



An offering being accepted by Kami

*By Yasuhiro Yano
Head Ministers*

The Grand Service for Ikigami Konko Daijin was observed at the Headquarters Church at Konko Town in Okayama on October 2, 4, 7 and 10. The speech presentations given at each day of the services at Headquarters Church have been displayed in the Internet Home Page of the Konkokyo Home. The other day, I was watching the presentation given by the Rev. Miyoshi Nagai of Konko Church of Kashiwa in Chiba. While I was watching his presentation, I was deeply impressed by his determination and devotedness in his missionary work. The following is a brief account of excerpts of his presentation.

He started his missionary work at Kashiwa in Chiba. There was no faith community in the area when he started his missionary work. Because his missionary work was a so-called "Kaitaku Fukyo" which means started out his missionary work from scratch in the area where there was no established community of Konko believers. He was subsidized for the first three years of his missionary work by the Headquarters Church because there was no believer. The only monetary resource he was available was the 40,000 yen a month subsidy from the Headquarters Church. He had to pay for the rent and any other needed expenses. But he was determined to make a pilgrimage to the Headquarters Church at least four times for the major services. Soon after he began his missionary work, in December, there was a major service he wanted to attend in person. But the money he had in hand was scarce. There was not a single believer who came to attend church and make monetary offerings. He was in deep trouble. When he made a visit to see his mentoring minister at his parental church while being troubled with financial situations, for some reason, the minister shared the following story as if he were talking to himself. He said that when he started his own missionary work, he was determined to make a monthly visit to the Headquarters Church in Okayama. But the financial situation was dire. Then he developed a thought that even if he might not be able to go all the way to the Headquarters Church, at least he would be able to extend his leg of journey to the farthest point possible, for example to the nearest train station and so forth. Keeping his spirituality, he could attain the Headquarters Church monthly as he was determined. The Rev. Nagai was

deeply moved by the extended thought by his mentor minister. Strangely enough, soon after he returned his home church, three visitors came to church one after another. As he opened up the offerings forwarded, he found exactly the minimum amount for his pilgrimage expenses to the Headquarters Church. But there was no extra money to be offered in the form of monetary offering to be forwarded to Konko-Sama upon seeking Toritsugi-Mediation. He took the most economic transportations to get to Konko by riding the slowest moving trains. When he arrived at the Headquarters Church, he extended his thanks to Kami-Sama in the Main Hall where Konko-Sama was serving at the designated place. But he was hesitating to proceed to greet Konko-Sama because he could not make an offering. He turned his posture toward Konko-Sama at the Toritsugi-Mediation Desk and extended his thoughts of thanks that he could somehow manage to reach to the Headquarters Church as he wished. The moment he extended his thoughts, he was overwhelmed with the feeling of awe and gratefulness, and he could not hold back his streaming tears.

In recalling his memory about this initial pilgrimage to the Headquarters Church, he knew it was sort of a reckless or irrational wish to make a pilgrimage under such a dire financial circumstance. But, somehow his wish was fulfilled. At least, he could reach the point of meeting Konko-Sama at the worship hall. He recalled that the tears he could not hold back represented the acceptance of his thoughts and action by Konko-Sama and Kami-Sama.

This morning, when I was extending my thought for the story, I remembered an episode related to a poor elderly woman who managed to make a pilgrimage to see the 4th Konko-Sama if my memory is correct. She was so poor that she had to save money from her meager earnings. Upon her arrival to see Konko-Sama, Konko-Sama spoke even before she spoke by saying, "Kami-Sama has accepted all of your spending for your pilgrimage today as offerings. You had purchased a pair of new shoes and news clothes, and paid for your travel expenses. You also dined at the Tsuchiya restaurant in front of the main gate. Kami-Sama has accepted all of your spending as your extended offerings in appreciation."

I learned of this episode soon after I started my missionary work in Hawaii. I felt if I make a visit to Headquarters Church, I would like to make such a pilgrimage as has been shown in the story.

