

Good Morning Everyone! Thank you very much for joining the Ikigami Konko Daijin Grand Ceremony of the Konko Church of San Francisco. I trust that you all are safe and enjoying the best of health and excellent spirits on this beautiful autumn day. It is a great honor and pleasure to deliver the sermon for this important celebration.

The first time I visited KC San Francisco was 30 years ago. At that time KC San Francisco held its 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration. It was 1990. I had had an earnest desire to serve Kami & people in the USA. So, I wanted to see as many ministers as possible on that occasion.

Two or three days before the celebration I came early to help with any Goyo. I arrived just when Rev. Richard Grange was leaving for the Colma Cemetery. He kindly took me with him. The first Goyo I did in the USA was to clean the monument to the soul of Rev. Yoshiaki Fukuda. What a great arrangement Kami had for me! While cleaning it, I swore to his Mitama spirit, "*Please allow me to do my best to spread this remarkable faith to the USA and beyond like you did.*" That was 30 years ago.

Since the outbreak of the coronavirus, more than eight months have passed. We humans cannot see it. We don't clearly know how we're infected by it, or how to avoid it. People around the world were afraid and for a while, seemed to totally stop any of their activities. In spite of tireless human efforts, there is no sign of it ever coming to an end.

Now is the time for all human beings to realize that we are powerless; before Kami we have no ability & no talent. So, we should pray to Kami all the time. We should trust in Kami for whatever it might be. It is then that belief will be born. As Kami told our Founder, "Those who have faith should not worry about the unexpected."

Now is also the time to answer some fundamental questions: *What is a human being? For what purpose are we born? And, what is faith?*

Our founder received the ***Divine Call*** this very day, Nov 15<sup>th</sup>, 161 years ago. I would therefore like to understand what the Konko Faith is, and what Kami wished to reveal to the world through our founder.

When he was a farmer, he lost many members of his family. At age 42 he was stricken with illness so severely that the doctor did not think he could recover. But his life was spared through his sincere & conscientious faith in *Konjin*, the most fearful deity in those days. He discovered that *Konjin* was not an evil deity, but one who would save people. This was his first encounter with *Tenchi Kane No Kami*, the most benevolent deity.

Since then he had a strong desire to know Kami's heart; and he did his best to realize more of it with such thoughts as: *The heart of the Universe I want to know. If there is a way, point it out for me, Great Universe!*

Two years later his brother, Shigeemon was possessed by *Konjin* and requested our founder to build *Konjin's* shrine. Even though it was a request from a mad man, he accepted this request, saying, "*I will do whatever I can.*"

Kami was very pleased and later Kami told our founder this request was **Kami's first request**. This was the origin of his faith. He himself wrote of it as the start of his faith and of receiving blessings from Konjin-sama. Since then, he did his best to respect whatever would happen as Kami's doing through sincerely following Kami's instructions.

It was two years later he received the *Divine Call* at age 46. He devoted himself to sacred Mediation, without thought of himself, helping people in trouble. Kami was very happy with his sincerity, and how steadily he was progressing in faith.

Years later the time came for Kami to reveal to him the essence of the Konko Faith, the true **way of Konko**.

The Meiji government ordered Konko Daijin to remove all of the altar fixtures. He totally was denied any way of connecting people with Kami. This was the greatest ordeal in his life. Even so, he respected it as Kami's wish and thought deep within himself: *Even if there is no worship place & no mediator – no matter **what** happens, will people still be able to receive Kami's Divine blessings at any time or place?*

Then, finally, Kami found in him the person to whom Kami would express the Divine Parent's true feelings and reveal the unprecedented truth of Kami. ***The Divine Reminder*** was disclosed to our founder for the first time in human history.

From then on, for 10 years, our founder put ***The Divine Reminder*** into practice in his daily life. The year Konko Daijin died, he wrote this impressive poem to his older son, Hagio Konko:

*The true way of Konko  
Has been made clear,  
Shines through Heaven,  
And will last forever.*

What a marvelous conviction our founder had about this 'true way' of Konko. It is a way based totally on ***The Divine Reminder***. It leads us on a sure path of mutual fulfillment between Kami & humanity. It is the way to live life in a true way of world peace. In Japanese, it is expressed as *Wa-Ga Kokoro*, which in English I call, *the peaceful joyful heart*. This is the essential foundation for human happiness, the golden rule of human life. This true **way of Konko** will shine through Heaven and last forever.

In November of 2015, young terrorists of the Islamic State attacked a theater in Paris and killed 130 innocent people. At that time, I knew for the first time that many young people joined *I. S.* from all over the world, and more than 500 from the United States. As a Konko minister, I could not help but grieve most deeply. The greatest natural gift of young people is to seek the truth and be able to sacrifice themselves to accomplish it. Those wonderful gifts of young people were snatched by the terrorist groups. Konkogyo has teachings that lead to true world peace and clearly states how humans should live life human-like & reach true happiness with Kami by realizing Kami is near to them. I really felt my responsibility was to deliver this message to young people in the world.

