

-All Is Divine Love-

KCNA Spirituality Bridge Presentation

Introduction

a. Anpanman's March

Good afternoon & welcome to this Spirituality Bridge presentation. It's a great honor to deliver my speech for this gathering.

Do you know a Japanese kid anime, named 'Anpanman?' The face of the Anpanman shapes like Anpan, bean-jam bun. Anpanman encourages those who are hungry or in trouble by giving a piece of 'Anpan,' his face, despite that his power decreases to that extent. Have you ever heard that theme song, titled 'Anpanman's March?' It is so touching that it has greatly encouraged the victims of the Great East Japan Earthquake which triggered the devastating Tsunami that killed more than 15,000 people & destroyed the coast lines of the Tohoku Regions three years ago. The tune & the lyrics of it are great & very meaningful. The lyrics are:

"I realized how great it is to live, even if the scar in my heart hurts.
 What was I born for? What do I do in my life?
 I don't like not being able to answer the questions.
 By living the present our heart burns.
 That's why you go with a smile on your face.
 Go! You can protect everyone's dream."

b. Kami's Love Named Prostate Cancer

We humans tend to think our lives as immortal... lasting into a future too distant to imagine; especially when we're young. We forget, with the demands in our daily lives, that our physical lives on this earth will be over someday! So we live a common, ordinary life without thinking of the value of life until something uncommon brings it into sharp focus for us.

On Feb. 6, just a couple of weeks after my birthday, my doctor of Urology told me that it looked like I had the early stages of prostate cancer. He also wanted to schedule some more test to determine whether or not my cancer had spread beyond of my prostate. That was the time I have really looked death in the face & realized so clearly that it was possible I could die some day in the foreseeable future. Not the distant future... but in a future nearer much nearer than the 66 years of life I've enjoyed so far!

Then the following questions flooded my mind: "What was I born here in this world for? What should I do for the benefit of this world? Why have I become a Konko minister to serve Kami & people in Chicago? Have I ever done enough, & so-on, & so-on & so-on?!"

I can accept my death if it is Kami's will, with gratitude at any time. But I feel I haven't done nearly enough to reveal Wagakokoro, or an unbreakable peaceful, joyful heart in Chicago over these past 17 years... let alone to the world & beyond! So I've promised Kami to devote myself to living a life of faith development, to the best of my ability; to my limits of my physical & spiritual boundaries. My goal is to support the Wagakokoro era to the best of my ability, so I pray to Kami to give me as many life challenges as possible to polish my heart & reflect forth the Divine Heart of the Universe.

That's why when I learned I had prostate cancer this February, I accepted it with respect, as a blessing of Kami's love named "prostate cancer." Since then it has helped me ask every waking moment of every day: "Why was I born here in this world? What should I do to improve all the coming moments in the rest of my life?"

After a battery of several tests it was decided that my best treatment would be to have radiotherapy, five days a week for 43 days, beginning on June 2. The prostate cancer needs a sufficient length of exposure to radiation to give me the best chance of completely curing the cancer through radiation alone.

Since the beginning of radiotherapy I have respected it as Kami's gift of radiotherapy. When I look at it this way, I realize I look forward to it as a personal blessing of Kami's treatments through radiotherapy. When I lay down under the great, powerful machine that strikes radioactive rays for my benefit, I am awestruck with its wonder & cannot help but be moved with Kami's workings as Kami guides my way to a cure of cancer through these superb machines. I always extend my appreciation to Kami during my treatment under these machines. My radiotherapy was finished by August 1 just in time to attend this year's KCNA Conference here in Toronto. Thanks to Kami's gift of radiotherapy my prostate cancer is gone.

c. KCNA's Theme

The Konko Faith is celebrating this year as the "200th Year Birthday of our Founder - Ikigami Konko Daijin." My parent church in Japan, KC Airaku celebrated the 100th Year Birthday of my mentor, Rev. Soichiro Otsubo, founding minister of it where I trained under his guidance for nearly 20 years. And we in Chicago have our own special celebration, our 5th Anniversary Celebration scheduled on Sunday, November 2. What a golden opportunity we have this year to deepen our practice of faith.

