



# KONKO MISSION BULLETIN

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*The following is an English translation of an article found in "Aiyokakeyo" magazine published on December 1, 2012. The article is a summarized edition of an interview with Mrs. Toshiko Kitagaki when she made a pilgrimage to the Headquarters Church. The English translation is provided by Yasuhiro Yano.*

## **Blessed encounter with the Konko faith**

*Mrs. Toshiko Kitagaki, who is a representative of Nishi Kinki District of Zenkoku Shinto Josei Network, aged 65 and belongs to the Konko Church of Himeji Nishi, encountered with the Konko faith through her husband who believed in the Konko faith. She was born in Miyazaki. The family was Buddhist oriented. The first husband was Catholic. After the marriage she became baptized. But in three years after the marriage, her husband passed away. She remarried to the second husband who was involved in the practice of the Konko faith. The husband also passed away in five years. But she got involved in the practice of the Konko faith through her husband. Her husband used to provide transportation to the Head Minister of the church for the monthly pilgrimage to the Headquarters Church in Konko Town. She also followed her husband for the tradition for the minister. She expressed her deep appreciation for her encounter to the Konko faith. An interview was conducted by Ms. Tokuko Tsuji at the waiting room under the Main Worship Hall at the Headquarters Church at Konko Town.*

I met my first husband at my work place in Osaka. The wedding ceremony was held at a Shinto Shrine in Sakai City.

The father in law who lived in Nagasaki stated, "I do not accept your marriage held at a Shinto Shrine because we are Catholics." We held another wedding ceremony at a Catholic church in Nagasaki.

When I was expecting the first child who reached four months, the father in law demanded me to get Baptized at the church the family members got involved in Nagasaki. I moved to the house in Nagasaki alone. The minister of the church taught me about the Catholic tradition in such a manner that an elementary student learned the basics of learning. In one month, I got baptized and converted into the Catholic faith.

But my husband got an illness in three years and passed away suddenly. My daughter was just one year and eight months old. I returned to my native house in Miyazaki with my daughter.

While I was living in my native house, my younger brother who worked at the company operated by my elder sister in Osaka, made a visit to the house with his fellow worker for fishing. I jokingly spoke, "I wonder if

there can be any person who would marry me." It really was just a joke. But he took that word seriously and proposed to get married with me. I was really surprised at the development.

I explained him that I had gotten involved in the Catholic practice and had a daughter. He responded to my expressed thought, "I am a believer of the Konko faith. I believe it would be all right to disregard the difference of religious faith. It would be all right if both husband and wife have different religious faiths."

We agreed to get married. He sent weekly letters and presents of dolls for my daughter. Several months later, he came to meet us. Upon his arrival, my daughter responded to him by saying, "Welcome home Otosan." I really was shocked by this. Her biological father died when she was one year and eight months old, she had no memories about her father. She regarded the person who continued to send dolls as her real father.

I prayed to the statue of Virgin Mary and had a rosary. My second husband put up his revered "Tenchi Kakitsuke" (Divine Reminder) in a frame on the same sacred table. We built a triangular table at the corner of the room. At one side, the framed "Tenchi Kakitsuke" and "sakaki" twigs were placed, and at the other end of the table, the statue of Virgin Mary and flowers were placed. I extended my prayer to both sides of the mini altars every morning. My husband didn't say anything about the practice. My husband was raised by his aunty who was involved in the practice of the faith at the Konko Church of Shinjuku in Tokyo. He also used to attend church with his aunty.

When my daughter reached the age of three, we discussed the tradition of visitation to a Shinto Shrine in celebration of the age reached.

My husband said, "Let us celebrate the three year age tradition at the Konko Church." I agreed to his opinion. We were not actively involved in any church in those days. We tried to find a church in the area through the telephone directory. The first Konko Church came into our attention was the Konko Church of Himeji Nishi.

At that moment I sensed that my husband might have expressed his exclamation in joy. He spoke, "Let's try to believe in one Kami-Sama for our family." I married into the Kitagaki family and felt convinced that I should follow the religious tradition of the family. I related the circumstance to the priest of the Catholic Church. The minister responded it was all right for the termination of the belief in Catholic tradition. I gave up the rosary and other items to the church.

