



The 4th Konkoku International Gathering
November 14 and 15, 2018.

Happy New Year, Everyone! I express my heartfelt joy as we welcome the year 2019.

When we talk about faith, we unfortunately think of it as something more complicated than it really is. There is nothing special that we need to do for our faith, because faith is a part of our everyday lives. Konkoku Faith has the divine message, “There will be eternal prosperity through mutual fulfillment (*aiyokakeyo*).” Stated simply, this means that we can help each other and become mutually fulfilled if we develop relationships based on the premise “I am here, thanks to you.”

For example, through the blessings of food, clothing and shelter, we are allowed to live. We express gratitude for all these things that help us in our lives, by living a life that helps preserve them and show we cherish them.

The fourth Principal Mediator (Konko-Sama) shared the following words,

“I am indebted to my glasses because I wear them all day, upon awakening in the morning, until bedtime at night. Always on my mind is the thought, ‘If these glasses were a person, what would I do?’ I would surely give them not only a daily allowance, but overtime and night pay, as well. I would say ‘Thank you very much for working so hard for me today, till late at night.’”

However, we tend to overlook our gratitude toward our glasses and say nothing because they are not a person. I

make it a point to use my glasses with care and in my heart express gratitude to them when I put them on, take them off and wipe them clean.

Glasses are not just ‘things.’ I express gratitude in my heart not just to my glasses, but to the food, clothing and shelter; that allow me to live. I pray to Kami to allow me to continue to remember to maintain a heart of gratitude toward all things of which I am indebted.”

Living your daily life with the attitude “I am here, thanks to you” is living a life respecting and caring about others. This way of living enables you not only to help others, but also yourself.

It is important to develop this relationship of indebtedness to other people and things. For example, you can be grateful for the bed you slept in last night and for your house that shields you from getting wet on rainy days. As long as you spend your life making an effort to feel gratitude and indebtedness towards everyone and

everything, this will lead to the relationship of “I am here, thanks to you.”

If we start training ourselves to express gratitude towards the benefits of food, clothing and shelter that help sustain our lives, then a relationship of gratitude will be born between each of us and these life-sustaining elements.

I pray that this year will be a prosperous one for all of you and that you keep gratitude for each other and these life-sustaining blessings in your heart, the entire year.



I Am Here, Thanks To You

**By the Reverend Yoshinori Nishikawa,
Chief Administrative Director of Konkoku**



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.

Do not save your efforts to change and renew yourself, when something challenging occurs to you (Chance for “Aratamari”).

When it comes to practicing religion, people often expect to receive divine gifts without making any effort. But it doesn't work to apply such a cheeky concept to Konkokyo; it just doesn't work with our faith. Gorikai, or Konko-Sama's teachings, says “Practice faith like a plum blossom rather than a cherry blossom. Cherry blossoms fall quickly. Plum blossoms endure the cold of winter and do not fall quickly.” (*Gorikai III Konko Kyoso Gorikai 29-1*). This is how our faith is taught to be practiced. How did our Founder practice faith? Gorikai says “Konko Daijin did not have anyone he could ask for teachings.” (*Gorikai III Konko Kyoso Gorikai 64-1*) Konko Daijin made tremendous efforts in such a way no one else could have followed, in practicing faith. Gorikai also says “Until now, Kami has never spoken words for people to hear. Wherever people worshipped, their prayers were only one sided. People can receive divine blessings if they pray single-heartedly, because Kami lives in their hearts. Practice faith in a living kami. Since the beginning of time, neither heaven nor earth has ever stopped its constant activities. The kami that Konko Daijin prays to single-heartedly is Tenchi Kane No Kami”. (*Gorikai III Konko Kyoso Gorikai 5-1-1*)

If you want to be saved, you must work tirelessly to realize it yourself, otherwise there is no way to achieve “Tasukari”, or being saved. It is a big mistake to expect to receive divine blessings by having others pray for you while you are lazy, making no painstaking effort on your own part.