Konkokyo is now promoting the faith movement, titled, "Kami & us, completing each other-Live the Faith!" all around the world. In support; KCNA's theme for this year is, "Let us receive Kami's blessings & unconditional love; living a joyful life of appreciation."

Our lives become meaningful when we live a life of joyful appreciation. It is not an exaggeration to say that we are born onto this earth to live in faith which manifests the mutual fulfillment between Kami & people.

My father did his best to live a life which sought to reflect the real figure of our founder's faith which connected Kami & people to complete each other. It's a great honor to tell you about my father & his faith in today's lecture. I hope you find something important for your faith development by hearing my recollections of my father's beautiful walk of faith.

Birth

My father was born May 21, 1919, in Imari town, Kyushu, in southern Japan. They gave him the name, "Michinori."

The Takeuchi family's encounter to the Konko Faith basked in the divine favor. My father's mother, Mrs. Yaeno Takeuchi visited the Konko Church of Nogata for the first time in 1912 at the recommendation of her aunt. Her aunt said, "There is the



very convenient Japanese Kami that does not demand consultation of the Days & Directions. It is called the Konko faith. Why don't you enshrine it?" Yaeno made the journey, received Mediation & a Goshinmai of sacred rice from the church which she enshrined as her "Home Altar."

My grandfather, Mr. Hyojiro Takeuchi had gone to Manchuria to seek his fortune. He was introduced to the Konko Faith when he visited the Konko Church of Tairen. He became a believer under the guidance of Rev. Seizo Matsuyama. When Hyojiro returned from Manchuria in autumn in 1912, he brought back Konko home-shrine with him. Both he & Yaeno were surprised to discover they'd come to believe in the same religion & were mutually delighted together.

It's important to give you a little more background about my grandfather before we move on. He was born in Nogata, on the Onga River. Men who were born along the Onga River were called "Kawasuji Otoko" which means 'strong men in fighting.' Hyojiro was no exception. He had a strong sense of justice which he tried to solve, when he saw this justice challenged, by fighting. He was said to be "Hyotan no Hyojiro," and was feared by everyone. However my father Michinori didn't experience this quality in his father growing up & always thought of Hyojiro as gentle & calm. Hyojiro's character was completely transformed by practicing the Konko faith.



The Takeuchi family moved to Imari in 1918. Michinori was born the following year. He was their third child, having two older sisters, Fusae & Mitsue.

Importance of Having Faith Early

What my father remembered of his younger days was looking forward to going to the church everyday & reciting the prayers, which he did without any mistake & doing purification rite just like playing house. It's no exaggeration to say that such trusting faith in his youth formed in my father's faith foundation that lasted throughout his life. As the saying goes, "As is the boy, so is the man."

My father never had doubts about life & faith even when he was young, even in an age that was known as, "...the Age of Skepticism."

He always felt grateful for being born a Konko believer. How important it was to be born a Konko believer for him! Konkokyo became the backbone of his 'being.' The more he learned of the teachings of Buddhism or the words of Christianity in his youth, the deeper insight he naturally found in our founder's teachings & the more they nurtured the depth of his faith in Konkokyo.

That made him not only to honor & appreciate his parents, which is deeply founded in Japanese culture; but he extended special gratitude to his parents who had brought the Konko faith in his family before his birth. This also gave him a strong desire to engrave the faith on his children's souls.

Epoch-making Event of Michinori's Faith

He'd attended Imari Elementary School for six years. His attendance was perfect & his school record was great. His father Hyojiro managed a mining company with great success at the time he was born. The Takeuchi family hung up the richest banner in Imari at his first boy's festival. Then the world had fallen into a series of declines during the Depression & Hyojiro had to close his mining company.

My father could not abandon his great ambition to become a Cabinet minister. He wanted to enter the best middle school in Saga prefecture to pursue his dream. Hyojiro willingly accepted his desire in spite of the fact that it caused him a big financial burden.

Then, what became the epoch-making event of my father's faith happened in his third year of middle school in 1935 at age 16.



The Turning Point in my father's Life

My father was in his second year of middle school when he got pleurisy in his left lung. The doctor told him, "You should really take a little more time off school to get better."

But he didn't want to be held back & in the end he forced himself to go. He kept thinking to himself, "I can't lose a year." Forcing himself to go back to school he ended up losing 2 years later instead.

