



May, 2020

No.98



Kami-Sama's Workings That Deliver Peace of Mind Beyond National Borders Expanding the Circle of Salvation Through Wagakokoro, A Peaceful and Joyful Heart

by Reverend Seiji Akiyama, Head Minister of Konko Church of Moji das Cruzes, Brazil

Twenty-eight years ago I began my Konko Faith outreach efforts in Brazil. Prior to that, I underwent spiritual training at Konko Church of Airaku in Fukuoka Prefecture with the wish to begin outreach efforts in Brazil. My wish was granted, however prior to going, I heard the story of my predecessor, who went to a remote area in the Amazon to do outreach. I had to ask myself, "What should I bring with me to accomplish my mission?" Two teachings abruptly popped into my mind and touched my soul. One was a teaching handed down by our Founder, Konko Daijin, "Faith is to polish the gem in your heart (*Gorikai* III, *Shinkun* 2-21)," and the other was this teaching by the late Reverend Soichiro Otsubo, the founder of the Konko Church of Airaku, "We were born into this world to polish our spiritual essence." These teachings helped me focus on how to develop my own heart, which I began to work on.

Then the time came for me to go to Brazil. Just prior to my departure, I received these words from Reverend Soichiro Otsubo, "When you start your outreach efforts, you may think that people will come to your church right away, but that may not be the case. What is important is that you are saved first, followed by your wife and family. Then, salvation will spread to other people."

I went to Moji das Cruzes together with my wife and 6 small children, and began my outreach efforts. Neither my wife nor I spoke Portuguese. No one came to my church. But thanks to the words I was given by Reverend Soichiro Otsubo, I was able to sit at the Mediation Seat with an energetic heart thinking it was time to communicate one-to-one



Rev. Akiyama is on the far left.

with Kami-Sama.

One month later, the first visitors to come to my church were my children's friends. I had served as a leader for the Boys & Girls Association when I trained at Konko Church of Airaku. I felt as if Kami-Sama acknowledged this experience by sending these young people to my church.

Gradually, their parents and relatives began to come to my church. One of them was a Brazilian lady who was a devout Catholic. She was divorced and accused of heresy because divorce was said to be a "sin." Her four children were bullied and she was riddled with guilt and anxiety. Her heart was freed when she came into contact with Konko Faith's "Peaceful, joyful heart" and a forgiving Kami-Sama. She became a believer of Konko Faith and continued to worship at our church every day until her passing. Last year, her children and grandchildren, altogether over 20 of them, came to our church on her 10th-Year Spiritual Birthday. Her peaceful, joyful heart through which she was saved continues to spread throughout her family and relatives.

We have many thieves in Brazil. Our church was broken into 7 times within the initial 5 years of my outreach efforts. One day, a video recorder that was an offering to Kami-Sama, was stolen. I was deeply apologetic since it was very expensive. My eldest son, who was 13-years-old, then said to me, "Maybe Kami-Sama is telling us we do not need to watch videos." I felt very grateful to learn that Kami-Sama allowed my children to develop their faith. At the same time, I was allowed to hear Kami-Sama's voice through my son and it calmed my heart.

We have experienced hardships. The whole family contracted a local illness. One of my children had a traffic accident. But each time we had a hardship, without any doubts we continued to receive the divine workings. And born within me was the power to trust in Kami-Sama and have a peaceful heart.

Recently, my daughter's Brazilian husband caused an accident with a company car. His company had no insurance for the car, so he felt very sorry and depressed. I told him,

"This may be a divine arrangement in which Kami-Sama wants you to learn something. I will be praying for you so accept the situation positively."

The next day, he received a large amount of repair bills. Then the following day, he was selected as the "Employee of the Year" by his company and received prize money that more than covered the expenses. My son-in-law, who did not yet have faith, realized Kami-Sama's workings through this divine arrangement.

Through these experiences, I became convinced that a "Heart with which we can take any occurrence as a divine arrangement is a *"Wagakokoro,"* peaceful and joyful heart, as we are taught through *"Tenchi Kakitsuke, The Divine Reminder,"* the guiding principle for our daily life. This conviction has become the source of my Toritsugi Mediation.