I was resolutely disciplined by Kami-Sama regarding “Aratamari”, which is reflecting on an occurrence, and changing and renewing yourself based on the lesson learned from the occurrence. Kami-Sama sends us a message by giving us a challenge to let us realize something is missing on our part in terms of “Aratamari” and that we are not up to Kami-Sama's expectation. Accordingly, when we receive a challenge from Kami-Sama, we must investigate why

Kami-Sama has given us the challenge. We will find out, or Kami-Sama will let us find out, the answer if we work to obtain it. When we know the answer, we must not leave it as is. We will have no other choice but to work diligently to resolve it. This is the essence of “Aratamari”.

In the meantime, when we make “Aratamari” and resolve one challenge, it is not the end. If we relax and think “Well, I have made ‘Aratamari’ and received a divine blessing. I am okay now,” Kami-Sama will give us another challenge with an intention to continue to save us. When that happens, we will have to find out where we must make “Aratamari” this time, asking ourselves what the message that Kami-Sama is trying to tell us is and searching for the causes of this challenge. This is how I practiced “Aratamari,” and resolved my challenges one by one.

As soon as I identified the causes of the challenges and dealt with them through “Aratamari,” I received divine blessings – it was as clear and simple as that. This encouraged me to make “Aratamari” without any delay or hesitation. In this way I performed my practice of “Aratamari,” resolving challenges one by one, proceeding to “Tasukari” step by step. This is how Kami-Sama changed me where I needed to be changed. I am so thankful to Kami-Sama, and I keep offering my sincere gratitude to Kami-Sama for having guided me to change myself through the path of making “Aratamari” in such a kind and helpful way.

Kami-Sama wholeheartedly teaches us to let us make “Aratamari” and become good people based upon great love and the wish Kami-Sama has to save us by all means. This is why it is so important to recognize, when something challenging occurs to us, that it is an implicit message from Kami-Sama to request “Aratamari” on our part, and we must practice faith through the process of making “Aratamari” in response to the request from Kami-Sama.

KIC Table Talk



Here, Rev. Yukawa talked about “practicing faith in a living kami.” He always had a dialogue with Kami-Sama and made “Aratamari,” or renewed himself, through examining the meaning of the occurrences. I can see that he received divine blessings by exactly practicing faith in a living kami.

I’m impressed by his words: “when something challenging occurs to us, that it is an implicit message from Kami-Sama to request ‘Aratamari’ on our part.” It means that you renew yourself by accepting the meaning of challenges as Kami-Sama’s wish to improve yourself.



I think it’s interesting that Kami-Sama “has guided you to change yourself in such a kind and helpful way” regarding what you are missing. You search for it all around yourself and make “Aratamari” on it, and then you’ll receive divine blessings. I guess Rev. Yukawa enjoyed it.

Being aware of this in my daily life, I often feel that Kami-Sama gives me a challenge to let me realize something is missing on my part. I contemplate the meaning of this, not only bad things but also good things.



Practicing faith in a living kami” means that you can communicate with Kami-Sama. I think that Rev. Yukawa really felt the lively and warm workings of Kami-Sama.

Speaking of religion, you may imagine praying to the great God. But in Konko faith, we’re taught not only to pray but also to practice “Aratamari” or renewal, aren’t we?



In “Aratamari,” I think how you do it is important. Thinking within your mind is not enough, but you should actually recreate yourself and change how you live, I think. But, it’s quite difficult.

We could hardly do it although we know how, could we?



Right. That’s why “Aratamari” needs lots of effort.

It’s hard to admit your own shortcomings. You should give it up quickly to make “Aratamari” on yourself at once like Rev. Yukawa did. It means that you give up what you are particular about. But, this “Aratamari” polishes the gem in your heart, and that gives you energy to live.



To do so, we need daily training, don’t we? My image of Konko faith is changing ourselves by “Aratamari” or renewal, and going up the stairs step by step. For me, it’s interesting to keep nurturing myself by continuously doing this.