Konko-Sama Says . . .

After being saved from a desperate situation or misfortune, everyone says that they will never forget the blessings they received. However, people tend to be unaware of the divine blessings that they receive daily. Regardless if people are alive or dead, they are always receiving Kami's blessings. (III Jinkyu Kyogoroku 90-1, 2)

People talk about blessings, but blessings are merely the shadows cast by the sincerity of each person. Therefore, if you show great sincerity towards Kami, you can receive great blessings. You cannot receive great divine blessings with a little sincerity. The shadow cast by sincerity will follow the shape of sincerity. (III Jinkyu Kyogoroku 21)

Bulletin Board

Regular Church Services for November 2011

- 1 Tue -Monthly Svc. for Tenchi Kane no Kami 7:30 pm
6 Sun -Sunday Service 9 am
-90th Anniversary of Konko Church of Iwatani in
Hiroshima, Revs. Yasuhiro and Reiko Yano will
attend.
13 Sun -Monthly Service for Founder at 9 am
-Hilo Church Grand Service at 11 am
20 Sun -Monthly Memorial Service at 9 am
27 Sun -Sunday Service at 9 am
-14th Memorial Service for Late Rev. Kikue Kodama
of Honolulu Church at 9 am

Volunteer at Wahiawa General Hospital

We will make a monthly visit to the Wahiawa General Hospital Long-Term Care Facility on Friday, November 18 at 10:00 a.m. by means of offering entertainment for the people cared for in the facility. The program will be in Japanese.

H.C.R.P. Peace Prayer Observance

The annual observance the interfaith Peace Prayer organized by the H.C.R.P. or Hawaii Conference of Religions for Peace was held at the Gedatsu Church of Hawaii on Sunday, October 23 at 4:00 p.m. This year's prayers focused on "Homelessness in Hawaii." This year marked the 19th year since this interfaith community organization started its operation. In representing the Konkokyo faith community, the Rev. Edna K. Yano made an offering of the prayer for peace and shared her thoughts about the theme. Seventeen religious groups and individuals, and about 55 people attended the function. The 101 "Cup-full of Peace" decorated by children and adults were displayed at the meeting place. The collected non-perishable food items were donated to the Weinberg Village and Salvation Army. Please try to experience the setting of interfaith gathering for your own enrichment. We enjoyed ono dinner and refreshments after the program.

Scheduled Grand Services in the Faith Community

- Wailuku Church Sun, Nov. 6 at 11:00 a.m.
Hilo Church Sun, Nov. 13 at 11:00 a.m.

Honoring the Mitama Spirits for November

Rev. Kikue Kodama	11/28/1997
Mr. Ronald Minoru Miyatake	11/14/2000
Mr. Kazuyoshi Kidani	11/____
Mr. Crandal Ancog	11/21/2008
Rev. Toshihiko Hosaka	11/20/2008
Mrs. Chieno Hirota	11/17/2009

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

Kyoso-Sama Volume 2 (#31)

The following is the last of the series of the English translated excerpts from the second of the two volumes of "Kyoso-Sama" a biography of the Founder of the Konkokyo Religion, authored by the Reverend Shinsei Konko for young readers. The publication is a compilation of articles in series featured in the monthly publication, "Wakaba" or "Young Leaves" issued by the Administrative Office of the Konkokyo Youth Organization. The first article was published in 1950. Translation by the Rev. Yasuhiro Yano.

(Reference to "Kyoso-Sama Volume 2" pages 305 to 317)

(15) Toritsugi-Mediation by Konko Shijin-Sama

Without the willingness to return home

The following episode was related by the Rev. Mitsuo Sawai who accompanied the Rev. Fujimori Kondo to see Konko Shijin-Sama at Gohonbu in August 1888.