What I now feel so convinced about is that the Way can be opened with *Wagakokoro*, peaceful and joyful heart. Through a peaceful, joyful heart I, as well as my family, was saved, and little by little this circle is expanding.

From Kyoten

On February 9, 1876, I went to the Hiromae for the first time. I continued going to worship, received teachings, and every day deepened my faith.

Konko-Sama noticed my frequent attendance. He imparted, "It's all right to come to worship often, but your faith mustn't trouble your parents. Before coming to worship, take care of the work to be done and don't trouble your parents to make a box lunch for you." I then started going to worship without taking a box lunch.

From 1878, Konko-Sama began to call me the Follower of Inagi I queried, "Konko-Sama, when my father first came to worship in 1864 to pray for my mother's illness, you told him about our house, the road, and the directions they were in. Everything you said was true. I was a child when my father told me this, but I was amazed. You knew everything so well, even from nineteen kilometers away. Can you hear my requests from afar?"

Konko-Sama answered, "Tenchi No Kami-Sama protects the entire world by watching through Heaven and Earth. We live in between two mirrors. When I close my eyes and pray, I become able to see the surroundings of the person's home. When I reveal what I see, I am told that I'm not the least bit wrong. Cast aside your physical eyes, and open and see through your mind's eye.

You are a human, and I am a human. We have both received the same mitama soul from the same Tenchi

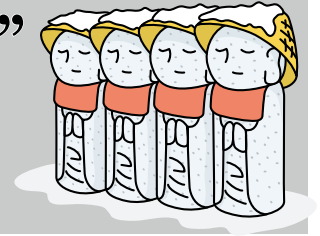
No Kami. So let us practice faith and receive divine virtue. Even though you don't come to worship, Inagi and Otani belong to the same Universe. If you don't pray by yourself and receive divine blessings, it will be too late. Come to worship while in good health, and receive divine blessings. When you suffer from sickness or misfortune, pray to Tenchi No Kami-Sama and Konko-Sama for help. Pray wherever you are—in the mountains, in rice paddies, on the ocean, on the river, or on the road. You have to receive blessings on the spot. Otherwise, it will be too late to relieve your suffering. This Hiromae is the only thing that is far away. Tenchi Kane No Kami knows no distance. He is neither near nor far.

People are a microcosm. Tenchi No Kami-Sama protects your head at all times, thus you can use your body at will. The results of practicing faith and working are the same. If you keep practicing faith, divine virtue and divine blessings will increase with each day.

On the other hand, if your heart becomes lazy, and you become conceited, your divine blessings will decrease. For example, a person who can plow a two-tenth-acre paddy before dusk, can plow only seventy percent of it if his heart is lazy. I can go on talking like this for a long time. Do everything with a right mind and practice faith for all things."

(Gorikai I; Yamamoto Sadajiro 2)

Aiming at “The heart of the heaven” and “The heart of the earth”



by Ms. Tomie Okubo, Konko Church of São Paulo, Brazil.

I first visited the Konko Church of São Paulo 24 years ago. I was 64 years old. Since then, I have practiced faith every day with the guidance of the ministers in my church. I am so grateful to have received teachings of Konko Faith.

My husband, who I was married to for 66 years, died the year before last. My acquaintances who have lost their husbands often say that it is hard for them to live without their husband, but I have never felt so, thanks to the teachings of the Konko Faith. I have never felt lonely because of my children, my friends, and members of my church. They are so kind to me. Every day I feel that I am protected by Kami-Sama.

Since I had received so many blessings, I was eager to attend the 160th Anniversary Ceremony of the Konkokyo establishment and the 25th Anniversary Memorial Ceremony of the founder of the Konko Church of Airaku held last November.

However, just before the trip I developed a severe backache. Reverend Chieko Iwai, the head minister of my church, said to me, “You surely can make it by praying to Kami-Sama sincerely.” And so, I prayed wholeheartedly. I received blessings and was able to fly more than 20 hours from Brazil to Japan to attend the ceremonies. I believe that when we turn our heart to Kami-Sama, Kami-Sama gives us blessings. I am really grateful.