Through the three year old celebration of my daughter at the Konko church, we have become more deeply involved in the practice of the faith. We also attend the seasonal Grand Services. I had no knowledge about the

Konko faith tradition. I learned from the very basics of how I got involved in the practice of faith.

My daughter fully enjoyed deep parental love and grew up to be a good adult. We had to tell her the fact about the adoptive father when she got engaged to marry.

We had some worries how my daughter would react to be informed about the adoptive father. We showed her a copy of the family registry and explained that her biological father died of illness. We felt at ease in witnessing her acceptance of the fact.

My daughter revealed at one time, she felt something was wrong when she overheard a conversation among the relatives who said, "She looks more like the other side." She asked them, "What do you mean by the other side?"

When I was engaged in sales business of an insurance company, the family doctor recommended me to a colonoscopic examination since I reached the age of 50. I refused the recommendation by saying I have passed the regular stools examination and gastroscopy examinations. But the doctor persistently recommended me to take the exam when I made the monthly visit for one year. At one time I refused to take the exam by saying, "I will never take the examination. If I would take the exam, I will ask another doctor for the exam. I feel so uncomfortable to expose my private parts to a familiar doctor." The doctor got angry and stated, "Kitagaki-san, even if you come to see me for help when you get a cold, I will refuse to give you any treatment."

I went to see the minister at the church and related the matter at the Toritsugi-Mediation Desk. The minister recommended to take the exam. I could no longer refuse to take the exam.

The doctor found four polyps. Three of them turned out malignant. The doctor sent me to a highly reputed surgeon to remove the polyps. The doctor who removed the polyps stated, "If you took the exam one year before, the polyps could not be identified. If you would take the exam next year, it could be impossible to remove. You took the exam at the opportune time." I thanked Kami for the miraculous arrangements for the circumstance. The minister stated, "I believe the reason your family doctor so persistently recommended to take the exam could be a divine message for you." In blessedness, I have been in good health for all those years.

One day he experienced some discomfort of his body and went to see the doctor. The gastroscopic examination showed advanced stomach cancer. The whole stomach was removed. While he in the hospital, he reached the age of 64. His grandchildren and other family members got together beside the bed and celebrated his birthday. I commuted daily from the house to the hospital to take care of my husband the whole day till he went to sleep at night. After he was discharged from the hospital, he continued to be admitted to the hospital from time to time. Nine months later since the initial hospitalization, he passed away. This was 5 years ago from now.

When he was around 40 years old, he worked at a sewer system construction site. While he was

digging a hole for the manhole construction, the wall of the ground collapsed and he was trapped in mud. He responded to the situation by shouting out "Konko-Sama, please help me." He was thankfully able to find a hole in the sewer pipe and could breathe air until the rescue crew arrived. It was a divine miracle.

He could have died at that occasion. I feel convinced in gratefulness that Kami-Sama helped him to continue to live till the age of 64.

I have gotten involved in the practice of faith at the Konko Church of Himeji Nishi for 36 years. I feel so grateful in witnessing three grandchildren of two of my children also made a visit in celebration of their three year old ceremony.

The minister's wife expressed, "I have been extending my prayers for the wellbeing of your children even before they got married and being blessed with children. I am so happy to see them all attending their three-year-old." I felt overwhelmed with the feeling of gratefulness for her kind words and extended prayers for us. When the second eldest daughter's child made a visit for the rite of three year old celebration, the Head Minister held her in her arms and extended a prayer in front of the Mitama altar by stating, "Let's try to greet your grandfather. He must want to celebrate your special three year birthday."

My granddaughters have been practicing Kibimai sacred dance at the church. At first, they were reluctant to practice the dance. But they responded to the encouraging words, "Your grandfather will be happy to see you dancing." Now they happily practice the dance. They sometimes show childish responses in such manners as to say, "We are too tired. We want some sweets." But the church community people help them to enjoy practicing the Kibimai dance.

I have been enjoying a fulfilling life in seeing sound growth of my grandchildren and help accompanying the minister for his regular pilgrimages to the Headquarters Church and some other functions.

