

Tenrikyo

newsletter



Translators Workshop 2025

The Translators Workshop 2025 was held at Dendocho on March 15 and attended by eleven people. Five advanced-level translators mentored six up-and-coming youth, the youngest being two 6th graders. Participants demonstrated their knowledge in a word game, kanji challenge and manga translation.

Tenrikyo Mission Headquarters in America
www.tenrikyoamericacanada.org

April 2025

“A Work in Progress” by Bishop Fukaya

- *Would You Be Able to Say “Thank you”?* -

This month, on the 18th, Oyasama will celebrate Her 227th birthday. I hope that you all are able to celebrate with Her from your respective locations.

As we approach the 140th Anniversary of Oyasama, we are at a time to further “rev up” our missionary work. The period of our pre-anniversary activities is also called the “Season for Spiritual Growth” or the “Season for Salvation work,” so let us mutually encourage ourselves and make progress.

Specifically, this month and next, we will hold Hinokishin Day activities at various locations, so I encourage you to participate at the site closest to you. Furthermore, from around the end of May or early June, we will also hold the Action Day for All Yoboku at each district, so I ask that you do your best to participate in that as well.

Now, there is something that I make a conscious effort to always do. That is, to make sure to say “thank you” whenever somebody does something for me.

This may seem like common sense, but there may be times when it slips our minds

to say “thank you” especially when we get distracted. We may not even realize when this happens.

Moreover, there may even be times when we are not able to say “thank you” depending on the situation or how we’re feeling. For example, if somebody were to do something that you did not wish for, would you be able to say “thank you” without any grudge or hesitation? If a well-meaning individual does something that ends up causing you inconvenience, would you be able to say “thank you” from the bottom of your heart?

In other words, whenever you encounter such situations when you simply cannot feel any appreciation, it may be very difficult to enthusiastically say “thank you.” Even if you recognize the sincerity behind one’s actions,

(continued on page 14)

Coming Up

- * Tenrikyo Women’s Assoc. Convention
@ Mission HQ 5/17
- * Tenrikyo Students Assoc. Spring Conference
@ Mission HQ 5/24~5/26
- * Spiritual Development Course
@ Mission HQ 6/15~7/12

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March Monthly Service Prayer

March 15, 2025

Before the spirits of the Nakayama family and our pioneers, who dedicated themselves to the North American mission, I, Hiroshi Alexander Fukaya, Bishop of the Tenrikyo Mission Headquarters in America, invoke with reverence.

You were drawn to this path through a wondrous casualty. Relying on God the Parent's blessings and the Divine Model of Oyasama, you single-heartedly devoted yourselves to this path and left us with your great legacies here in America and Canada while striving through numerous hardships spiritedly and with joy .

Presently, we are able to live each day splendidly, due to the blessings of God the Parent and the parental love of Oyasama, but also due to your many years of planting seeds of sincerity—and for this, we give you thanks daily.

Today we shall conduct this year's Spring Memorial Service and we have made various food offerings. Further, before God the Parent, we have just performed Yorozyo and the Twelve Songs of the service dance, with all of the followers gathered here today, to give praise to your many virtues and achievements.

From now, we will hold our Spring Memorial Service to give thanks for your sincere dedication, demonstrated throughout your lives.

Today, we will enshrine the spirit of Mr. George Blesch, First Head Minister of Cupertino Fellowship, in the memorial shrine and honor his legacy eternally.

As this is the final year leading up to the 140th anniversary of Oyasama, we shall convey your legacy to the next generation, and with this as our springboard, we shall dedicate ourselves further for the progress of the path. We aim to realize the Joyous Life world by striving diligently on the path of single-hearted salvation.

Please accept our sincerity as we ask for you to watch over your families, as well as all Yoboku and followers of our diocese here in America and Canada, as well as for the growth of the path.

As we aim for spiritual growth, we ask that you guide us to spiritedly focus on our work for the Path. In unison with all present, I humbly pray that this may be so.

