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Reverend Okanari's lecture in Osaka

The Way of the Universe and Ikigami Konko Daijin's Toritsugi Mediation

by Konkokyo Chief Administrative Director

Commemorating the 200th year since our Founder's physical birth, the Reverend Toshimasa Okanari, the Konkokyo Chief Administrative Director lectured at thirteen church districts in Japan. This is one of the major activities in Konkokyo for this year. The objectives of this activity are to learn about and discuss the significance of Ikigami Konko Daijin's Toritsugi Mediation and with a newfound understanding, be innovative and invigorate future activities in our churches and organization.

The following is a summary of the lecture titled, "The Way of the Universe and Ikigami Konko Daijin's Toritsugi Mediation – Realize (Learn it), Practice (Live it) & Reveal (Share it)"

I. Receiving The Third Konko-Sama's Faith Today

Last year we celebrated the 50th Memorial Year of the late Reverend Setsutane Konko (our Third Konko-Sama.) Since then, we have become familiar with our senior ministers who revered the Third Konko-Sama.

When the Third Konko-Sama was 24, he attended the 5th Industrial Exposition in Osaka. On his way home, he visited Osaka Church and Namba Church. In his greetings, he merely said: "I heard that the difference between one who practices faith and one who does not, can be likened to that of a child with parents vs. a child without parents."

A senior minister contemplated the meaning of these words. He wondered why Konko-Sama would say this knowing that everyone has parents. One day he finally realized that a parent becomes a parent only when his/her child realizes the parent's kindness/favor. Therefore, the difference between those who practice faith and those who do not, depends upon whether they know the favor of the Divine Parent or not. With this realization, the senior minister deeply understood the true value of practicing Konko Faith.

I would like to share a true story. There were two elderly women having a conversation. One was a Konko believer while the other was not. The Konko believer said to her friend, "I was also able to take a bath yesterday, and each day, I thanked Kami-Sama for allowing the weariness to fade away." Then, her friend replied, "I can understand how good you felt after taking a bath, but why did you need to thank Kami?"

There are two types of people in the world; those who receive blessings by practicing faith, understand the favor of Tenchi the Universe, and express appreciation. Then there are those who complain, are materialistic, and forget about Kami and the Universe. I was made to discover the difference between "a child with parents and one without."

The previous teaching is exactly what our Founder said: "Kami is Kami because of people, and people are people because of Kami."(The Divine Call) In other words, when a person realizes the divine favor bestowed by Kami, Kami becomes the Divine Parent to that person, for the first time, and Kami's workings can be revealed through that person to

the world. Through Kami's workings, Kami's children can seek the Way as "people are because of Kami." Thus, those who practice faith differ from those who do not.

In August 1936, the Third Konko-Sama delivered the following words:

"The matters of Tenchi the Universe are beyond human power. To have faith in Kami means knowing that above all else, having patience is most important. Our Founder abandoned his selfish desires and accepted to be a Toritsugi Mediator. Shijin-Sama (the Second Konko-Sama) had succeeded this selfless service, sitting day and night for ten years. After his early passing, I, who knew nothing, was told that it was easy and started sitting at the Mediation Seat. Early on, it was so difficult that I often cried. However, while I cried and sat patiently, I kept my parent's teachings in my mind. Then, without even noticing it, things that I wanted and thoughts that I had, disappeared. My heart was filled with nothing but gratitude. No matter how many times I give thanks, I cannot express by appreciation enough. All I can say is that I am sorry for not expressing enough appreciation. I feel so grateful."

When I read the Third Konko-Sama's words "Early on, it was so difficult ... I sat patiently," I thought that it must have been so painful for him to sit at the Mediation Seat, day-after-day. However, the Reverend Chikayuki Tsumura (the second son of Reverend Miyotaro Konko, a younger brother of the Third Konko-Sama) shared the following:

"The Third Konko-Sama encountered hardships about every ten years. However, he overcame such difficult experiences and developed a true faith. First of all, at the age of 14, he lost his father. It must have been an unbearable sorrow for a child to lose his parent at such an early age. Ten years later, he lost his beloved wife. Furthermore, ten years after that, he lost his mother. Another ten years after that the Grand Mediation Hall and his house were burnt down. Nine years later, in 1934-35, the Third Konko-Sama was the innocent victim of a malicious scandal in a series of documents disseminated at that time. While this incident was taking place, he lost his second son, Mishinosuke at the age of 23. Then eleven years later, he witnessed Japan's defeat in World War II."