### **Konko-Sama Says . . .**

Few have a heart that Kami can accept. Those whose hearts can be accepted by Kami will be blessed with good health, wealth, and wisdom for three generations, resulting in a strong family lineage. Those whose hearts are not accepted by Kami may have wealth as well as wisdom, but will get sick. Those who have wisdom and good health will lose their wealth. If they do not lose their wealth, their beloved children will die, leaving no heirs. Since these people are not aware of Kami's blessings, they are always lacking one thing or another. If you practice faith and understand Kami's blessings, you will live a peaceful and stable life. You will have descendants and gain wealth. You will receive divine blessings from year to year, and then from generation to generation. (III Konko Kyoso Gorikai 78).

## Bulletin Board

### 1<sup>st</sup> International Sand Scribing

A symbolic 1<sup>st</sup> International Sand Scribing session was held at the beach near the Sharks Cove in North Shore on Sunday afternoon on February 3. Rev. Drs. Leon & Linda Webber who just arrived to enjoy the annual Hawaii Spiritual Retreat from Alaska initiated this fun yet deeply spiritual event. Revs. Yasuhiro and Reiko Yano enjoyed the program with the Webber's friends from Maine as well.

### 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Konkokyo Tokiwadai

The 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration Service of the Konkokyo Tokiwadai in Tokyo will be observed on Monday, February 11 from 1:30 p.m. through 5:00 p.m. The church was founded by the Rev. Michio Miyake from Konko Church of Izuo in Osaka. The Rev. Yasuhiro Yano will be attending the function.

### Volunteer Activity at Wahiawa General Hospital

The monthly volunteer activity at the same facility will be held on Friday, February 15 at 10:00 a.m. Your participation to the program will be very much appreciated.

### KMH General Meeting

The annual meeting of Konko Missions in Hawaii will be held on Saturday, February 16 from 1:30 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. at the Konko Mission of Honolulu.

## Honoring Mitama Spirits

### February

Umi Yasuyo	2/3/1965
Ichiro Yano	2/5/2006
Dennis Fujio Tamashiro	2/6/1998
Thomas Takahashi	2/9/2005
Rev. Yukio Hiramoto	2/10/2012
Yoshiyuki Momotomi	2/10/2003
Mildred Chiyoko Oka	2/12/2004
Jiro Oho	2/14/1937
Elisa Albarran	2/20/1977
Marilynn Olsen	2/22/2009
Suetsuki Toyofuku	2/24/1995



The 15<sup>th</sup> Memorial Service for the Late Mr. Dennis Fujio Tamashiro, who passed away on February 6, 1998, will be held on Wednesday, February 6 at 10:00 a.m. at the Wahiawa Church.

*If you wish to have a name added to the church Mitama listing or removed, please contact Rev. Yasuhiro Yano.*

## Insight into the teachings in “Tenchi wa Kataru” or “Voice of the Universe”

*The followings are excerpts of series of an English translation of “Tenchi wa Kataru—Kanwa-shu” or “Compilation of Insight into the teachings in the Voice of the Universe” which contains 400 selected teachings from the original “Konkokyo Kyoten” or the “Konkokyo Scriptures.” Three authors, namely, the Revs. Mikio Seto, Yasushi Hata and Matsutaro Kōsaka contributed the insightful articles. The translation is provided by Yasuhiro Yano. (Reference pages 34, 35 and 36)*

### No. 34

**Kami has more concern for those with less faith. Practice faith and receive divine blessings. (III Konko Kyoso Gorikai 8, Kyoten page 779)**

**Kami has more concern for those with less faith.**

This message shows much deeper divine love in such a manner that Kami has more concern for those with less faith, compared to the message in the previous page that stated, “The more people do not understand Kami’s heart, the more compassion Kami will have.” The expression of “bu-shinjin” in the original Japanese implies not just those people who have little concern for the practice of faith, but also those people who deny the religious involvement and those who might try to disrupt operation of the religious work. How can we understand the divine love that Kami has more concern for those people who show negatively inclined attitudes toward the practice of faith?

The author quite often quotes the religious theory of “Akuni Shouki No Setsu” or “Evil people as the true object of salvation” in comparison to the divine love shown in the quoted teaching. This excellent religious theory implies that “zennin” which literally means good people, can attain Buddhahood, then “akunin” which literally means bad or evil people are also able to attain Buddhahood because “zennin” believe in their own personal power alone, but “akunin” has the heart to rely on the power of Buddha for salvation. “Akunin” can exhibit the very fundamental spirituality to enjoy blessings of the Buddaha.