March Monthly Service Sermon

by Rev. Takahiko Hayashi

~To Be Like Don-chan, or Maybe Not~

I want to begin my sermon today, by expressing my gratitude in being a part of this service for the Joyous Life, the March monthly service of the Mission Headquarters in America under the leadership of our Bishop.

As I have been given this task of speaking before you, I ask that you bear with me as I deliver today's sermon.

Growing up in a church, I've always had an ambivalent relationship with church life in general and with the service in particular. When I was very young, I quietly sat in the middle of the worship hall and, as instructed by my parents, took the chanpon in my hands and played it as told. Eventually, I moved onto playing the drums—and that was always so much more fun, and I always quibbled with my brother and my cousin over who would be able to play the drums for evening service. Flute was a challenge, but I enjoyed playing the kotsuzumi—the small tabor—trying to figure out how to get the sounds to echo out after each hit.

But eventually, I began to find the morning and evening services to be more of a chore and not something that I necessarily wanted to do. Not that I didn't like it, but there was always something more enjoyable to do, the least of

which was watching the 49ers on TV or playing Dungeon and Dragons with my friends. Having to rush home from high school to make sure that I took part in the evening service became more of a challenge over the years, and I found one reason or another to not be at service. Studying at the library was an excuse that I used rather frequently.

While I did experience such distancing from the service in my youth, now, as an adult, looking back, I know that my faith today—and the many things that I regard as important—was formed in a number of “moments” of small realizations about the service songs and the dance. Over the years, I noticed certain things that the lyrics were teaching me. Certain hand movements caught my attention. I can't really claim that there was a singular moment of enlightenment about the service or about my faith as a whole. But I do think that there were lots of little moments where the verses and the hand movements shaped the contours of my faith.

So, what I'd like to do today for my sermon is share some of these “moments” with you, to give you a sense of why I truly appreciate the service, the songs, and the dance, and why it's important for me to continue to do the service.

The very first “moment” came when I was quite young, probably around four or five years old. Song Four, verse four. “Night and day, dong! chang! we perform the Service; the



Rev. Takahiko Hayashi, head minister of America West Church in San Francisco

neighbors may feel it noisy and annoying.” In the English translation, the meaning is rather clear. The Japanese original is *yoru hiru don chan tsutome suru*, and when I heard this when I was four or five, I understood the lyrics to mean that there was a little child named Don, affectionately known as Don-chan, who would do the service—Don-chan *tsutome suru*—and he would do so energetically to the point of driving the neighbors crazy. And I thought, wow, I wanted to be like Don-chan; we should all be like Don-chan and annoy the heck out of our neighbors.

That was the first “moment,” when I thought that paying attention to the service lyrics made the service more interesting than it seemed at first.

The second “moment” came a little later, probably when I was in high school or college. Song Two, verse seven: “If you help others who are suffering.” By that age, I knew that helping other people was an important thing

to do in life. But a very subtle detail about the dance movement taught me there was more to it than that. When I paid greater attention to the dance movements, I came to see that it spoke not only about the importance of helping other people, but also about how to go about doing so. For the verse, we lower ourselves, even if slightly, and then raise ourselves with our hands expressing a lifting motion. I realized that this slight motion of lowering ourselves is probably meant to illustrate that we should seek to help others by first putting ourselves in their place—lowering ourselves—and then, from that place, seek to lift others—and ourselves—back up. We don’t just extend our helping hand while we stay comfortably where we are; rather, we should place ourselves in their place and rise up together. I learned at that “moment” that sharing their journey was a critical element of what it means to “help others.”

The English translation doesn’t quite do justice to this song, in my opinion. The English translation is “to help,” but in Oyasama’s original words, the expression is more like to “lift up.”

And when we lift up others who are suffering, they are not the only ones to benefit from our efforts. What I mean by that is, if we look at the verse that follows, that is, Song Two, verse eight, we learn that the reward for assisting those who suffer extends to everyone as well. “I will cut off the root of illness.” This is a blessing that involves everyone. Our personal efforts to lift up someone in suffering benefits not only that person but goes so far as to help clear away the root of illness. And if you regard the dusts

of the mind to be the root of illness, then, God is saying that our efforts to lift up the suffering are directly connected to the dusts of the mind being cleared away for everyone. That is to say, when we seek to assist those who are the most vulnerable among us, in the end, we also better the world as a whole in the most profound way.