Reverend Setsutane Konko (our Third Konko-Sama.)

Taking these series of hardships into consideration, we can grasp how earnestly and wholeheartedly the Third Konko-Sama continued to serve for Toritsugi Mediation, as he stated, "Please allow me to keep receiving the Divine Parent's teachings." Then, he mentioned that his heart was filled entirely of gratitude. I find that the Third Konko-Sama serving at Toritsugi Mediation with such a grateful heart to be very awe inspiring.

I am sure that so many senior ministers practiced faith and received Toritsugi Mediation from the Third Konko-Sama (who expressed his deep appreciation). I would like to introduce a story about the Reverend Manabu Nakamura (Head Minister of the Soeda Church, Fukuoka, Japan). Presently, he is 91 years old.

In 1943, a student mobilization order made Reverend Nakamura join the army. He was 20 years old, but he had a gastric ulcer at that time. However, he continued his training while enduring the pain. One day, during training, he lost consciousness while marching and he was hospitalized. After he was discharged to his church, he visited Amagi Church with his father. When his father explained the situation during Toritsugi Mediation, the Reverend Matsutaro Yasutake said, "He has received blessings." The young Nakamura thought, "What on earth is he saying that I 'received blessings' while I am suffering here on my sickbed?!"

During Reverend Nakamura's army hospitalization, a soldier told him that the ship carrying all of his crew members was torpedoed off Taiwan's shores. The soldier told him that he was lucky.

Hearing this, Reverend Nakamura suffered even more. Filled with anguish, he left the army and entered the Konkoyo Seminary. After graduation, Reverend Nakamura returned to his church and became a schoolteacher. However, his gastric ulcer flared up when he worked at the school. After resigning as a schoolteacher and returning to church, he recovered. When he went back and forth between the school and church several times, his health condition worsened.

During that time, his friend, Reverend Noboru Sato, sent him a letter.

"Last December, I received Konko-Sama's Toritsugi Mediation and I said, 'I would like to have Manabu Nakamura the Assistant Chairperson for the Young Ministers

Federation.' But I received no word from Konko-Sama. I made a second request in the New Year. But, Konko-Sama did not reply. I don't know what to do."

Reverend Nakamura responded to this letter. In his letter, he explained the situation. Then Reverend Sato sent back another letter, which said, "I now understand. Konko-Sama is praying for your health. It is something to be grateful for, isn't it?" Having read this letter, Reverend Nakamura was surprised and thought, "Konko-Sama is even praying for such an unworthy person like me. I never told Konko-Sama about my gastric ulcer. Yet, Konko-Sama has prayed for me." Tears fell and he gave thanks and apologized from his sickbed. Gradually, he recovered. He started to receive blessings by being aware that he has been receiving Konko-Sama's prayer.

Later, Reverend Nakamura visited Honbu and received Konko-Sama's Toritsugi Mediation. Then Konko-Sama said, "It is better to serve for the Young Minister's Federation." No words could describe Reverend Nakamura's gratitude.

Reverend Nakamura reflected: "Tens of thousands of believers visit Honbu during the Grand Services and Konko-Sama prayed for them. I thought that he prayed for them all as a group. However, he has prayed individually for every believer whose name was written in his notebook. I am also aware that the Founder and our Divine Parent pray at the same time through Konko-Sama." Then, he said that he deeply apologized for his past thoughts.

Reverend Nakamura's story made me realize that I am receiving Konko-Sama's prayers. I also felt grateful to be aware of it. So many ministers realized Konko-Sama's prayers, received blessings, and served Kami. And, I also received blessings to serve for Kami's workings.

Prayers in this Way of Faith started by our Founder, continue on by the later generations of Konko-Samas at the Main Toritsugi Mediation Hall and all ministers at local churches. Within the prayers, our Way of Faith exists, as do



we. Therefore, it is important to be aware of and deepen the awareness of "The blessings of this Way of Faith."