He got pleurisy again in his right lung in May the next year at age 16. Thinking this was not good at all, he decided to entrust himself completely to Kami & completely stopped going to the doctor. He stayed home for 2 years.

During that time someone actually paid him a bereavement visit. The Takeuchi household usually shuttered up all the windows & doors during a Grand Ceremony. The visitor saw what they believed was a sign of mourning. They apparently thought, "Oh my, the Takeuchi boy just couldn't make it after all," & came to pay their respects.

When my father felt things were getting a little out of hand, he thought, "Well, maybe I should go to the doctor,"

He thought if he ended up dying at home without a doctor care, he probably wouldn't get the death certificate need to get cremated. He might not be afraid of death, but he didn't want his mother to have problems afterwards. So he told her that was why he wanted to go to the doctor.



Yaeno said, "I have never heard of a dead person being refused a cremation. You don't have to worry about anything like that. Now just be strong in your faith & you'll be blessed."

That was a turning point. Then he really showed his heart of absolute acceptance to be blessed & the blessings just rolled in day after day. He realized, "Now is the time. I'm ready to be blessed!" He then decided to go to the church to attend the year-end & New

Year's Day services to express his appreciation to Kami for prolonging his life. He could barely walk, but with great determination to be reborn... he reached there on his terms.

It was the epoch-making event of his faith. He received it as a turning point of his life to dispel all desires, regarding this event as his death like our founder. Our founder came to a turning point of his life at age 42 when he was gravely ill. Kami later requested Konko Daijin to dispel all desires & regard choosing Mediation full-time as the turning event as his by accepting it as his death to the customary demands of the world, because the doctor had given up his recovery. My father later found that there was a trace in his left lung that had been treated by the doctor, but that his right lung, which had been cured by Kami alone, was completely cured... & there was no trace to be seen.

a. My Father's Scar in his Chest as "Faith"

He returned back to school within two years. Then when he was the fifth school year of middle school he got abscess in October 1938. A cup-sized swelling came out in the center of his chest & pus was oozing out of it. He knew if he saw the doctor, it was very likely he'd remove a couple of his ribs. If that happened he feel very sorry to Kami. My father decided to rely on only receiving blessings & be healed through faith in Kami. He took a Goshinmai (the Divine Rice Packet) folded in two, dipped it in hydrogen peroxide & put it on his chest. Then applied an adhesive plaster with a piece of gauze over it. The Goshinmai soaked up the pus. He changed Goshinmai twice a day for the next 180 days. At the end of that time, pus gone & did not come back. He had perfect attendance during his fifth school year & got the highest grade in his school.

What he thought himself most blessed was that pus oozed from his chest, because he could treat it himself. What he felt most difficult was that he could only bathe his body from his chest down in warm water & his upper body had to stay cold on cold winter days. He thought about a ridiculous thing & that was to try to bathe upside down to keep his shoulders warm.

It remained scar on his chest after full recovery. However he thought as follows: "I might have been dead at age 16 without Kami's blessings. However as the saying goes, 'The danger past, God forgotten,' it was very hard to attain spiritual enlightenment such as dispelling all desires with the thought of death if I did nothing. Therefore Kami impressed a clear seal on my chest & all the more wanted to rouse myself to developing my faith." He thought this scar on his chest was a monumental achievement that was engraved in his body by Kami.

b. Truer Religion

He entered the Saga High School in 1939 at age 20. In high school, he studied philosophy in addition to attending (extracurricular) lectures on such topics as the Zen Buddhist text, Shôbôganzô. As he learned, he would always find himself coming back to his Konkokyo teachings. He would think, "Oh, that's what that teaching was about." So this had come to perform the function of deepening his understanding of Konkokyo.

The Konkokyo teachings, as far as structure & phrasing, are decidedly simple and, inasmuch, easy to understand. However these are teachings that continue to deepen the further you look into them. Every time he learned about another religion or attempted to grasp the true nature of the world through philosophy, he had always not only come back

to our founder's teachings, but had come back with renewed assurance that these Konkoko teachings have something much deeper in them.