The third “moment” that I want to bring up taught me about inner strength and our trust in God, especially in relation to unwanted judgment and ridicule from others. Slander and ridicule, being laughed at, being talked about: these are things that trouble many people. This was definitely the case for me, especially when I was young. Mikagura-uta teaches us to have faith in God especially in such moments. Song 3 verse 5 “Always ridiculed and slandered, still I will realize remarkable salvation.” Song Four, verse 1: “Whatever others may say; God is watching, so be at ease!” Even in the Ofudesaki, we are taught that “laughter of people will be God’s delight” (I-72). These sayings of God taught me that I didn’t need to worry about the slander and ridicule from others.

But, having said that, there was something not quite right about my understanding of these verses, and I wasn’t able to find a coherent answer until later in my life. “Whatever others may say; God is watching, so be at ease!” This verse definitely put my mind at ease, knowing that God is watching. But the question is, whom was God watching? When I was young, I assumed that God was watching—keeping an eye on—those who slandered me. So, I was at ease because I thought that those who said negative things about me were going to get it

from God. It did put my mind at ease, but it was a sense of smugness, knowing or hoping for retribution from God on my behalf. It felt nice but it didn’t sit quite well.

Then, I came across an anecdote of Oyasama regarding Shirobei Umetani. Shirobei was doing hinokishin at the Residence, plastering the walls of Oyasama’s Resting House. While doing so, he heard others talking about him in unflattering ways, that Shirobei was there at the Residence doing hinokishin simply because he couldn’t find work elsewhere. Such words made Shirobei quite angry, so ...

In the middle of the night, he quietly gathered his belongings and started to return to Osaka.

Walking on tiptoes, he was about to leave through the main gate when he heard Oyasama cough from her room in the Nakaminami Gatehouse. “Ah! Oyasama!” he thought; his feet stopped and his anger disappeared. Next morning, while he was having breakfast with the rest of the people at the Residence, Oyasama appeared and said:

Shirobei, is man the object? Or is God the object? Remember that God is the object.

Through this anecdote, it became clear to me that Oyasama’s concern was not about those who engaged in malicious gossip. Her gaze was directed at Shirobei—that is whom God was watching. Her parental love was concerned about his mindset in response to what others said

about his hinokishin efforts. It seemed like She wanted him to take such moment to find clarity as to what was truly important. She wanted him to take such moment to strengthen his faith, to embrace God even more strongly, knowing that God would also embrace him in return. In the Divine Directions, we are taught:

To become angered at what others say, it cannot be said that the mind is pure if one is angered. If the mind is made pure, no matter what others may say, anger will not arise. That is the purified mind.

Osashizu March 22, 1887

With the knowledge that God wants us to spiritually grow through even the unkind words of others, it gave me a completely revamped understanding of what “be at ease” meant.

Unfortunately, slander and ridicule will always exist in our world. However, please know that God wants us to take such slander and ridicule as opportunity for us to nurture our inner strength, to take delight in their laughter, and to come closer to a purified mind that is capable of bringing Joyous Life into this world. And, to always have God as our object.

The fourth “moment” concerned Song Five, verse eight. “Not only in Yamato, I will go also to other countries to save you all.” Simply put, this was a message from God that salvation was meant for everyone throughout the world. We can see that in the hand movements for this verse. Our fingers point to the right. Then, our fingers point to the left. God will go in both directions—in all directions—to bring about

salvation.

It occurred to me that God’s message about the universality of salvation is more pronounced particularly because this verse occurs in the middle of a song that concerned the unique place of Jiba. Song Five is about “place.” We do the “place” hand movement multiple times during this song, to sing about the remarkable place that is Jiba. And yet, in the middle of this song about the singular nature of the place known as Jiba, as a place where our salvation is grounded, God makes it a point to note that salvation is also to take place throughout the world. It seems to reinforce the idea that Joyous Life is meant for everyone throughout the world.

