



KONKO MISSION BULLETIN

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"Itadakimasu" and "Okagesamade"



By Rev. Yasuhiro Yano
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The Founder Konko Daijin stated, "People have often wondered why a man who is honest and like a kami or Buddha is often afflicted with many misfortunes. There is a difference between a good, honest person who does not do wrong and a person who has received divine blessings through faith" (III Konko Kyoso Gorikai27).

What can be the difference between those who practice faith and get blessed and those who do not practice faith? In my understanding, it would be the presence or absence of acknowledgement and appreciation for the fundamental elements of blessings of sustenance universally given to each and every individual by Kami-Sama or Something Great.

It is a typical Japanese tradition to extend our prayer in appreciation of the food we enjoy; not only during a feast, but even for a glass of water. As I sometimes mention that when you watch a Japanese TV program in which food consumption is shown, they usually press their hands together and say "Itadakimasu" before eating. It is an ingrained element of everyday life in the Japanese culture. The expression of "Itadakimasu" shows the deeply rooted appreciation for the food that is a gift from Kami-Sama to sustain our life, and the good health we can enjoy eating. Also the spirituality of "Itadakimasu" includes appreciation for all the elements, such as the work of Heaven and Earth, the labor of the famers and distributions, the preparations and so forth. In a sense, the spirit of "Itadakimasu" is the basic ingredient of enjoyment of eating.

Eating is the basic element for our sustenance of life. The Founder Konko Daijin said, "We were born into this world to eat" (I Tokunaga Kenji 5-2).

If we can enjoy eating food as usual, it would be the best indicator of our healthy life. Throughout our human existence, we have struggled to secure foods for sustenance. Our family would be able to thrive as long as we can sustain a normal daily food intake in gratitude. If there is any kind of family disharmony, the first obvious signs of disruption are apparent in the way the family members eat. Once we slip into this condition of disharmony, it would be very difficult to regain healthy and happy meal times amongst the family members.

If we can extend our gratitude and appreciation for the food we enjoy, that spirituality would be applied to any other elements in our daily living. Even when we use the bathroom, we can appreciate the toilet, our normal bowel movements and the water we use to flush it.

When we drive a car or ride the bus, we can extend our thanks for our ability to drive and use public transportation and the paved roads.

There is some fundamental awareness for the presence of Kami-Sama in our life and in the lives of the believers who have enjoyed divine blessings through practicing faith. In a sense, those who have faith have always connected to Kami-Sama at any given situation.

The Japanese have also expressed "Okagesamade" or the many visible and invisible elements in our life have contributed to the state of what we are able to enjoy, such as good health, good relationships and good financial standings. We cannot single out one or two elements that have contributed to the state of our wellbeing. Simply saying, we are not fully aware of what elements have helped us, for example, good health. Some people may say because of the good food they eat and healthy lifestyle they maintain, they enjoy good health. But what they believe is just a fraction of what contributes to overall health. Every element both big and small contribute to the state we are in. If people are aware of the infinite elements that have contributed to their good health, the only way to consolidate it into one phrase is to say, "Okagesamade."

Last year in April, I tried to drink noni leaf tea daily to ease my sinus congestion. For some reason, it showed an instant effect. My nose cleared. And I had clear sinuses for about half a year. I said it could be because of the use of noni leaf tea. And for some reason, my nasal congestion returned a half year later. Then I became aware that noni leaf tea alone could not be identified as the reason for my enjoyment of a normal breathing. Many elements both big and small might have contributed to my overall good health, relations and finance and any other blessed elements in life. I just say, "Okagesamade" for any blessings I have enjoyed. As a Konko believer, I would say, "Kami-Sama no Okagede" for any blessings I would be able to identify.

What I have mentioned could be just a fraction of blessings enjoyed through my engagement in the practice of Konko faith.

Many people in East Asia observe the Days and Directions which is part of the social norm also in Japan. On certain days, they do not hold wedding ceremonies and funeral services because the message in observance of Days and Directions dictates in such a manner.

These are typical elements of normal life in Japan. But when we see those traditions through the perspective of the Konko faith, we have been quite unaware of the blessings of Kami that can affect us negatively. Or we could have been offended Kami unknowingly.

Both expressions of "Itadakimasu" and "Okagesamade" have something in common. Both expressions are based on conscious awareness of the universal work of Something Great, Some Supreme Being. In Konko faith, we say "Tenchi Kane No Kami" or the Divine Parent of the Universe.

The 4th Konko-Sama, the late Rev. Kagamitaro Konko used the expression of "*Sewani naru subeteni rei wo iu kokoro, heiwa umidasu kokoro to iwan*" or the heart of expressing thanks for any and all elements in the whole world would be the heart that brings forth peace.