On the other hand, the message extended by the Founder disregards not only the moral definition of “zennin” and “akunin”, but also embraces even people who stand against the practice of faith. The message holds such an extraordinary nature. Because of the implications of the message, some people may take the message in wrong manners.

There could be some people who may develop a notion that if Kami has more concern for those with less faith, it could be much better to have no faith rather than getting involved in the practice of faith. But such a thought is

totally wrong. The paralleling concept is the previously quoted message that reads, “The more trouble and worry a child causes, the more compassion the parents has.” It does not encourage one to become undutiful to their parents. Children should learn to respond in appreciation of the depth and width of parental love.

In the same manner, we should respond to appreciate the divine love expressed in such a manner that Kami has more concern for those with less faith and try to give fulfillment to Our Divine Parent through our practice of faith. At the same time, we should learn to exercise the heart of Kami within ourselves to interact with others regardless of religious indifference.

#### **No. 35**

**People cannot receive divine blessings because of their lack of faith. They think that there are not divine blessings. To Kami, this is deplorable. (III Jinkyukyogoroku 163, Kyoten pages 972)**

**Kami feels sad in witnessing people who cannot receive divine blessings.**

At one occasion, for some reason, the Founder became overwhelmed with the feeling of deep sorrow, and inquired about the circumstance to Kami. Kami responded, “People cannot receive divine blessings because of their lack of faith. They think that there are no divine blessings. This makes Me sad.” The deep sorrow the Founder experienced was an exact reflection of Kami.

The ultimate divine will for us is to witness a fulfilling life of each and every beloved child. Despite the extended divine love, we have not been fulfilled. There are so many people who have little awareness of the existing divine love and remain unfulfilled. Kami has been waiting for us to become awakened to learn to appreciate the extended divine love and get blessed through our single-hearted prayer for help. Kami has been tormented in witnessing the confusions and suffering of the beloved children.

Kami has been in deep regret in witnessing such people who blame Kami for their failure to get blessed while they do not try to reflect on themselves and find out their own lack of faith in Kami.

When we speak of “okage” or divine blessings, we have an inclination to expect how Kami would respond to our extended prayers; and prompt answers for the problems encountered. But the vital key to get blessed exists in the heart of “appreciating blessings received.” It would be more vital in identifying blessings we might have already received, rather than placing emphasis on how much blessings we get for the extended prayers. Konko believers who have enjoyed a fulfilling life through enjoyment of blessings received one after another show

the exact nature of how they have been able to identify blessings received in their faith life.

It is not that there are no divine blessings. We will be able to appreciate the existing divine love and find out how we should pursue the faith accordingly if we can identify blessings already received. The moment we reach that state of mind, we are to experience a spiritual awakening and be able to appreciate many blessings we might have taken for granted.

#### **No. 36**

**People say that Kami has deserted them, but Kami never deserts people. People desert Kami. (I Kondo Fujimori 10, Kyoten page 278)**

**Kami never deserts people.**

Some of those people who encountered desperate circumstances despite their devotion to religious faith complain, “Kami has deserted us.” The Rev. Fujimori Kondo might be communicating the similar subject with the Founder. In responding to the expressed thought, Konko-Sama stated, “Kami never deserts people. People desert Kami.”

The statement sounds so serious and points out the truth we might have not been aware of. The message reveals shallow nature of human-oriented perception about Kami. At the same time, we appreciate the truth of the message.

In this manner, there might be many instances similar to the quoted message. What we perceive as the apparent truth can be viewed differently through divine vision. Even if we think we practice faith single-heartedly, there can be some room to be improved through divine vision.

The expression, “Kami has deserted us” tend to be said only by people who have engaged in the practice of faith in such a manner that they practice in many religious faith here and there without any unwavering devotion. Getting engaged in many religious faith casually means that they could not find one definitive deity they can wholly believe in. To those people, Kami may respond, “How could you say Kami has deserted you while you have not shown enough devotion to Me?”

The expression “Kami has deserted us” also implies that the believer could not enjoy fulfillment for his extended prayers for help. It does not necessarily mean that a person who gets unfulfilling results for his extended prayers has failed to receive blessings. Only those people who adhere to a single religious faith wholeheartedly can learn to appreciate true blessings.