2. Receive the Founder's Steps to Paving the Way

Next, I will talk about important steps to pave the Way for "Ikigami Konko Daijin's Toritsugi Mediation." These three treasures are "Offering Prayers," "Teachings of the Way of Tenchi No Kami" and "Upholding the Ikigami Konko Daijin community."

First, I will talk about prayers. There is a teaching, "In this faith you are saved not by chanting prayers, but by listening to the teachings," (GIII: NAIDEN, 6) yet what did the Founder think about prayers?

On January 1, 1858, the Founder set up a new home altar and offered prayers every morning and night. Then he received "a hand divination" and "speech divination." In September, Kami told him to do training during autumn. Kami also directed the Founder to offer prayers at the Worship Hall upon awakening, change clothes, and go work in the fields barefoot. He finished his "barefoot training" in the winter. However, "Offering Prayers" became the starting point for the Founder to concentrate on his sacred tasks and earnestly continue to pursue the meaning of it as his important life's work.

On January 1, 1860, the year following "The Divine Call," Kami instructed the Founder to make a list of devout worshippers which was called "Shinmon-cho" and to record their names, year of birth, and addresses. Then Kami told the Founder to change the name of "Shinmon-cho" into "The Daily Record Book" on worshippers, called "Negainushi Toshigaki Oboe-cho." Use of this prayer book allowed the Founder to develop the prayers he offered up to Kami. Offering prayers through the use of "The Daily Record Book" for worshippers spread to each Konko Church throughout the world. This way of offering individualized personal prayers differs greatly from other ways of praying, such as chanting



set prayers. It is unique to the Konko Faith.

Following the history of the Founder's prayers, we can clarify the meaning of one passage in the "Divine Message" of 1873, "Tenchi Kane No Kami has sent Ikigami Konko Daijin to the people to give blessings and teachings." In other words, "giving blessings to the people" is based on Mediators offering prayers using "The Daily Record Book" which includes the worshippers' requests. Moreover, this means that according to the Founder, Kami has confirmed the importance of praying deeply, which is an important element of Toritsugi Mediation. To continue on, what does "To give teachings" mean?

The answer lies in one divine message on July, 1872, "Uphold the Ikigami Konko Daijin community which spreads the Way of Tenchi No Kami." That is – Kami gives people "the Way of Tenchi No Kami." "Tenchi No Kami" is also called "Nittenshi, Gattenshi, and Ushitora hitsujisaru Kimon Kane No Kami." "The Way" means the path one should follow.

There is one noteworthy book called *OMICHI ANNAI*, A Guide to the Faith, written in 1871 by the first Reverend Shinichiro Shirakami. It was the first document written to spread the Konko Faith.

Reverend Shirakami, who had adhered to traditional Japanese beliefs in the workings and the will of heaven, received divine blessings for his recovery from blindness through the Founder's Toritsugi Mediation. Then he was led to "The Way of Tenchi No Kami." This experience drastically altered his way of life. His amazement and joy inspired him to leave the lively messages of the meaning of the Founder's existence, stating the four inevitable things in human life – "birth, aging, sickness, and death" are all in "the ground which belongs to Konjin" and "Everybody receives divine blessings from Tenchi No Kami day and night. However, I have never heard of any shrine for Tenchi No Kami anywhere in Japan."

The Founder's Toritsugi Mediation affected Reverend Shirakami so deeply that he could not help writing about it in his book A Guide to the Faith. Kami's divine messages such as, "Uphold the Ikigami Konko Daijin community" and "Though they live between Heaven and Earth, people are unaware of Kami's blessings."

Despite living between the Workings of Heaven and Earth, people are unaware of their divine blessings and thus "encounter hardships due to their accumulated offenses." Therefore, "Tenchi Kane No Kami has sent Ikigami Konko Daijin to the people to give blessings and teachings." That is the significance of "Kami's wish and the Toritsugi Mediation

of Ikigami Konko Daijin."

Next, I will talk about the faith community serving the Toritsugi Mediation of Ikigami Konko Daijin called "Upholding" the "Ikigami Konko Daijin community."

After the Kami Altar was removed in 1873, the sacred tasks at the Founder's worship hall had gradually been restricted to harsh circumstances.