In the Ofudesaki also, we find multiple verses that teach about universality in a more direct manner. Part XIII states:

What do you think this path is to be? It is solely mutual help among all people in all matters. If all the world comes to help one another, Tsukihi will accept all your minds.

XIII:37-38

Our path is meant for all people of the world, and if we are able to embrace such ideal, God will accept our minds and act accordingly.

Ofudesaki Part XIII continues:

All of you throughout the world are brothers and sisters. There should be no one called an outsider.

XIII:43

I believe that these are remarkable words precisely, as human beings, we have a natural tendency to make distinctions as a way to protect our close loved ones. But God is teaching us that there is a better path. This verse was written by God in the midst of a massive civil war in Japan, the biggest social turmoil after the establishment of the modern Japanese state. In a time when people were turning against each other, God taught us that “All of you throughout the world are brothers and sisters. There should be no one called an outsider.”

The scripture that contains this verse is the Ofudesaki, and it is the Ofudesaki that Tenrikyo was forced to collect and destroy—every single copy—during the dark days of late 1930s and early 40s, in the years of World War Two. The imperial Japanese state, preaching that the emperor was divine and that the Japanese people were somehow better than others, sought to silence these all-embracing words of love found in the Ofudesaki.

I spoke today about four “moments” when the songs and dance of the service etched a very strong impression upon my faith, upon the growth of who I am as a person. Over the years, as I performed the service, I learned about compassion—how to go about helping others. I learned about inner strength, of how God wanted us to grow spiritually even in the face of slander and ridicule. And I learned that God wanted us to extend that compassion and love to all people without exception. Through making daily efforts toward such ends, even a little by little, these efforts, informed by the incredible teachings embedded in the Mikagura-uta songs,



will surely become the seeds of stories that will sustain us and nourish us in our efforts to bring about Joyous Life in this world, together with God. And that is why I do the service today.

Before concluding, I want to go back to the story about Don-chan. I think my interpretation of Don-chan came from a good place. I learned to do the service with enthusiasm. However, I also came to know that my interpretation was not correct. Don-chan was not a name of a child performing the service with enthusiasm to annoy the neighbors. It was an onomatopoeia, the sound of drums and cymbals. My lesson from this was that I should always have the awareness that my efforts to understand the Mikagura-uta may be wrong at times, no matter how much my heart may be in the right place. It taught me one very important lesson, that we should always be humble before the words of God, knowing that God will always guide us in the right direction in the end.

With that, I'd like to end my sermon with a word of appreciation for your kind attention. Thank you all.

1) APRIL MONTHLY SERVICE (4/20)

Officiant: Tomoyoshi Tanaka

Assistants: Junjiro Nakatomi, Takahiko Hayashi

Attendants: Motohiro Iwahashi, Gary Yashiki

Director: Satoru Onishi

Offerings Officiant: Eddie Takemoto

Sermon: Jonathan Nomachi (E)

2) CHURCH & FELLOWSHIP AFFAIRS

* Divine Sanctions:

Terminal Church: Church Roof Replacement, Temporary Transfer of the Medo (2 cases), Request for Special Service

Divine Sanction (Scheduled): End of March, 2025 Enshrinement Ceremony: May 30, 2025

Enshrinement Service: May 31, 2025

Kochi Omaha Fellowship:

Fellowship closure notice was processed on February 4, 2025.

3) PASSING AWAY FOR REBIRTH

On April 7 (Mon) at 9:12 AM, Rev. Shinichi Uemura, Honbu Jun'in and former Secretary at the Mission Headquarters, passed away for rebirth at the age of 81. The transfer of spirit ceremony was conducted on April 9 at 6:45 PM, and the funeral service was conducted on April 10 at 10 AM, both at 12 Moya. We would like to acknowledge and appreciate his many years of service and dedication.

4) TENRIKYO HINOKISHIN DAY

For those districts that have conducted their Hinokishin Day activities, please submit your Activity Report to the Mission Headquarters Secretaries (c/o Masuno).