**When you go asking for water,
you should not bring a bucket which was filled with mud
because it will not keep the water clean.
Likewise, let’s make the effort to clean our heart and mind
so we are able to receive divine blessings.**

From “*Manazashi*”

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



Kami-Sama's gifts

By Ms. Ashton Kish, Konko Church of Chicago

As a Konko believer, I've always been taught to rely on Kami-Sama for anything. For almost 10 years, I was taught this very thing in various ways. However, I don't think I truly realized what "relying" on Kami-Sama truly meant until I visited Japan.

My original trip to Japan was supposed to last for 3 weeks. However, after a request from Reverend Masanori Takeuchi, Head Minister of Konko Church of Chicago, the 3 weeks trip turned into a 2 months trip. Admittedly, as the trip grew near, I felt a little nervous. I had a lot of fears: Not seeing my husband for 2 months, no medication for my mental illness, weak Japanese language abilities, trouble eating many traditional Japanese foods, and worries about cultural aspects like understanding how not to be troublesome for other people. Very soon after arriving Japan, I felt my fears realized. I became paranoid that I was troubling everyone with my presence, and I couldn't communicate with anyone. I felt constant guilt. I cried a lot alone in my room and wished I could just instantly go home. Then, one evening, I had skipped an evening service due to my anxiety. However, I felt this strong urge to leave my room. So, I cried on a couch in a main area in the dark. Even though I thought everyone must be asleep, a reverend showed up, and he immediately came to me with great concern. Although I struggled to communicate, we used a translator program on my phone to try and express my true feelings. It took forever, but he was so patient. I remember most, he said, "Everyone is worried about you. We want to embrace you and learn about you. So please don't cry alone anymore. All of us here are people with problems. We'll all be flawed together." I was moved greatly by his words, and thought: "Kami-Sama really arranged this, huh? There's something here I'm not realizing. I kept



thinking people won't be able to understand me at all, but that's because I won't tell them what's going on."

I started to be more honest. I started to go to "Toritsugi" Mediation. Even though it was difficult to communicate, I learned so much about the people around me and how they shared my same fears and daily difficulties. However, all these people had something in common-- they trusted in Kami-Sama to make life better, clinging to Kami-Sama tightly. That's when I realized, and noticed: From the beginning, Kami-Sama had been holding my hand. Flooding back to me, I remembered how every difficult experience followed with what seemed like a gift, no matter how small. For example, perhaps something for breakfast would be too difficult for me to eat. However, without knowing, someone would bring me some treat or pastry, just because they thought I might like it. I could say now that Kami-Sama was taking care of me like a precious child. When a child endures some difficulties or challenges, often a kind parent will reward them with some treat. This is how I felt. When I noticed these things starting to happen, I no longer cried. This is how my visit to Japan changed from difficult to amazing. When turning to focus on Kami-Sama's gifts and kindnesses, I came to love the country I was in. I enjoyed myself endlessly and found myself surrounded by people who loved and cared about me! In the end, when the two months were coming to an end, I found myself wishing that I had a little more time to spend in Japan. Now, I live my daily life trying to recognize Kami-Sama's gifts for every step I take. I definitely look forward to travelling to Japan again, with my realizations about Kami-Sama's care from the beginning. Next time, I get the feeling I'll only be crying tears of thankfulness. Thank you!



People today cannot live without digital communication tools. About seventy percent of the people in the world use a cell-phone or a smartphone, and more than a half connect to the Internet. This number will continue to increase, and within five to ten years, our world will change dramatically with the use of new technology, such as artificial intelligence (AI), robots, and virtual reality equipment. Huge amounts of data will be collected from countless devices everywhere, including peoples' homes, and people using wearable devices. The big data will be instantly converted into useful information called algorithms for AI systems and will alter everything in our lives, culture and society. In addition to these information communication equipment, the advance of technology in the sciences of the human body and health, such as regenerative medicine, genome editing, genome synthesis technology, and cyborg technology, has been remarkable. I am surprised that the world I imagined in science fiction is becoming a reality.