A Truer Religion is one that is deepened day to day by pursuing in every action the real meaning of its teachings. They are simple, clear-cut and blessings do follow.

c. Kami's Love as the Name of Pleurisy & Abscess

It was because of these two illnesses that he had to spend an additional three years more than anyone else to graduate from both middle school & high school. That meant he had three years more friends than the others & they, would become very helpful to my father in devoting himself to the development of the Imari City as mayor much later. Those illnesses also made my father ineligible to fight in the front lines during WWII. He survived the war despite other classmates, including class presidents from his middle school days being killed in action.



My Mother Itsuko's Faith

My mother Itsuko Yamamoto was born in Okayama on July 6, 1922. Her grandfather was an older brother of Hyojiro, my father Michinori's father. She went to her grandfather's house in Tosu town, Saga prefecture at age 20 to take care of him, when her grandfather was stricken with paralysis & became helpless.

When Michinori went to comfort his uncle during high school, Itsuko was always there taking care of her grandfather. They naturally became acquainted with each other over time.

a. Hiroo's Death in Action

Itsuko had an older brother, Hiroo, who was two years older than she. He died in action in 1942. Michinori attended his funeral in Tosu. When he saw Itsuko who had lost her parents as a youngster. Now she had lost her only brother. Michinori felt a duty to play the role of "brother" to ease the death of Hiroo. He sent letters of encouragement. He also wrote about the Konkoko Faith, wishing to know of his religion that became a part of his life. Then their relationship deepened with time & continued contact.

b. Her Faith Experience

Itsuko sat up with her grandfather whenever he had a seizure. He eventually came to have pain somewhere in his body around 2:00 in the morning. She'd massage his right shoulder for example when he told that's what hurt. Then she'd go to church as soon as she could to ask to Kami to ease his pain. Strangely, her right shoulder started to hurt. When she returned home her grandfather said that was the same time his pain was gone.

When his left foot became painful she went to the church to pray for it. & when her left foot started to hurt; her grandfather's pain was gone. Her pains were also gone in a single night. She realized Kami was miraculously working through the experiences of caring for her grandfather's discomfort.

University's Days

My father entered the Tokyo University in 1943. He majored in law. Because of the war his university days only lasted for two & half years. Because of the war, he had to do one year of civil service in place of being drafted. His university life ought to have been miserable. But he was developing a loving relationship with Itsuko through exchanging their letters. He desperately wanted to express his feelings toward her even though he felt he could communicate less than 100th of one percent of them.

Wedding & Family Life in Kumamoto City

In 1946 he received his degree from the university. His desire to marry Itsuko was overpowering. But there was a problem. They couldn't get married because it was against the law for second cousins marry in those days. Then the Japanese Constitution was amended & changed all that on November 3, 1946. They both were born through Kami's blessings, saw each other through Kami's blessings & were led to get married through Kami's miraculous power. They had their wedding ceremony on May 15, 1947.

He found a job at the prefectural office in Kumamoto in July, 1947 & began his new life with Itsuko. I, their 1st



son was born January 25, 1948. The

next year my brother Kazunori was born on February 1, 1949 & their only daughter Emiko, was born August 24, 1950. My father was very busy at the secretary section of the prefectural office while my mother had her hands

full with 3 small children... 3 years apart. Luckily my father was promoted to chief of the prefectural office in March, 1956. They had a very happy life together there.

He resigned his position at the Kumamoto prefectural office in 1961 when the governor who was his superior was defeated in his fourth bid for election. He created a company to sell Kinkai soup stock as a sole representative in Kyushu. But it turned out to be like a business managed by samurai. He was constantly being deceived time & time again. Within a year he owed a huge debt to suppliers. But this event fashioned for them their own destiny.



Encounter with Rev. Soichiro Otsubo

My mother owned her restaurant named “Kinkai,” & then became a manager at the cafeteria hall of the Kumamoto College of Commerce in order to ‘make-ends-meet’ & raise their three children. My father was asked to be a deputy mayor in Imari city in June, 1962 when his friends learned of his situation in Kumamoto. At that time Michinori & his mother Yaeno lived in Imari & Itsuko & their three children lived in Kumamoto, because they wanted to give their children higher quality education. Michinori drove to Kumamoto at full speed every Sunday to see us. People made fun of it saying ‘Sunday-Mainichi.’ In those days there was a weekly magazine named ‘Sunday-Mainichi,’ that was published every Sunday. It means Sunday is everyday.

