy and peaceful life without discrimination and oppression. T.F



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