A simple act of mindfulness in saying, "Itadakimasu" and "Okagesamade" will surely change our life to the better and learn to appreciate the message "People have often wondered why a man who is honest and like a kami or Buddha is often afflicted with many misfortunes. There is a difference between a good, honest person who does not do wrong and a person who has received divine blessings through faith" (III Konko Kyoso Gorikai27).

Konko-Sama Says . . .

When practicing faith, there are more blessings which cannot be seen than those which can be seen. The blessings you unknowingly number more than the blessings you knowingly receive. If you think about it, you will come to realize the many divine blessings that you have received. If you can do this, you are a true believer. (II Tsugawa Haruo 14)

Some people have decided to serve the Faith by conveying truthful teachings. If there were such people in each town and village, this Faith would spread easily. (I Kondo Fujimori 80)

Those who are able to live due to Tenchi Kane No Kami's blessings are in between two mirrors. Kami sees all good and bad things that are reflected in the mirrors. You must practice faith and have a sincere heart. (Yamamoto Sadajiro 3)

Bulletin Board

Monthly Services for June, 2019

1 Sat -Monthly Service for Ikigami Konko Daijin (7:30 pm)

2 Sun -Sunday Service (9 am)

7 Fri -Garage sale preparation (9 am)

8 Sat -Garage sale (9 am to 2 pm)

9 Sun -Monthly Service, Ikigami Konko Daijin (9 am)

16 Sun -Sunday Service (9 am)

23 Sun -Monthly Memorial Service (9 am)

30 Sun -Sunday Service (9 am)

-1st Rotary Hanashikai Gathering @Wahiawa Church (10:30 am to 1:30 pm). Curry and rice will be served for lunch.

July 2019

1 Mon -Monthly Service for Tenchi Kane No Kami (7:30 pm)

6 Sat -9th Summer Ohana Camp at Camp HR Erdman (till 7th)

Rotary Hanashikai Gathering

We will be holding the first Rotary Hanashikai Gathering after nearly two decades of pause on Sunday, June 30 from 10:00 am to 1:30 pm. The main purpose of this revived meeting is to provide an opportunity to get together and share episodes of blessings and to broaden our sense of the Konko faith community in Hawaii. We extended our invitation to our neighbor island church members as well. Lunch of curry and rice will be served. Please join the meeting and enjoy exchanges of thoughts and foods.

Volunteer Activity

The regular monthly visit to the Wahiawa General Hospital Long-Term Care Facility will be made on Friday, June 14, 2019 at 10:00 a.m.

HCRP Meeting

The Hawaii Conference of Religions for Peace will hold the regular meeting on Monday, June 24, 2019 at Palolo Hongwanji Temple at 1:30 p.m.

KMH Meetings

The KMH Community Engagement and Outreach Committee Meeting will be held at Konko Mission of Honolulu on Friday, June 21 at 1:00 p.m.

Honoring the Mitama Spirits

June

Nancie Chieno Ooyama	6/3/2013
Katherine Sumiko Araki	6/5/2013
Clara Kimiko Hiromasa	6/10/2014
Florence Tamaribuchi	6/10/1997
Edith Suzuyo Noguchi	6/14/2014
Harry Ching	6/19/2007
Matsu Suzuki	6/2008

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 following 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 Matsutarō Kōsaka contributed the insightful articles. The translation is provided by Yasuhiro Yano. (Reference pages 380, 381 and 382)

No. 380: Since Kami gives Konko Daijin teachings and tells him to convey them to other people, Koko Daijin does so. Listen to those teachings and tell them to children and other people. If just one of those people discovers how blessed Kami is and begins to practice faith, Kami will rejoice. And you will also be helping to serve Kami.

(II Yamamoto Sadajiro 6-6, 7 Kyoten page 717-718)

Spread the messages to others

Sadajiro Yamamoto had numerous occasions to listen to the Founder. He listened to the messages so intently and tried to preserve many long stories from the Founder. It was evidently shown that the Founder repeatedly conveyed the message, "Man is the lord of all living things" to Sadajiro.

The quoted message is only a partial excerpt from much longer original message. The Founder began to talk by saying, "Man is the lord of all living things, thus he is to recognize good and bad. Do you think all living things can survive the hottest days

of summer by their own strength? Think about this and come to realize the blessedness of Kami-Sama. Even when you cannot stand the intense heat, Kami-Sama will inform you whether or not you can live healthily. At such times, put your hand on your belly. You will find it to be cool. Tenchi Kane No Kami-Sama will cool your belly amid the scorching heat outside. This goes for not only man, but for dogs and cattle as well. If you think about this, you will understand how Kami-Sama protects. If your belly is hot, you must be careful. During the bitter cold winter, Kami will warm your belly and make you comfortable. When you can no longer stand the cold, sit on a futon blanket to get warm. In these ways, Kami-Sama protects during the four seasons. If you practice faith only to cure the pain, you will stop practicing faith after giving thanks for being cured. Even today, many have come and said thank you, and gone home. These people won't listen to teachings like this one. Since Kami-Sama gives Konko Daijin teachings and tells him to convey them to other people, Konko Daijin does so. Listen to these teachings and tell them to children and other people. If just one of those people discovers how blessed Kami is and begins to practice faith, Kami will rejoice. And you will also be helping to serve Kami-Sama" (II Yamamoto Sadajiro 6).