My father, from the time of his great commitment to the Konko Faith at age 16, was always searching for the real of our Founder, Konko Daijin’s faith. He believed that somewhere there had to be a minister whose faith was mirror to that of our Founder in practice. My father was more than willing to go on a pilgrimage throughout Japan in order to try to find such a person. He read many books of the prominent leaders of the Konko Faith one after another. His business failure only heightened his determination more fervently to find a mediator who could show him to practice the Founder’s essence of the Konko Faith. Somehow he was told there was just such a Mediator living in Kabame, Kurume city, & he was determined to go there & see him.

In order to find such a mediator he chose to look for three things for them to qualify. One was that Kami’s workings had to be vividly present in that church. The second: Great teachings had to be delivered & practiced by example in that church. He found a number of such churches with divine dignity. But until then he could not find the church that would answer his third requirement. The third requirement was: the church had to deliver teachings that would be renewed day to day. The mediator he met after all that searching near & far for a genuine mediator was Rev. Soichiro Otsubo.



a. Divine Dream of Rev. Otsubo

In those days Rev. Otsubo was sat all day long & seldom left the Mediation Place. But strangely enough my father visited twice without being able to meet him in person. My father’s third visit was on June 7, 1963. He could not meet him this time either. However Rev. Otsubo talked about my father in his speech after the regular morning prayer service that day. The speech about my father lasted 30 minutes & was

all about his divine dream of my father. My father heard the speech on recorded tape. He was so impressed with it that he happily thought it seemed like a revelation our founder had received from Kami.

What he said have become very important not only for the Takeuchi family but also for all who have heard, so I’d like to share some parts of it with you.

a. Living with Kami’s Feelings instead of Human Feelings

In my dream this morning Mr. Takeuchi came here to seek the mediation. I said to him, “Hi, Takeuchi-san, there are two kinds of fields in the world, dead or alive. Live fields produce as many as good things as we like, no matter what seeds we plant. Wastelands produce nothing whatever seeds we sow. There are many churches in Japan. The founding minister of each church seemed like cultivating wastelands & brought forth many good products. The dignity of each church shined brilliantly. There was rare exception for the founding ministers. However there are so many churches that become like wastelands even though people think their church is still productive. Therefore you should be of service to lead those churches to return to those like productive fields.

Mr. Takeuchi asked me, “What does it mean to make productive fields as they were?” He received elaborate teachings about it. “The founding minister was respected by people & there were many who came to the church to seek mediation. However when the generations change, the church’s influence declines. It is because the church received too much blessings & depended on them too much. It seemed that the productive field became marsh due to too much water. Marsh doesn’t produce anything. Therefore water should be removed from marsh by all means. Then that field surely produces good harvest.”

Then Mr. Takeuchi asked again, “What should we do for the church like removing water from marsh?”

I answered, “It means to change from human feelings to Kami’s feelings. It sometimes seems severe to always have Kami’s feelings, but this Kami does not work for human feelings. People’s faith does not grow by only human feelings. The church does not have real dignity. The most important is to have a heart that always try to follow Kami’s instruction.

I believe if Mr. Takeuchi does his best to have Kami’s feelings instead of human feelings, many churches will change from too much blessed & not productive ones to productive ones that many people will be fulfilled with Kami.

Recalling this dream of Rev. Otsubo, my father often said in later years that he had to become a trainee under the guidance of Rev. Otsubo right away. I believe my father has entrusted me with his dream of seeking to fully understand the true way of Konko Faith & has been pleased with me for serving Kami & people in Chicago

c. Konko Church of Airaku

People came to ask Rev. Otsubo for help one after another. So in 1950 through Kami’s revelation, he established the Meeting of Kabame-Shinaikai without any qualification as a Konko minister. He still wasn’t sure what to do & he sought Mediation of the Third Konko-sama through his senior minister Rev. Hisato Aramaki. The Third Konko-sama said, “It is good for you to serve as a Konko minister.”