Under these conditions, a movement arose among the local people to legitimize having sacred tasks conducted at the worship hall. A petition to approve the Founder's engagement of his sacred tasks was submitted to the Okayama Prefectural Office.

However, Kami stated, "The followers thought that requesting the certification would please Me, but I am not pleased."(OBOECHO: 20, 23)

Here, Kami seems to have a stern view of what it is to uphold the "Ikigami Konko Daijin community."

The Founder has said, "Even if I, Konko Daijin, go astray, Kami may dismiss me." This means "if I go astray" based on Kami's will. The Founder also said, "People may think it is good, but Kami is not always pleased." Although people may think something is good, it does not necessarily mean Kami will also be pleased with it. To be "dismissed" means that Kami may end one's divine virtue given.

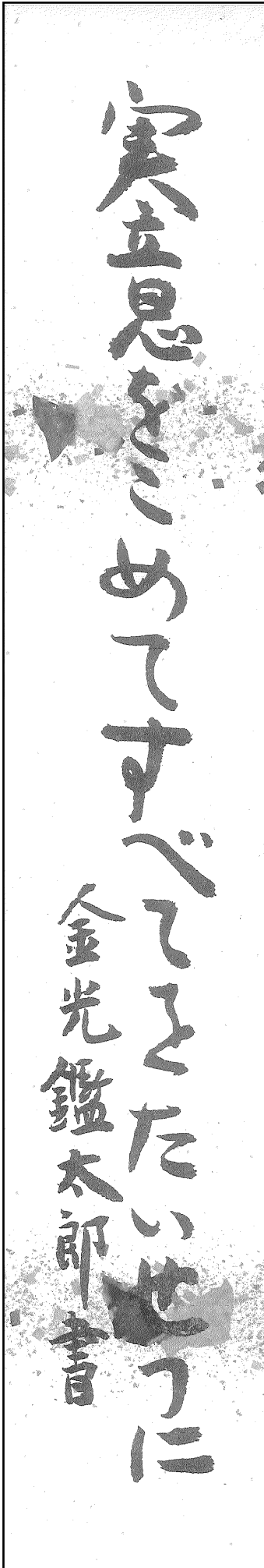
Within such a harsh world, the Founder, alone, tried to live a devoted life whereby Kami's divine virtue had shined through, and Kami praised him with these words, "Konko Daijin works for the benefit of both Kami and people." (GIII: KONKO KYOSO GORIKAI, 4)

How will we incorporate this in our lives today? It is not a matter of whether we can or cannot live in this way, but by pursuing and practicing it, Kami will be pleased and the divine virtue will shine brightly.

This is the way of Konko Faith and senior ministers experienced how severe it was. They always admonished themselves and overcame many hardships. From here on, it is important that we receive divine blessings to succeed their will.

In conclusion, let us return to today's theme. I would like to raise a question.

1.Regarding the "Way of Tenchi No Kami," all living beings are given life within Tenchi No Kami's divine workings. It is the world of Tenchi No Kami's divine blessings to fundamentally support the vast world between Heaven and Earth and to cover it entirely at the same time. Those individuals who know about "the Way of the Universe" should walk on the path of the "Way of Tenchi No Kami."



2.This is how the Founder has developed the Toritsugi Mediation of Ikigami Konko Daijin. The basic point of Ikigami Konko Daijin's Toritsugi Mediation is to let all people who suffer from many hardships because they are unaware that they are Kami's beloved child, know about the world of divine blessings between Heaven and Earth. With regard to the Third Konko-Sama's words: "The difference between those who have faith and those who do not can be likened to the difference between children who have parents and those who do not," let people without faith know of the divine workings between Heaven and Earth and Kami's favors. Let them become children who truly have parents by meeting an eternal parent. Furthermore, in order to develop Ikigami Konko Daijin's Toritsugi Mediation through a combination of prayers and teachings, we have to pursue a practice of "Realizing (or Learning it)", "Training (or Living it)", and "Revealing (or Sharing it)." By so doing, we will deepen our relationship with Kami.

3.By proceeding with this way of Toritsugi Mediation, Kami's divine virtue will shine more brightly.