5) 85TH AMERICA SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT COURSE (SHUYOKAI)

The 85th Spiritual Development Course at the Mission Headquarters is currently scheduled to be held from June 15 (Sun) to July 12 (Sat). These courses will be held if there are at least two applicants for the English or Japanese course, or five applicants for the Spanish course, as of one month prior (May 18).

6) TENRIKYO LANGUAGE INSTITUTE (TLI) APPLICATION

We would like to communicate a few major updates to the TLI application for the Japanese Language Department in 2026.

Eligibility:

1. Those who completed formal education for a minimum of 12 years.

2. Those who have passed N5 in the Japanese Language Proficiency Test.

When applying for the Japanese Language Department, the Certificate of Japanese-Language Proficiency must be submitted with the application.

- For those who have not passed N5, applicants will be given study materials from the Japanese Language Department in May of the application year, in order to prepare for skill certification test, to be taken by the end of August.

- Depending on the results of this skill certification test, should TLI certify that the applicant's proficiency is equivalent to that of N5, the application will be accepted, and accommodations should be made so that the application process itself will not be hindered.

Regarding application distribution:

- We plan to make downloadable application forms available from April 25.

- At the same time, details should be released regarding the study requirements for the skill certification test.

7) AMERICA ICHIRETSU-KAI SCHOLARSHIP

We are now accepting applications for the 2025 America Ichiretsukai Scholarship. Children of church, fellowship, and mission center heads who have been accepted to attend college are eligible. Application forms are available at the Mission Headquarters. The application deadline is June 30(Mon). New recipients will be announced on the August monthly service day. Those wishing to continue to receive scholarship in the second, third, or fourth year will not have to resubmit applications; however, if students plan to take time off from school or transfer to another school, they must report it to the Mission Headquarters by August 31.

8) SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA WILDFIRES RELIEF FUND

The Mission Headquarters was able to collect a total of \$17,042 in donations for the wildfire disaster that affected Southern California. Also, the Tenrikyo International Tasukeai Net gave a donation of \$15,000. Further, the Mission Headquarters in Hawaii has pledged a donation of \$5,000. We will donate these funds, along with the funds collected from our congregation members, to the Emergency Network Los Angeles (ENLA), to aid in the Southern California Wildfires disaster relief activities.

9) REGARDING BESSEKI LECTURES DURING THE MONTHS OF JANUARY AND APRIL, 2026

As the amount of expected Besseki Lecture attendees is anticipated to greatly increase during these months before and after the 140th Anniversary of Oyasama, the days when live lectures are offered will be determined in advance. You may view this schedule by visiting the Church Headquarters homepage, as well as via the Overseas Department homepage. The QR Codes for both pages can be found below:



Church HQ Calendar



Overseas Department Calendar

COMMITTEE & ASSOCIATION REPORTS**MISSIONARY COMMITTEE**

* Starting from the middle of 2025, we would like to begin monthly service duty at the Mission Headquarters for church, fellowship, and mission center heads. One of our members will reach out for the purposes of compiling a duty roster.

Nurturing & Educational Committee

* The TSA Spring Conference is scheduled for May 24 (Sat) ~ 26 (Mon).

Program: Hinokishin, lectures, and fun activities.

* The New York Center held their Three Day Course from March 28 ~ 30. Five people attended.

PUBLIC RELATIONS COMMITTEE

- * We have incorporated an ongoing section in the Ichiretsu/Newsletter to highlight everyone's efforts and activities leading up to the 140th anniversary of Oyasama so that we can share our events & ideas with all of our congregation members. Therefore, we would like to request churches, fellowships, districts, and individuals to submit your activity reports & pictures to us (Kawakami: kamishuyo@hotmail.com or Hayashi: takhayashi@gmail.com).
- * The Mission HQ Homepage has been updated with new content, including monthly service sermons, "SoulFire" reflection videos, and "Stories Inspired by Oyasama." Please visit our homepage to view these videos, and let those around you know as well. Also, the domain name has been changed from Tenrikyo.com to TenrikyoAmericaCanada.org .

FUTURE PATH

- * As a reminder, the Tenrikyo Sacred Scripture study seminar is being planned for August 30~31, 2025.