Mr. Otsubo was very surprised by this reply. But from that time on all necessary things needed by a mediator were just naturally brought to him. The last offering someone brought was a desk for him to sit in front of. He put the desk on the left side



of the altar instead of the right side to show he was not a minister & humbly did not want to portray himself above his 'station.' By the time my father got to know Rev. Otsubo there was an organized effort to establish a church in it's own building.

Soichiro's son, Rev. Katsuhiko Otsubo, was accredited as a Konko minister in 1965. Soichiro Otsubo took the ministerial examination to qualify him to enter the Konko Seminary in 1966. But because of his diabetic health problems he was not allow to attend the Seminary. My father was strongly determined to follow Rev. Otsubo in whatever path of faith he took. Rev. Otsubo kept faith in the Third Konko-sama's words & accepted this decision as a blessing to develop his faith. Then strangely enough, the next year he was granted the option to become a Konko minister through testing only. Therefore; when the Konko Church of Airaku & its building was established in 1967, Rev. Soichiro Otsubo was graciously honored as the head-minister.

Mayor of Imari

My father served two terms as deputy mayor before running for mayor, when, he had been told, the seat would be ceded to him. However, he was then told to wait another term because the Mayor was planning to run again.

Many people were recommending that my father would run anyway, so he sought Mediation with Rev. Otsubo. He told my father, "I have received a revelation of the public servant's baton, "十手" in Japanese. This is a power vested in you to serve. You should run. The pieces have not come together yet, but in due time what you need to assume that baton will come to you. It's time to seek election."

The public servant's baton could have another meaning in Japanese. That baton is for people who assemble enough support. Just as Rev. Otsubo had foreseen, the pieces came together for him, the Mayor pulled out of the race, & my father won the election uncontested.

a. Breaking the Jinx

His second term was also uncontested, but the former Mayor, who had since entered the Prefectural Assembly, still had his eye on the mayor-ship & used this period to ready his campaign for the next term. In Imari, the mayor-ship had long been known for its "3 term jinx (There is no mayor who runs three terms so far)", but for my father, this idea was just foolishness. This is something the human psyche can just do without. Upon asking Rev. Otsubo for guidance, he was told to run & so he did.

His opponent had all but never lost an election & was extremely confident. But one's own strength alone is not enough. Exceeding expectations, he won by 4,000 votes.

Letting go your own strength
Hold tight to that of Kami
A new strength holds you.

This is how my father obtained the strength to succeed. He was blessed to win his fourth term uncontested as well, & continued to serve as mayor for fifth & sixth terms, total 24 years.

However, he had no special ambition to this end. For him, the only thing that mattered was doing as well as he could the job that Kami had given to him at that time.

It was for Kami to decide whether he continued or not. He would have resigned at any time if Rev. Otsubo told him to do so. This was as far as he had prepared.

b. Admirable Development of Imari City

After my father city, his close Cabinet Minister Japanese father could from it for his plans to renovate beauty of the old Imari. He could built bridges etc. to Imari such as Company.



became mayor of Imari friend became the one after another of the Government. So my receive kind supports projects. He had many Imari, combining the Imari with the new reconstruct roads & Many company moved Namura Shipbuilding

c. Imari amidst Kami's Grace

For example such thing happened during his term. The IC (integrated circuit) industry, the industry of cutting-edge technology that is so avidly sought out world-wide, chose Imari for the site of a new plant. Imari is known as a shipping port of fine china, & my father had often said, "We need to bring the prosperity of that Traditional Imari, to the Imari of the Future." Then the electronics company that was coming told him that here they would make their biggest factory in the world!

The president of this company was asked in a newspaper interview why Imari had been chosen over the countless other candidates for host city, being, as it is, basically geographically & demographically unremarkable. He responded, "The character of Imari's Mayor was the deciding factor; we believe him to be most trustworthy." My father felt he had no such power on his own, but keenly aware of being rooted in & supported by Kami.

Imari was admired as the most developed city in Saga Prefecture during his term.

Rev. Soichiro Otsubo died in November, 1994 after my father resigned from mayor on the same year. He could not help but extend his utmost appreciation to Rev. Otsubo, thinking that his entire mayor-ship of Imari was under his prayers & mediation.

Training to Become a Kami

When my father resigned mayor of Imari, Rev. Otsubo told him as follows: "From now on you should train yourself to become a kami."