In the southwest of Gohonbu, there was a locality called Ooya shown in the same Kanji character of 大谷. There lived a woman of over sixty years old. One day, she made a visit to see Konko Shijin-Sama with five to six followers. One of them looked ill. The elderly woman proceeded before Konko Shijin-Sama and related, "Konko-Sama, that sickly person has regained much health from her prolonged ailment. When she overheard our pilgrimage to see you today, she expressed that she also wanted to come along with us. She stated, 'I have just regained much health but still feel feeble, I would like to start off my pilgrimage ahead of you.' She left her house a day earlier than us. Five of us started our pilgrimage as we scheduled. When we traveled approximately 3-ri, we encountered to a crowd of people at the base of the river bank. A policeman was in the presence. We became curious and approached the crowd. Were we surprised to find out that sickly woman who started to travel ahead of us was lying on the ground. The policeman asked us 'Does this woman belong to your group? If so, please take care of her.' We took her to a nearby house and asked the household people to provide an overnight stay for us, just to take care of the sick person.

She regained much strength by the following morning. We tried to take her back home. But she insisted, 'I beg you to

let me accompany you to see Konko-Sama at Gohonbu. If I give up my pilgrimage at this stage, they will laugh at me with scorn. I don't care if I should die on the way. Please take me with you.' I thought it would be too hard for the sick to continue the pilgrimage, but we took her along with us anyway. The woman said, "Konko-Sama, we left our house for a day long pilgrimage yesterday. If we do not return home today, our family would worry about us. If we cannot return home, maybe some of us should go home earlier to report about the circumstance. And one or two of us should stay and take care of the sick. What should we do?" Konko Shijin-Sama responded, "You can all leave here after 12 noon. Go to the Fujii Inn and borrow a futon comforter for the sick. Let her rest here for a while."

A person in the group went to borrow a futon comforter. They positioned the sick on her back, directing her head toward the altar and the feet toward the entrance. Konko Shijin-Sama who witnessed how the sick person was positioned responded by saying, "No, no, you are placing her in the wrong direction." The woman responded, "Konko-Sama, are you saying she should not lie down on the floor?" Konko Shijin-Sama replied, "She can lie down. I am saying her position is not proper. It is wrong to place her head toward the Kami altar and the feet toward the entrance." The woman responded, "Konko-Sama, if we follow your direction, we could be showing irreverence toward Kami-Sama." Konko Shijin-Sama said, "Kami-Sama is our Parent. Kami-Sama could not be angered. Be assured. The visitors who would be greeted by the presence of feet directed to them would be annoyed and get angry. The visitors always come up from the entrance." We all became overwhelmed with the great and grateful nature of teachings of Kami-Sama and shed tears in joy.

Despite the words of Konko Shijin-Sama, "I will let this woman leave here at 12 noon," she has been still in suffering and showed little improvement in her condition. The time reached almost one o'clock in the afternoon, but there seemed to be no change to the circumstance. The five people who accompanied the sick woman became worrisome and asked, "Konko-Sama, you said that this woman will be able to leave here at 12 noon. Is it because of her lack of faith in Kami that she is still in suffering? What do you say about this situation?" Konko Shijin-Sama responded, "Even if a healthy person will not leave here unless he/she exhibits the willingness to leave. It would be hard for the sick to leave here without her determination to leave from here." Then the woman encouraged the sick, "Be ready to leave here. As Konko-Sama said you have to have your willingness to leave here. Cheer up. Let's try to leave here and go to the Fujii Inn and enjoy lunch, and we will be ready to go home." They pulled off the futon blanket and let her get out of the place. They said, "Konko-Sama, we will go to the Fujii Inn and eat lunch there." The sick person could move to the dirt floor at the entrance. There were several bamboo and wooden sticks at the corner, which were used as canes. The elderly woman asked Konko Shijin-Sama, "Konko-Sama, can I borrow one of the sticks here to use as walking support for the sick woman?" Konko Shijin-Sama answered, "The ill came to church with those sticks, and left them here upon their return because they

didn't need them any longer for their improved conditions. The stick will help the sick to ease their pains for a while." She used the cane to travel to the Fujii Inn. After they enjoyed lunch, she felt much better and could go back to see Konko Shijin-Sama at the worship hall without depending on the walking stick. All of us joined together and returned home safely.