Our lives are undeniably integrated with advanced science and technology. We live in a society that is inseparable

Relationship between Science and Technology and Faith

By the Reverend
Shinkichi Kawai,

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Center

from this technology. However, no matter how advanced the technology has become or will become in the future, we must realize that both, society and technology, exist "between Heaven and Earth," and that we are humans living between Heaven and Earth. It is absolutely true that everything, each and every happening in our lives, and

all that exists in the Universe, is Kami-Sama's doing, an implicit message from Kami-Sama. They are all Kami-Sama's arrangement. It is therefore important and necessary to converse and interact with Kami-Sama, to learn how to live with Kami-Sama. This is why it is important to practice faith.

Although we live in a society integrated with science and technology, I want us to turn our hearts to Kami and live a life committed to act in every way in harmony with Kami-Sama. The fourth Konko-Sama taught us an important lesson on how to realize a way of life based on faith: "Seek to have a grateful heart for all that you are blessed with. Appreciate everything and everyone that makes this blessing possible." We must create a way of living in a society that is not technology-centered nor human-centered but Kami-centered. We can find a way to build such a society, without denying the progress of the technology, through the practice of faith. We will always be challenged by questions such as "What is the ideal use of technology?" or "How do we use technology ethically?" We can discover answers to such questions in a life based on practicing faith.



"VOICE OF THE UNIVERSE"

98. Nothing ever stays the same. Unless each person practices his faith, it will not last very long.
(*Gorikai III Konko kyoso Gorikai 67*)
99. You do not need anyone else to practice faith with. You should practice faith on your own. If you need someone else to practice faith with, you will need someone to die with.
(*Gorikai III Konko Kyoso Garikai 26*)
100. For faith, daily renewal is most important. Live each day with the same happy heart you have on New Year's Day. When the sun set, think that it is the last day of the year. When the sun rises, think that it is New Year's Day. If you are happy everyday, there will be no discord in the family.
(*Gorikai III Konko Kyoso Gorikai 35*)

4th Konko International Gathering



The 4th Konko International Gathering was held on November 14 and 15, 2018, to celebrate the founding of the Konko Faith. Over fifty people from Japan, the Mainland United States, Hawaii, Canada, Korea and Brazil participated.

Following the opening service, the participants visited two Sacred Sites. The first was the Founder's original Mediation Hall (*Rikkyo Seijo*), and the second was the home where the Founder was born. At the birthplace location, Reverend Wataru Kandori, who is a descendant of Konko Daijin's biological parents made a presentation to those in attendance. Later the group observed the fifth Konko-Sama's formal procession from the Main Worship Hall to his residence (*Ohike*), attended an evening prayer, followed by a welcome celebration.

The next morning, at 3:40 am, the participants reverently greeted the fifth Konko-Sama's procession to the Main Worship Hall (*Odemashi*), then attended morning prayer at the Founder's gravesite. This was followed by *Saiso* cleaning, *Arigato* exercise, breakfast and a faith enrichment workshop, where participants shared their own faith stories. The second day came to a close with a Konkokyo Establishment Day Service, which commemorates the receiving of the Divine Call for the Founder to devote himself to mediation, which is considered the founding of the Konko Faith. The service concluded with a rousing cheer and affirmation of the slogan, "Back to the Day! Inspiring the future!"

The participants said, "It was easy to feel the presence of Kami at this Sacred Site." "I felt reverence for the sacred ground I stood upon and connected by faith to this original place." "I have gotten much encouragement from the opinions of other Konko believer's from other countries." "First and foremost, I would like to truly and deeply thank our Founder for accepting the Divine Call."

The official Konkokyo Establishment Day Service will be held in conjunction with the 160th Anniversary of the Divine Call next year and the 5th Konko International Gathering will be held during the same year as well.



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