Resignation from his mayor-ship turned out to be a blessing later as well. Three years later after it my father got stroke. Paralyzed on the left side of his body, he was hospitalized first for four & a half years. He first thought that this was a



great chance to manifest the late Rev. Otsubo's words to train himself to become a kami from now on.

At the beginning of his hospitalization he accepted it as 'painful but grateful.' Then he gradually came to say 'painful' & 'grateful' at the same time. Furthermore he reached to the stage that 'grateful' uttered first before 'painful.'

After hospitalized for 188 days in 1981 & 1982 due to his critical illness, Rev. Otsubo said, "I spent such painful days everyday as though I seemed to be in hell. However I returned back from there after experiencing that Kami's love was filled even in hell." Rev. Otsubo manifested gratitude & the fact of 'All is Divine Love' in any cases.

Like him my father had a strong determination to practice his faith to feel only grateful without even whispering 'painful' & then to manifest by himself that 'All is Divine Love.'

a. Kami's Love Named as Stroke

My father practiced faith to respect his illness as Kami's love named 'stroke' & deepen peace & joy in his heart everyday. After releasing from the hospital in 2001 he was often hospitalized again & again. However his wife Itusko always was besides him & his grand children wished to be his side to learn the essence of the Konko Faith from him & his attitude. Those who came to see him in hospital were encouraged by him instead.

He finally understood one of our founder's most important teachings that says, "Everything Tenchi Kane No from the bottom of all his heart & soul. He had understood it through knowledge, but through afflicted with Kami's love he fully realized that teaching.



understood one of most important says, "Everything Tenchi Kane No from the bottom of all his heart & soul. He had understood it through knowledge, but through afflicted with named stroke he fully realized that teaching.

Toronto Conference in 2006

The KCNA Conference was held in Toronto in 2006. During Saturday activities soft ball was played by the old versus the young. I joined it as one of the old players. As some of you might still remember, strangely enough I hit four consecutive home runs. Rev. Richard Grange, head-minister of KC San Francisco at that time impressed my power a lot. Later he asked me to join the softball competition the next year that was held in our headquarters in Japan every summer. He had a long-cherished dream to take young American believers to join that competition. I was scouted by him to guide them. It means not only to play with them but also to show them the important historical places around the Konko town. I couldn't afford to buy airfare for it, but Rev. Grange kindly offer his "frequent-flyer" miles to use for my flight.

I joined the softball competition in our headquarters in the summer of 2007 with Rev. Grange & Mr. Kosugi from KC Gardena. However unfortunately none our young American believers could not participate in it due to their busy schedule.

But thanks to that trip, I was able to stay by my father's side for three days after the competition. For three days I tried to stay close to my father as much as possible. We prayed together, talked with each other a lot. I listened to his precious insights about the Konko Faith. I tried to take good care of him, massaging here & there. He said to me with smile, "This time I have totally behaved like a spoiled child before you."

Kami gave me a chance to show my filial duty to him even it is one-hundredth. Therefore I did not have the slightest regret when my father passed away at age 88 the following year on March 26, 2008.

My father's faith leads me to be what I am now. Not only I can hardly express my appreciation to him for that but also I cannot help but realize great responsibility I have to be a steward of his faith & pass down to the future generation.

-----Break-----

There are a few more lessons I'd like to share with you because I feel they may be the most important I learned from my father's whole search for the essence of the Konko Faith.

My father thought our founder must be like Rev. Soichiro Otsubo when he met him for the first time. Rev. Otsubo talked about Kami's will which he saw in everything around him. He always delivered our founder's teachings with deep insight into Kami's wisdom, which amazed my father.

My father thought there was no other better interpreter of our founder's teachings than Rev. Otsubo. First, Rev. Otsubo established his unwavering belief by putting our founder's teachings into practice until they were completely correct & accurate. Secondly, Rev. Otsubo understood that all our founder's teachings were about explaining the following message in the Divine Reminder, "Kami's blessings begin within our grateful & caring heart in harmony & joy, or our peaceful & joyful heart," for him these clarified the central core of our founder's teachings. Third & finally, Rev. Otsubo made the way to develop our peaceful & joyful heart perfectly clear through every moment of every day. It is achieved by respecting each & everything that happens in our daily lives with gratitude as Kami's doing. This is a path which anyone can practice.