My way of thinking has been changed because of the profound teachings of Konko Faith. The founder of the Konko Church of Airaku said,

“Why living in a world with
More blessings than even receivable,
Would occur such loneliness?
Seek to repay the gratitude
And without even praying
Such joy naturally wells up.
Realize that this joy
Is taken into the next world
And remains in this world.
Wishing to be like the universe:
Be not surprised by small things;
Be not afraid of big things.”



Ms. Okubo is second from right.

I would like to live a life like this teaching.

When I was feeling that something was missing in my way of life, I heard the story of “Kasa Jizo,” or Straw Hats for the Jizo Statuettes, at our faith study session. An old man gave his straw hats to Jizo statuettes because the statuettes looked freezing in the blizzard. Even though the old man was very poor and the hats were the only things he could sell to buy food, he gave the hats to the Jizo statuettes. I was moved by his kindness. I was also impressed by his wife’s warm heart. She didn’t blame him but rather said, “You did a very good thing!” I thought the couple are good people. At the study session, I learned that the old man had “a heart of the heaven which is willing to give everything,” and his wife had “a heart of the earth which is willing to accept everything.” Since then, developing “the heart of the heaven” and “the heart of the earth” have been the goal of my faith training.

Last year was a commemorative year for our church because it was the 25th anniversary that Reverend Chieko Iwai began to serve as the minister of the Konko Church of São Paulo. I was so grateful that I turned 88 last year. I hope that I continue to receive teachings and that Kami-Sama will use me to fulfill Kami-Sama’s wish.

My Visit to Seattle

by Ms. Tomoko Teramoto, a staff member of Konkokyo International Center (KIC)

From January 13-20, 2020, I visited Seattle, Washington for the first time. During my stay, I had a meeting with Reverend Amy Uzunoe-Chin, Konko Churches of North America (KCNA) Chief Administrative Minister, visited Reverend Richard Dusek, Reverend Michihiro Yuasa, and Konko Church of Seattle.

I was also allowed to attend the KCNA 2020 Missionary Women's Society Seminar, held at a rental house in Seattle from the 16th to 18th. During the program, the 10 participants had prayer services, a faith discussion about "Eternal Happiness," and received Mediation at Konko Church of



Seattle. In addition, we visited "Kubota Garden," a public Japanese garden established in 1927 by Mr. Fujitaro Kubota, a believer at Konko Church of Seattle. We really enjoyed all these activities while sharing our faith experiences with each other. I was so impressed by everyone's dedication to realizing Kami-Sama's wish.

I truly appreciate that Kami-Sama gave me this wonderful opportunity. By meeting everyone and having these experiences, I deeply felt the importance to continue supporting each other and learn about our faith together. Also, I realized that most of them have a desire to create opportunities to learn and share more about

our faith between ministers and believers from all over the world. As KIC staff, I would like to seek various ways to make this wish come true.



Let's make time to turn our hearts to Kami-Sama every day!

As the Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) Continues to Spread

We would like you to join us in prayer, for the spirits of those lives lost to the Novel Coronavirus so they may rest in peace, for the recovery of those who contracted it, as well as a swift end to the spread of this deadly disease.

By clicking on the following URL, you can read both the foreword in the monthly "Ametsuchi" booklet (April 2020 Issue) by the Reverend Yumi Asano, Outreach Department Director, and the "Prayer for the Ending of the Novel Coronavirus Pandemic" created by Konko Faith followers from various parts of the globe.

The monthly "Ametsuchi" booklet (April 2020 Issue); <http://kic.jpn.org/eng/?p=1245>



"Prayer for the Ending of the Novel Coronavirus Pandemic" created by Konko Faith followers; <http://kic.jpn.org/eng/?p=1242>



A Message from the Staff

I live my life with various anxieties about the unclear future. However, when I turn my heart to Kami-Sama and pray single-heartedly, these teachings flow into my mind: "Practice faith with patience" (Grikai II Fuku-shima Gihei 9-2), "Look forward to the future" (Oboe-cho 16-6-2), and "The more blessings you receive, the more benefits you will gain." (Grikai III Konko Kyoso Gorikai 60) Then my mind starts to calm down, and I begin to notice the workings of Kami-Sama and the blessings I am receiving now. I am resolved to make my prayers an important part of my day, and rely on Kami-Sama for everything. (T.F)



FACE TO FAITH NO. 98 VOL. 27-2 issued by

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