In each person's life, the world of salvation will be broadened, "This (Toritsugi Mediation) will help Kami and save people." As a result, the "Way of Tenchi No Kami" will be realized in human life. This is Kami's wish. Those who dedicate themselves to realize this as the first disciples of Konko Daijin are required to live consistently in reverence to Kami, no matter what the circumstance. Ikigami Konko Daijin's Toritsugi Mediation carries both severe and valuable aspects.

4.The Second Konko-Sama, who succeeded the Founder's Faith, realized and strictly adhered to his sacred tasks, as stated above. Meanwhile, the Third Konko-Sama practiced faith with sincerity, conscientiousness, discretion and patience. Born within him was a heart that "Could not say 'thank you' enough."

The Fourth Konko-Sama said "Take care of everything with sincerity and wholeheartedness." He always emulated the Third Konko-Sama's ways in his sacred tasks, as well as his daily life.

The present Konko-Sama always follows his parent's faith and preserves his parent's ways of doing his sacred tasks. He has set an example for us to follow "The Way of Kami and People" on the occasion of the 150th anniversary of Konkokyo's establishment. The present movement began in this way. We are continuing on with this movement.

From the basic view of what is Ikigami Konko Daijin's Toritsugi Mediation, which the generations of Konko-Samas, the Founder's disciples and theirs, in turn, have pursued since the Founder had developed Toritsugi Mediation, we would like to seek from each other "How should Konkokyo and its churches be in the future? How do we want to be in the future?"

*The reason why the divine name is not written as "Tenchi Kane No Kami," but as "Tenchi No Kami" is due to a quotation from "The Divine Call" of 1859.

→ The Fourth Konko-Sama's handwritten words "Take care of everything with sincerity and wholeheartedness."

An Establishment Commemorative Service of Konko Propagation Hall of Osasco Held

In August of last year, the Reverend Carlos Frederico Hasselmann Martins established the Konko Propagation hall of Osasco in São Paulo, Brazil. In March 30 of this year, the establishment commemorative service of Konko Propagation Hall of Osasco was held. The Reverend Martins told his aspiration as, "After this, at this Propagation Hall, I would like to do outreach of the Konko



Faith in Portuguese to the Brazilian people. I will deal with questioning and request through E-mail from now on too. I would like to have the opportunity to communicate with the other religions as well. In general, Brazilians do not have a custom to worship at their home; therefore, I will grapple with building a foundation of the church with which everybody can come and worship freely in the future."

Konkokyo Peace Gathering Held in Taiwan

A Konkokyo Peace Gathering was held on May 28 at the Houkakuzenji temple in Taichung City, Taiwan, where 51 participants prayed sincerely for world peace. Taiwan Peaceful Gathering Executive Committee, organized by some believers of the Konkokyo North-Kyushu District, had worked on planning this gathering since the previous year. A Memorial Service was held in the Japanese tomb and in front



of the Reian Kokyo monument honoring deceased Japanese soldiers and Taiwanese World War II civilian employees. Mr. Takao Saita, the executive director of this committee, said, "I have been wishing for and planning to have this gathering ever since I learned about the monument five years ago. Through this opportunity, I sincerely hope this will be a way toward world peace."



Various Events in Each Region Commemorating 200th Birth Year of the Founder

North America

This year's KCNA Conference was held in Toronto, Canada on the dates of Friday, August 8, to Sunday, August 10. This year's keynote speaker, Reverend Motoo Tanaka, Osaki Church, Tokyo, Japan. This year's theme, "Let us receive Kami's blessings and unconditional love; living a joyful life of appreciation," gives us a great opportunity to connect with others from across the continent, but this year we want more than just a weekend of educational discussions. Our goal is for believers of all ages to renew their appreciation of our faith and keep that experience after they return home.

Hawaii

Celebrating the 200th Birthday of our Founder, the Konko Missions in Hawaii determined the 2014 activities with the objectives to learn about the history of Konko Daijin, and how Konko Daijin's faith came to Hawaii through our ministers. To enrich our faith, we plan to visit Headquarters for one week in October. In addition, the Reverend Michio Ide, Yukuhashi Church, Fukuoka, Japan, was invited to be the guest speaker for our Conference and Ministers' Gathering in June. The Reverend Ide with his insight of the Konko Faith gave us a huge impact on our ministers and members in Hawaii.