Medicines and Poisons

The following is a story the Rev. Mitsuo Sawai received from Konko Shijin-Sama in July of 1890. About three-ri from Gohonbu, there a rich family who paid the largest amount of taxes in the province of Bitchu. The parents of the household got involved in the practice of faith long time ago. Their son suffered from a prolonged illness for five years and tried to find healing by visiting many hospitals one after another.

At first, he was admitted at the hospital in Tamashima, and was transferred to the hospitals in Okayama, Himeji, Ichinotani, Osaka and other places in eastern regions. He also visited a hospital operated by a foreigner. The family exhausted fortunes to find a cure for the dearest son, but to no avail. The doctors gave up hope for his recovery. The son also gave up seeking any further medical treatment and expressed, "I have to give up seeking medical treatment for my ailment. Since I am to die for sure, I want to die in my home and being buried with my family ancestors at the same grave." And he returned home. His parent came to see me with his wife and related what his son said, "At this stage in life, I have nothing but to rely on the Kami-Sama my parents got involved in devotedly. Konko-Sama, you are the only hope I have right now. Please save my life. I don't want to die now." Since I identified him to be a truly devoted believer, I related him, "If you want to get blessed for your illness, take 'medicines,' instead of 'poisons.'" His father responded, "Konko-Sama, there was not a single day in the last five years that he didn't take medicines. He took medicines in three or four colors and in the form of powder, liquid and tablets regularly." I said, "He took 'poisons' in such a manner. If he takes 'medicine' he should have become healed now. On the other hand, if he takes 'poisons' his illness becomes worse. Eat what he enjoys that helped him to grow up. It is the best remedy for him to take food that helped him to grow up. From today, enjoy whatever food he likes and prays to Kami single-heartedly for his recovery. Try to stop any 'medicine' that didn't help him for one week. Even if he doesn't take them, he won't die for not taking those substances." His father replied, "Konko-Sama, my son will stop taking those 'medicines' for one week." I responded, "Your son should not give up taking 'medicine' instead, he should enjoy eating 'medicine.'" He said, "Thank you. I understand." And he returned home.

A week later, he came back to see me and said, "Konko-Sama, thank you very much. My son has been getting much better now by giving up 'medicine' and ate 'poisons.' He feels really puzzled." I said, "Your son has become well because he ate 'medicines.'" He responded, "My son believes so. He was wrong." I advised him, "Try to

continue to eat ‘medicines’ and giving up eating ‘poisons.’” He said, “Konko-Sama, my son will follow your instruction.” And he returned home.

Two weeks later, he came back again and said, “Konko-Sama, thank you very much. My son has gotten much strength. He feels so fine now. If he would continue to recover in this manner, he would be able to make a visit to see you in about one week.” I responded, “If your son has been getting better, try to let him continue the diet instructions I recommended.” He responded, “Konko-Sama, my son can’t take any ‘medicine.’” I said, “If he stops to eating ‘medicine’ he will die.” For him, “kusuri” always meant medicine given by doctors.

Three weeks later, the son and his wife came to see me on foot for the distance of 3-ri by saying, “We cannot waste money by riding a vehicle.” A person who recovered from chronic illness for five years, made a visit and said, “Konko-Sama, I don’t know how I should thank you. I became healed from the illness I suffered for five years. Thank you so much. I really don’t know how to express my happiness in words and deeds. I want to thank Kami-Sama for the blessings received. Please tell me how I can thank Kami-Sama. I will do anything you would ask me.” I asked him, “Are you sure you can keep those words?” He responded, “As long as your order can be accommodated with money, I don’t mind how much I would spend.” Then I will ask you, “If you want to thank Kami-Sama for your spared life, never try to express your complaints against Kami-Sama hereafter. This can be the only true expression of extending your appreciation for the blessings you received from Kami-Sama.”