In those days, ordinary peasants were subjugated and looked down as "hornless oxen" and conditioned to work hard like slaves. While the Founder also persevered in such a given condition, he learned to appreciate the wondrous blessed nature of Heaven and Earth while getting engaged in farming. Kami-Sama responded to the Founder to be of service to Kami for His purpose. He was just an ordinary farmer with limited educational backgrounds and was not articulate. It is just amazing that the Founder could respond to the calling and followed the message from Kami-Sama to convey a large volume of messages. It could be extraordinary for the Founder to convey those messages of Kami in such a manner as Kami instructed, "Listen to these teachings and tell them to children and other people. If just one of those people discovers how blessed Kami is and begins to practice faith, Kami will rejoice."

Through this message, the Founder showed us that once we get blessed for the issues we had to deal with, we should respond to share the episodes of blessing and the messages received to others in fulfillment of appreciation of the blessings received from Kami-Sama.

No. 381: Though you come to worship often, I have nothing to give you. My teachings are divine blessings, so after returning, convey them to others. Have people receive divine blessings. In this world, there is no one that doesn't belong. *(II Horimoto Rikichi 1 Kyoten page 693)*

A message "There is no one in this world who does not belong" (III Shinkun II 34) is based on the quoted message given to Rikichi Horimoto. Rikichi Horimoto was a farmer and a boatman in Yamaguchi Prefecture. In the year around 1880 to 1882, he made visits to see the Founder three to four times a year. The quoted message was one of the teachings he received during those days. The message might deeply impressed Rikichi. This is the only one message he preserved. He might have treasured this one particular message and got engaged in pursuit of faith devotedly.

Since he was in operation of a boat besides his primary occupation as a farmer, the author assumed that he was a boat man of a small ferry boat of a short distance. But a researcher found out that he was a crew member of a relatively large ferryboat that traveled between Yamaguchi and Okayama. Though Seto Inland Sea looks calm, the waters become treacherous due to storms and so forth. If a boat encounters rough seas, yet is safely able to reach its destination safe and sound, the passengers would feel relieved and prompted to share their happiness with one another.

It could be easily assumed that Rikichi might share the messages given by the Founder with other passengers on board, such as, "Tenchi Kane No Kami's presence is prevailing everywhere, even in the waters. We are constantly moving through the realm of divine blessings. Let us all be aware of the presence of Kami-Sama and get blessed through our engagement in the practice of faith." In today's society in Japan, people are constantly in a rush. They don't bother to exchange greetings with strangers who sit next to their own seats in the bullet trains. If they would ever try to open up their hearts and try to communicate with one another, they would enjoy a new world opening up unexpectedly.

No. 382: While walking along the road or while sitting on the ridge between the fields, you should talk about faith to others. If they can understand what you say from the heart, they will receive divine blessings. (III Naiden 6-8 Kyoten page 900)

Divine blessings are actualized through understanding teachings.

This quoted message is found in "Naiden" or "Special Messages" that is a compilation of speech scripts about the episodes of the Founder while he was serving delivered to the audience of ministers serving at Headquarters Church by the Rev. Norio Sato. The Rev. Masao Takahashi dictated the series of lecture given by the Rev. Norio Sato and compiled them into a record book.

The title of the speech is "Konko Daijin stopped giving the Oharai Prayer." The main message of the speech is, "In this faith you are saved not by chanting prayers, but by listening to the teachings." In the spring of 1881, the Founder stopped reciting the Oharai Prayer. Norio asked the Founder, "Konko-Sama, why aren't you chanting the Oharai Prayer anymore?" The Founder replied, "Kami instructed, 'It is the same whether or not you give the Oharai Prayer. Have people listen to your teachings instead.' This is why I stopped giving the prayer."

Then Norio Sato stated, "Requests made through Ikigami Konko Daijin to Tenchi Kane No Kami became the prayers of the Founder. This practice was established while he was living."

Konko Daijin always said, "In this faith you are not saved by chanting prayers. You will receive divine blessings by understanding, even if it is through conversations you have as you walk or as you sit on a ridge between the fields."

The Founder encouraged believers to try to share their blessed episodes with other people whatever they are doing and wherever they are. We have to keep this outgoing spirituality in the practice of faith. In general, when we stepped out of the church, we enter into a secular world and try to socialize with other people over non-faith related topics.

The Founder said, "If they can understand what you say from the heart, they will receive divine blessings." My mentoring minister always tried to communicate with other people by appealing both to his heart and head.