Ordinary people have the power to choose how to accept any & everything that happens in our lives. Konko Daijin made it clear that events, feelings & notions are the very workings of Kami, our Divine Parent. They are the processes that make up our lives, & the divine arrangements for reaching Kami's will. Respecting any part of the daily processes of life, good or bad, as Kami's work leads to faith in Kami. Such faith anyone can practice.

By practicing the Konko Faith to perfection Rev. Otsubo came to have an absolute belief in that, "All is Divine Love." This is the same conclusion our founder says, "Everything that happens is Kami's doing."

The Truth of the Universe Is "All is Divine Love"

My father's search for the truth of the universe throughout his life served him well. As a reminder he kept in mind this poem of Mr. Misao Fujimura, called 'Feelings of the Precipice.' He was a student at the former Premier High School of Japan. Unable to

resolve the emotional turmoil in his life, he left it as a suicide note before throwing himself off the top of the Kegon waterfall in Nikko. It is carved in stone there to this day.

“Feelings of the Precipice”

by Misao Fujimura

How distant the cosmos; How vast the ages.

Can I, a mere 5 feet tall, attempt to fathom such greatness?

After all, what authority does the philosophy of Horatio claim?

The truth of the universe is contained in a single word, namely,

“Incomprehensibility.”

With this discontent at heart, after much anguish, I’ve come to settle on death.

Standing now on the precipice, my heart empty of fear,

For once I understand: The greatest despair is also the greatest peace.

When my father listened to Rev. Otsubo’s speech, saying, “All is Divine Love,” he clearly understood this was the very truth of the universe with great joy.

When we understand ‘All is Divine Love’ is the truth of the universe, there is no other way to accept every happening as Kami’s doing with joy & gratitude, whatever happens & no matter how difficult it may be. Even more these joy & gratitude come from respecting Kami’s workings, so it is not only our joy & gratitude but also Kami’s joy & gratitude. These joy & gratitude reflecting on Kami’s joy & gratitude are our peaceful & joyful heart, which is the essential foundation for human happiness.

Problems Collapse by Themselves

Japan’s preeminent scholar of theology, Doctor Hideo Kishimoto, says, “Religion is the definitive solution to the problems of humanity.” & he believes that, in as much as it is definitive, it can be neither relativistic nor limited.

For example, wealth can also solve some human problems but it’s meaningless in the face of death, & therefore amounts to only a relativistic solution; & the field in which medicine can solve human problems is limited to that of human health.

He believes that the solution that surpasses relativity & limitation comes from a firm belief in the existence of the Infinite Capacity. So even here, the power of resolution is outside of the problem.

In Konkokyo, we start with transforming the problem itself. We make of what we have considered to be our problems, ones that have been specially given for us by Kami. Through Mediation we change the nature of our life, so it becomes the true path Kami has intended for us.

How do we actually go about doing that? It is to accept everything that happens to us as Divine Love. When doing so, all problems are no more problems & any problem collapse by itself, because all of life’s events in themselves are Divine Love. It comes from within. Ever since my father had come to understand a truer religion.

As all is Divine Love, troubles are also Divine Love. They must be reframed as Divine Love by accepting them as exactly what we need at the present moment & Kami provides for us.

We all may think that by having faith our problems will begin to disappear, but since humans, being of finite corporality, are for this reason inherently destined for

hardships, those hardships will surely not disappear. We can't try to escape them; We change each hardship that comes our way into Divine Love. We must start with accepting all as Divine Love.

Most Supreme & Most Authentic

For real people, there is nothing more certain than what happens to & around them right now. No one can deny this. When some other power outside this is said to exist, it must be verified. There is no way to put a higher value on your destiny than by treating that which is most present, what happens to & around us right now, itself, as the workings of Kami, the supreme being, & Divine Love. & by truly accepting it in this way, this extraordinary value begins to show itself.

When we try to respect everything that happens in our daily life as Kami's doing, we can grasp, for the first time, this most authentically supreme Kami, Tenchi Kane No Kami, the Divine Parent of the Universe.