

Foreword

"Nothing Is More Worthy
Than Showing Gratitude"by the Rev. Kazumasa Tsukamoto
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The year 2024 is coming to its end. Time flies indeed.

On July 21st, the Rev. Heiki Konko, the former Spiritual Leader (Konko-sama), passed away. His passing gave each one of us great surprise and sorrow, yet I am deeply thankful for the Fifth Konko-sama's selfless service which lasted for 3 decades, 6 consecutive terms as Konko-sama.

Just as Konko Daijin and his successors, the 5th Konko-sama also has become a "deity of the Sacred Mediation." As a "deity of Toritsugi," the 5th Konko-sama continues to perform the Sacred Mediation for all of us, the entire Konko congregation, and he also continues to pray to our Parent Kami for "world peace and the fulfillment of all humanity" on a constant basis. Konko-sama's sincere prayers for us is far more than we ever deserve, I believe, and I cannot help thanking him deeply again and again.

When I was a student of the Konkoku Seminary, I trained myself as an apprentice of the former Spiritual Leader. After graduating from the Seminary, I asked the 5th Konko-sama for his Toritsugi at each of my life's turning points. Each time, Konko-sama showed me the way to the sunny side of the street.

Among these Toritsugi Mediations with Konko-sama, one Mediation stands out as an unforgettable Toritsugi. In 2006, an asbestos removal work was done at the Konkoku HQs' Central Worship Hall. Because of this, the HQs' Mediation Seat was moved from the Hall to the Faith Training Center. Today, we call this wooden building "Shutokuden," but it was in fact the building for the Sacred Mediation performed by the 3rd and 4th Konko-samas. Compared to the present-day Hall, the Kami Altar and the Mitama Altar of Shutokuden are nearer from the tatami-mat space for worshippers. The Mediation Seat of Shutokuden is elevated above the space for worshippers, but not so much as the one at the present-day Mediation Hall. Thanks to this, there was an atmosphere which allowed us to feel the distance between Konko-sama and ourselves were shorter than usual, when we were in Shokutokuden.

Back in those days (in 2006), I was appointed

the Director of the Konkoku Activity Center in Seoul, South Korea. At that time, I was with my wife and my 15-month baby boy. I knew when to arrive in Seoul for my new goyo. The closer that date came, the more seriously I came to feel my responsibility as the Director of the Center in South Korea. The big sense of responsibility gave me much anxiety, and I honestly expressed such a feeling to the former Konko-sama.

The 5th Konko-sama looked around the Worship Hall from one edge to the other and spoke to me, "Our Founder teaches us, 'The whole world is Tenchi No Kami's hiromae.' Therefore, I advise you make yourself see that you are doing goyo in South Korea as if you were doing goyo in one corner of the HQ's Worship Hall. Then you will feel more at ease. Receive such a blessing from Kami."

I had already known that teaching, but I got a huge impact when Konko-sama orally quoted the teaching for me. And the 5th Konko-sama's words were always a great support and powerful encouragement for me during my tenure in Seoul.

In the address of the chief mourner of the main, official funeral ceremony for the 5th Konko-sama on August 29th, 2024, the Rev. Hiromichi Konko, the present Konko-sama, gave us the following words:

"Through the passing of the 5th Konko-sama, I am being gradually allowed to understand the true meaning of the teaching of the 4th Konko-sama, 'the importance of making gratitude the foundation for everything we say and/or do.' Yes, it's true that I am lonely and sad for my father's passing. But much more than these feelings of sorrow, I am now being made to realize that my gratitude is not enough. I cannot but express my sincere gratitude. What I mean by this is that expressing gratitude is paramount in the faith of Konkoku."

As we all know, the 6th Konko-sama serves our Parent Kami at the Konkoku HQs' Worship Hall day in day out, seeking and showing the faith of the successive Konko-samas. The present Konko-sama imparts, "To express gratitude is paramount." He, in other words, says that nothing is more important and worthy than expressing gratitude. In my mind, these words of Konko-sama sparkle like a precious gem. It shines so brightly that I can feel nothing but deep thankfulness and awe. And I now renew my resolution that I would like to follow the 6th Konko-sama's teaching as much as I can. I would like to contribute to world peace and human welfare every single day with a healthy body and mind, making the feelings of gratitude the foundation for everything I do and/or say.

Ceremony to Appreciate the Mitama Spirits of Konko Ministers and Believers with Outstanding Contributions to the Spread of the Konko Faith

Wishing to Re-Appreciate and Inherit the Sincerity of Our Senior Ministers and Believers

We will hold the Ceremony to Appreciate the Mitama Spirits of Konko Ministers and Believers with Outstanding Contributions to the Spread of the Konko Faith at the Grand Service Hall of the Konkokyo Headquarters at 13:30 on December 8th, 2024. Following the Ceremony, we will have “Convention for



the Entire Konko Faith Congregation” with our Spiritual Leader and his wife in attendance.

In this article, we would like to publish the aim of this Ceremony, and the Convention.

~ Aim of the Ceremony ~

The Second Konko-sama, namely Konko Shijin Tsurayuki No Kimi (Ieyoshi, the fifth son of our Founder), passed away on December 20th, 1893. Most of the Konko churches on the Kyushu Island of Japan were established, largely thanks to the Konko Church of Kokura. Its Founding Minister, the late Rev. Matsuhei Katsura, revered the Second Konko-sama so much that Konko Shijin-sama was almost everything to the Rev. Katsura. All of his disciples knew this. Therefore, the entire Konko congregation of the Kyushu Island made a sincere petition to the Konkokyo Headquarters, asking Go-hombu to hold the one-year memorial service for the Second Konko-sama at the Konko Headquarters. Hombu accepted their sincere request and they held the memorial service at the Headquarters in December, 1894.