At that time Kami revealed this poem to me:

***To you, young people: Your true Way to happiness  
is found in this Faith. Come & learn it faithfully.  
Become a light for the world!***

Kami has listened to my wishes. Since then, I have happened to receive some e-mails from young Americans in many states who want to know about Konkokyo. America is a country of Christianity & there are many religions here. Among them are those young people somehow interested in the Konko Faith. I thought I would do my best to answer their questions as sincerely as possible and convey all of what I have learned & experienced about this Kami. I now send every sermon of mine to more than 50 young Americans.

As I mentioned, I have always sought for answers to the fundamental questions of life, especially since the outbreak of the coronavirus. And again, I have come to realize that, while we are alive, the greatest purpose of life anyone can & should have is to *polish the gem of their heart* in this world. Our Founder taught, "*Remember, this Universe always has been & always will be your home.*" We humans are born in this universe & return to the universe. Therefore, while alive in this world the most important thing is to develop our heart to totally agree with that of the universe, which is to say, with *Kami's Heart*. The peaceful joyful heart is to *be one with Kami*. We human beings are born in this world to train ourselves to have such unbreakable peace & joy in our hearts.

In order to achieve this remarkable heart which brings about divine blessings without wishing or asking for them, we should have a strong conviction that *everything that happens is Kami's sacred doing*, or that *all is Divine Love*.

Our Founder received the following revelation in the 15th year of Meiji, 1882:

*Those who have faith should not worry about the unexpected. There will be unexpected illnesses not only in summer, but also in winter. No one is aware of the blessings of Heaven & Earth which enable people to live. Kami shall have people become aware of the blessings of Heaven & Earth by having Konko Daijin be born throughout the world where the sun shines, in every country, without exception.*

When explained, everyone understands with their heads such blessings of Heaven and Earth with which we cannot survive without, such as the air we breathe, the water we drink, etc. Then what are the blessings of Heaven & Earth that no one is aware of? First of all, we should realize from the bottom of our hearts, that we are allowed to live in the vast virtue of Heaven and Earth. As the 'Adoration Prayer' says, "Living amid such gifts of Kami's great giving, how happy and grateful we are!" Then here, I believe, Kami teaches us that even unexpected illnesses are divine blessings; that through them we deepen our hearts. So is the coronavirus. If so, Konko Daijin is the person who realizes not only Kami's infinite blessings, but also *each & every happening is Kami's doing*, and *all is Divine Love*. Konko Daijin, our Founder, is the very first person who came to this realization and gives off this *light of faith*.

To save the world right now in the midst of an unexpected illness called, coronavirus, Kami keenly wishes Konko Daijin to be born throughout the world in every country without exception. Therefore, how can we manifest this wish of Kami while Konkokyo is still such a tiny religious organization in the world? When we compare the Konko faith with other religions, it appears to be impossible to accomplish this wish of Kami's. We

are apt to think why this true *Way of Konko* has not spread in the world.

We should think of this matter through Kami's eyes. *Tenchi Kane No Kami* is a kami that has existed since the beginning of time. Therefore, this **Way**, or the splendid idea of this faith, has spread all over the world from the beginning. It's just that people aren't yet aware of it. Kami has already prepared all over the world for Konko Daijin to be born, one who is aware of the real blessings of Heaven and Earth. Then why hasn't Konko Daijin yet emerged?

Our Founder wrote in 1877 this revelation:

*How is Konko written? It is written with kanji characters for 'GOLDEN LIGHT.' Any person is inclined to look toward the light. Gradually, people will come toward the light.*

The world has been getting dark even before this pandemic, by the fact that people are inclined to be selfish and think only of themselves. The coronavirus has made it worse. We should change this situation. Now people all over the world are seeking for the *true light* to make this world bright. Thus, we have a great opportunity to have Konko Daijin be born throughout the world. And at the same time the true value of Konkokyo shall be tested.

I really believe people in the world will start to be aware of the true blessings of Heaven and Earth and become interested in the Konko Faith, because Konkokyo is the *true light* to brighten the world. In response to this light, from now on, Konko Daijin will naturally appear one after another in the world.

For the last six months I newly received the e-mails of six young Americans (living in Illinois, Texas, Arizona, Florida & Missouri) who were interested in the Konko Faith. I have continued to exchange e-mails with each of them.

It is thus most important for each '*bud* of Konko Daijin,' each one of them, to deepen their faith and become a real Konko Daijin. This is what Kami so wishes, in order to manifest the true blessings of Heaven and Earth in the world and make the world the brightest place.

From this point, it is our turn. We, Konko believers ourselves, should become real figures of Konko Daijin. For that, we should respect each & every happening as Kami's sacred doing more precisely than ever, so to develop unbreakable peace & joy in our hearts to such an extent / that they would radiate & shine from within. I will do my best to do so, and eagerly wish to lead those '*buds* of Konko Daijin' in the world to become genuine Konko Daijins to save the world.

Let us pray for the world! Let us work hard for this world! Let us strive for a world that is filled with the peaceful joyful hearts of all people. May this earth we love so much, become a place where divinity & humanity will meet together in prayer, rejoice together in gratitude and delight together in mutual satisfaction.

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Thank you!