WOMEN'S ASSOCIATION

- * TWA Month to Focus on the Besseki: March 1 ~ April 30, 2025 (Sat)
 - * TWA America Convention: May 17, 2025 (Sat) @ Mission HQ
 - * Kokan Gathering: May 17, 2025 (Sat) @ Mission HQ
 - * Bake Sale: May 18, 2025 (Sun) After Mission HQ monthly service
- Sponsor: YWG

BOYS & GIRLS ASSOCIATION

- * The BGA Camp will be held from June 20 (Fri) ~ June 22 (Sun). Please sign up by April 18. Registration form link: <https://forms.gle/3Wn58k7brDhhLuyi9>
- * The Children's Pilgrimage to Jiba General Group is planned for July 24~30. Also, the BGA International Hinokishin Corps will be held from July 25~30. Applications will be distributed, so please submit them as soon as possible.
- * The 2025 BGA Service Convention will be held on August 16 (Sat). The service roster will be distributed this month, so please begin practicing. If your BGA member is not yet signed up, please do so as soon as possible.
- * Please send an email to moto1884@icloud.com if there are any new BGA members, newborn or new to the North America congregation.
- * Let's share stories about Oyasama with BGA members! Visit your churches as a family and engage in hinokishin together.

TYMANA

- * We will hold our TYMANA Convention on June 14 (Sat) from 10:30 AM. The afternoon will feature several hinokishin activities, so please bring hinokishin clothes. In the evening, we will attend a game at Dodgers Stadium. We are offering subsidized tickets for TYMANA members, so please reach out to Chairman Ryo Wong if you are interested in attending (wongryo@gmail.com).
- * The 99th TYMA Convention will be held in the Inner Courtyard of Church Headquarters on October 25 (Sat), from 1 PM.

NY CENTER

- * 4/19 BGA Fife & Drum Corps Performance (Flushing Meadow Corona Park Cherry Blossom Festival)
- * 4/26 NY TYMA Hinokishin Corps (26th ~ 27th)

Translators Workshop 2025

The Translators Workshop 2025 was held at Dendocho on March 15 and attended by eleven people. Translation Committee chair, Rev. Marlon Okazaki, welcomed the participants and shared Rev. Yoshikazu Terada's saying that translation and interpretation are salvation work.

Five advanced-level translators mentored six up-and-coming youth, the youngest being two 6th graders. Participants demonstrated their knowledge in a word game, kanji challenge and manga translation. Working in pairs, they learned to use translation apps on their cell phones, iPads and computers to aid in reading kanji.

As the teachings get passed on from one generation to the next, more sermons and talks are in English, requiring more translation and interpretation into Japanese. We congratulate the effort by families who continue to speak to their children in Japanese and the hard work put in by participants to consciously study both languages. An Interpreters Workshop is scheduled to be held in September.

(Article submitted by Rev. Hiroko Okazaki)



~ Flower Arrangements ~

Less than a year remains until the 140th Anniversary is held in Jiba on January 26, 2026. At Meishin America Church, we began holding flower arrangement classes back in 2022. Initially, with the intention of providing a space for women to enjoy one another's company, now, it has become a fun monthly gathering of women at the church. The flower arrangement was started thanks to the cooperation of several members in the diocese, including instructor Satsuki Sturgis (Brazil Dendocho) and Rita Guerra (Shimagahara).

The past 2 years, we held the class each month and each time Instructor Satsuki would bring flowers from her workplace, and create beautiful centerpieces, wreaths, and other flower arrangements, which the participants would follow in arrangement and then take home. Currently, we hold the flower arrangement every other month, and in between have begun to hold sessions where the participants share their skills with one another. For example, just this month we held a crocheting class. Thanks to everyone's selfless efforts in hinokishin, the class has also served as a means to implement the Teachings as well as introduce them to newcomers. We look forward to continuing the flower arrangement class, and eventually share the joy of faith with others around the community in doing so.

(Article submitted by Rev. Isamu Ryono)



Overnight Gagaku Gathering

On March 29th and 30th, the 20th Gagaku Overnight Gathering was held for the Boys' and Girls' Association and Student's Association. Prior to that, six members performed at the American Missionary Association's Spring Memorial Service on March 15th.