The final “Gorikai” teaching given by Konko Shijin-Sama
Konko Shijin-Sama gave the following final message to Nobuzo Miyanaga from Onomichi on December 15, 1893, five days prior to his departure from this world. Miyanaga-san recorded the following notation in writing, “I received the following message on December 15, (November 8 in accordance with the lunar calendar), 1893 at around four o’clock in the afternoon. This was the last message I received.”

“Practice faith. If you practice faith, you would never be without blessings. Kami stated, ‘You and I are in the relationship of parent and child.’ They say ‘ujiko’ or a child in the family. If you believe every direction belongs to Kami-Sama, and plan to build a house, try to offer some ‘omiki’ sacred rice wine to the direction and extend your prayer by stating, ‘I intend to build a house at this location. Please allow me to proceed with the construction work.’ Then you shall never be punished. On the contrary, Kami-Sama accepts your extended prayer in gratitude and helps you to enjoy prosperity of your household. Kami-Sama says that the number of restrooms in your house reflects the prosperous nature of your household. Kami allows you to build as many restrooms in the premises. If you build a restroom in the direction believed to be unoccupied by the (fearful) deity this year, how would you deal with the evil deity when he comes around to occupy the place in some other year? The same can be said about our

own community life. What if we go to a neighbor’s house in their absence, and move things around? They will get very upset upon returning to the house. The same is true for the deity. If you extend your sincere apologies to the deity who occupies the direction and ask for permission to build a structure, Kami will respond to your thoughtfulness, and help you to enjoy household prosperity. ‘Akikata’ or an unoccupied direction represents two slots of opening created when the ‘12-Eto’ and ‘10-Jikkan’ were combined and the number was divided into 24 slots. In the old, they labeled the deity, ‘Konjin’ as being fearful and tried to avoid being in his path at all cost. ‘Kane no Kami’ stands for the deity of happiness. Though the name is shown in the calendar, they didn’t teach to respect and worship the deity. That is the reason why those who build their houses in that direction are condemned for their thoughtlessness, regardless if they followed the directions or not. The Founder Konko-Sama saved those in suffering through Toritsugi-Mediation. They have been enabled to travel, do construction work and being helped to enjoy household prosperity. The government will condemn those people who fail to pay taxes for their houses and farming lands. The same is true for the deity. They say they have been punished and condemned by the Konjin deity because they do not seek permission to use the land freely as if they belong to them. If you encounter a mishap, a disaster or an injury on a ‘shanichi’ (lucky day) and ‘tenjo’ (lucky day) in the calendar, would you still regard those days to be the days of ‘shajitsu’ (auspicious day) and celebrate the days? A blessed life means you enjoy a good day without encountering any troubles on the day shown to be unlucky days in the calendar through the work of Kami. If you extend your thoughts in this manner, there couldn’t be a single day that can be referred to as a bad day from the New Year’s Day to the End of the Year. In my understanding, the people become irreverent and failed to appreciate the blessings they receive from Kami in their lives; consequently they had to encounter that flood that occurred recently. It can be regarded as a divine condemnation. The entire area was flooded with water; however, there were those who had faith in Kami who have not suffered much damage. There lived a blacksmith in Nishiachi. The house was flooded and flown downward for about three-cho (approximately 300 meters). The clothes they had in the house were not damaged at all. A lot of stocked charcoal they used for furnace was not waterlogged as well. This is a reflection of an example of being blessed through the practice of faith. There is an apparent difference between those who have faith and those who do not believe in Kami. Kami represents parent figures. Those who practice faith are ‘ujiko’ or the beloved household child of Kami. That is why Kami-Sama stated ‘Kami and people are in the relationship of Parent and child.’ If you practice faith, you are to get blessed for sure. The same can be said to the parent and child relationship. If the parents take good care of the child, the child will take care of the parents in return. The same is true of Kami. If you practice faith, Kami grants blessings to you and you will be at ease. To become parents, you will learn to appreciate true meaning of getting into the practice of faith. It is too bad I cannot talk like this to people who are always in a hurry.”