Later on, Hombu came to additionally hold the memorial service for Konko Sanjin O’oji Tatewake No Mikoto (Hagio, the fourth son of the Founder) and Konko Tose Isshi O’oakaru Hime (Tose, the wife of the Founder) on the same date. (Hagio, by the way, was the Konkokyo Kancho I. Kancho

was a position installed by the then Japanese government. The government in those days aimed to supervise religious organizations in Japan through Kancho set onto each of those religions bodies.

In 1933, the Konko Headquarters decided to admire and give thanks to the mitama spirits of senior Konko ministers and believers with outstanding contributions to the spread of the Konko Faith in addition to doing so to the Founder’s direct family members. (1933 marked the 50th anniversary of the Founder’s passing.) Because of these revisions, Hombu officially named this service “Ceremony to Appreciate the Mitama Spirits of Konko Ministers and Believers with Outstanding



Contributions to the Spread of the Konko Faith” in 1941.

The mitama spirits of those with remarkable contributions to the spread of Konkokyo. Not all of them lived in the same era; they lived in different periods of time. No matter which era they lived in, they all dedicated their entire lives (all of their time and energy, in other words) to the fulfillment of both Kami and people, faithfully following Konko Daijin’s teachings, “People are supposed to spread Konko Daijin’s faith. Kami will bestow blessings upon those who strive for it” and/or “Become a kami by saving people.”

In this Ceremony, we would like to reminisce what the Fifth Konko-sama was





like during his lifetime, because he will soon be newly enshrined at the Mitama Altar of the Headquarters' Worship Hall. We also would like to remember or imagine what the successive Konko-samas like and what our senior Konko ministers and believers with outstanding achievements in the field of propagation were like. Let us also not forget that we will express our sincere gratitude for us to have had the opportunity to join this Faith. Konko Daijin, his successive Konko-samas and other distinguished senior ministers and believers sought the "Way of Kami and People" through which both Kami and people are

mutually fulfilled. They also prayed to our Parent Kami for those in difficulty so that those people in distress would be saved. In the Ceremony, I pray that we will all respect Konko-samas and our senior Konko ministers and believers for their sincerity and emulate their great examples.

During the Ceremony to Appreciate the Mitama Spirits of Konko Ministers and Believers with Outstanding Contributions to the Spread of the Konko Faith, we will have a period of "Appointment of Ministers' Assistants (Hokyo)." Hokyo are expected to inherit the invaluable sincerity of these great mitamas and they will hopefully make endeavors "for the sake of Konko Daijin's faith." As such treasured human resources, ministers' assistants are expected to take an active role in church activities and get involved in various activities/programs of the Konkokyo Organization.

From this Ceremony on, let us pray that each one of us, who is already connected to the faith of Konko Daijin, will work on developing his/her faith and try to become a useful individual for "world peace and the fulfillment of all humanity."

Convention for the Entire Konko Faith Congregation

~ Aim of the Convention ~

We wish to practice faith in our Parent Kami on a daily basis, revering and following the Konko-sama's prayer, "I would like to become a useful human resource for world peace and the fulfillment of all humanity." In various parts of the world today, however, confrontations between countries are getting even more pronounced. Those serious situations appear to be happening far away from where we are, but they aren't. These problems are directly connected to our daily life. Here in Japan, we are surrounded



with non-peaceful situations such as bullies at school, various harassments in workplace and abuses at home. How can and should we ever deal with these

domestic and overseas problems?

Our Founder, Konko Daijin, taught us, "When you truly sympathize with someone in agony, that's when you realize you are blessed with a kami/god-like heart." In fact, there are occasions where we think of people in hardship and feel deep sympathy for them. This means we are bestowed a "kami/god-like heart" by Kami. Cherishing this heart means our inner kami gets activated and we will get to contribute to the emergence of peaceful world.

On New Year's Day this year, a large earthquake broke out on the Noto Peninsula of the Ishikawa Prefecture of Japan, victimizing many, many people. Several months later, there was heavy rain on the peninsula and a great number of



people in that area were victimized once again. A lot of Konkoko believers took part in reconstruction support activities. These people stood by disaster victims. When they did so for those victimized people, Kami was working with those Konko believers, because Kami constantly prays for the salvation of people in extreme difficulty. Kami enabled the kami-like hearts of those Konko believers to get activated, and this enabled those believers to actually go into the victimized areas and help the local victims on the peninsula.

Even if we have motivation and desire to go to Noto and help the locals rebuild their towns, not all of us can actually do so. You may not be able to go there, but you can still “pray.” Praying to Kami for people in suffering is what any one of us, the Konko believers, can put into practice.

This year, we will ask the Sixth Konko-sama and his wife to attend the Convention for the Entire Konko Faith Congregation, his gathering. We will also ask two disaster-relief groups, which worked very hard for the reconstructions of the victimized areas of Noto, to report their activities over



there. We will consider their oral reports presentations on their practicing faith. We, as the audience, would like to receive inspirations from what they need to tell us. We are in different circumstances, yet I would like each of us to be creative enough to be useful to our society in our respective circumstances.

One individual can never do anything big on his/her own. Even if your endeavor is just “a drip of water in a vast ocean,” it will still be one important step towards the realization of Kami’s wish, “world peace and the salvation of all humanity.”