VOICES

Tenrikyo Young Men's Association of North America

Through Voices, the Tenrikyo Young Men's Association of North America (TYMANA) would like to share with you about what is going on in our TYMANA community. This month, we asked Andy Kokuryo to share a memorial message about Shun Hattori, a very important member of TYMANA and its representative for the Western Canada District for over ten years. Shun passed away for rebirth on December 2, 2024, leaving behind his wife, Miho, and two young daughters.

I was asked to write an article about Shunsuke Hattori and I'd like to start with a conversation I had with Shun years ago.

Me: Shun-kun koe dekaizen!

Shun: What?! Who cares!? If they wanna look, let them look.

Me: Yea, but everyone keeps staring at us, haha.

Shun: To be honest, I stopped caring about that a long time ago

Me: Okay, but aren't you embarrassed?

Shun: Look, I'm not that smart or nice, and I'm not really good at anything. So I figured I might as well laugh and maybe that will make other people happy.

I knew Shunsuke for practically my whole life. Although our families were close, it wasn't until we were both living in Tenri at the same time from 2016-2017 that we became close. Our dorms that we lived in were on the same block and we both "worked" at the Overseas Department. Whether I liked it or not, we saw each other every day.

I'm sure many of you have stories about Shun. My stories are personal and those memories I'll keep forever; like the time I borrowed his entire slam dunk manga collection when I was young,

but never finished reading it. The countless nights he would buy me a snack from the konbini on the way home just because he was older. How happy he looked after his first date with Miho. How the birth of his daughters, Eloha and Nico, changed his life. But I think one common aspect from these stories was his laugh. That loud, high-pitched, infectious laugh. It's the reason why so many people were drawn to him. He was one of the few people who I could feel embarrassed to be seen with, but at the same time, wanted to be around.

It's difficult for me to explain what he meant to me. He was a lot older, but I often felt like I had to watch over him. He was stubborn, but selfless; impatient, yet caring. Most of all, he was true to himself. He was a "what you see is what you get" type of person. He loved talking about his kids, nephews and nieces, and rarely talked about himself. He and I argued constantly, but that never affected our relationship.

I'm not sure how to end this, but I think if Shun were here right now, he'd tell me to relax and not take this too seriously. I'd respond with "Shun, koe dekaizen" and then we'd go on about our day.

if you end up feeling burdened as a result, it may be very challenging to communicate your appreciation.

There may also be situations when it's difficult to graciously say "thank you" when those around you do well-intended things for your sake without you knowing and you end up finding out after the fact. You might even view such individuals as being bothersome.

Additionally, despite the sincerest efforts of those around you, if the result of their actions or decisions do not align with what you would prefer, then it may be hard to say "thank you". It turns out that there are many scenarios where it proves to be difficult for one to unreservedly say "thank you".

In Japan, there is a song called "Thank you" that singer/songwriters Yousui Inoue and Okuda Tamio collaborated on. Many of you probably have heard of the song. In this song, they sing "thank you" for the various actions people have taken around them—for example, when one has smiled for them, given gifts to them, or enjoyed something due to them. But the lyrics at the end of the song also thank people who have been cold or mean to them—basically saying "thank you" to those individuals who one would typically have difficulty saying "thank you" to. At the very end of the song, the lyrics say "thank you to everyone, everyone," expressing appreciation to all people around them.

I am unsure what thoughts the songwriters had for this song, but after reading through the lyrics, it feels as though the song depicts the end of one's life, as if one is saying "thank you" on their deathbed. I, for one, would like to thank all those around me when I am about

to pass for rebirth.

Now, very similar to saying "thank you," being able to say "yes" without hesitation also may be difficult to do. There may be challenging scenarios to fully accept something with a "yes."

For example, if your boss at work asks you to complete a nearly impossible project, would you be able to accept it with a "yes" without question? Or when asked to take on more work when you are already so busy, would you be able to say "yes" and take action immediately?

In terms of the Teachings, we are taught of the importance of responding first with a "yes," no matter the circumstances, whenever requested upon by one's "spiritual parent." I believe the meaning behind this is to "first, wholly accept the spiritual virtue" behind such a request.

A great example of this lies in the story of the "Truth of Origin." Here, after Tsukihi, God the Parent, summoned the fish and serpent, "discerning their single-heartedness, God obtained their consent and received them..." I believe the portion about being "single-hearted," in other words, leaning one's mind and heart towards God the Parent and aligning oneself with God's intentions, is extremely important. At the very least, we are being asked to make an effort to do so.

We are taught that "the universe is the body of God," which includes the fact that we are shown signs through the multitude of events going on all around us.

In Instruction Four, it says:

"Global pandemics and frequent natural

disasters are all expressions of the parental love and guidance of God, who urges us humans, who are God's beloved children, to replace the mind."

(Instruction Four, page 5)

I believe, however, that on top of natural disasters and pandemics, all things that take place within God the Parent's body have a meaning and reason behind it. I believe these are messages from God the Parent. That is, the message being "God desires to see us humans lead a Joyous Life."

If you think in such a way, you'll be able to interpret any scenario as having God the Parent's intention behind it. In order to do so, I believe it is important to first and foremost accept God the Parent's guidance with a "yes." Additionally, it becomes of utmost importance that we ponder over how exactly we should act towards God's intentions.

Of course, after replying with a "yes" and thereupon receiving spiritual virtue, there may exist a scenario where you still end up having to decline with a "no." Especially in cases where the request is unreasonable, it makes sense that there exists a path to say "no." Determining how to eventually respond may be difficult, but I believe that it is very important to initially respond with a "yes" in order to receive spiritual virtue.

Understandably, some of you may think, "this type of blind acceptance feels wrong." But I believe saying "yes" in this way allows for an openness of one's heart that eventually ties to having a flexible and accepting mindset.

There is an excerpt from a Divine Directions that contains the words, "Say 'very

well (yes)'."

April 21, 1896 (On the request for instructions regarding the matter of The Ministry of Internal Affairs notifying local authorities to suppress Tenrikyo)

...If they say, "No", then answer, "Very well." There is no other way to crawl out of it than this. I give you words of assurance. If they say, "It will not do," then answer, "Very well." If they say, "No," then answer, "Very well."

As described in the notes of this Divine Direction, these words were given to help followers prepare to discuss matters regarding the covert decree issued by the Japanese government to suppress Tenrikyo. Despite such a daunting hardship before them, these words emboldened followers to have complete faith in God the Parent's blessings, to have this deeply rooted in their hearts, and to "crawl out of this knot" by replying with "Yes (very well)" with an unwavering heart. It was as though they were being told to treat this period as an opportunity to sow seeds of sincerity towards their spiritual growth.

This might be making a big leap, but to conclude, I believe the words "thank you" and "yes" are such precious words that are like a lubricant that facilitates smooth relations and harmony between people.

Additionally, saying "sorry" without any hesitation also may be challenging to do. In many cases, it may be that your pride is getting in the way.

What do you all think?

(translation by S. So)

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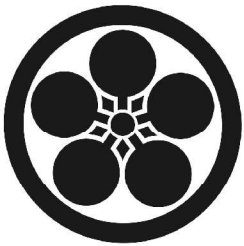
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TOWARD THE JOYOUS LIFE

TENRIKYO came into existence on October 26, 1838, when God the Parent, Tenri-O-no-Mikoto, became revealed through Oyasama, Miki Nakayama, to save all humankind. God the Parent is God of Origin and God of Truth who created this world and has nurtured and protected us ever since.



God the Parent created human beings so that by seeing us lead the Joyous Life, God could share in our joy. Leading the Joyous Life is, therefore, the purpose of our existence. Since God is our Parent, we are all God's children; thus, we should realize that we are all brothers and sisters.

“With human beings : the body is a thing lent by God, a thing borrowed. The mind alone is yours.”
Osashizu : June 1, 1889

We are taught that we borrow our bodies from God the Parent and only our minds truly belong to us; further, through the proper use of our minds, we will be able to lead the Joyous Life.