Life of Awakening

"One who wishes to be reborn in Pure Land on hearing it's a joyful world cannot become a Buddha."

- Rennyo Shonin

years ago, Mrs. Chiyono Sasaki of Kona, Hawaii, who had belonged to the former temple of the late Rev. Shonen Tamekuni, joyfully exclaimed:

Konomama ... I happily bow my head with happiness!
Good or bad ... konomama!
Right or wrong ... konomama!

Not knowing that Amida calls to me just as I am...
sonomama,
I was wandering in the dark.

[Freely translated from her Japanese, with omissions.]

The noted Zen scholar Daisetz Suzuki recognized and appreciated the myokonin’s simple acceptance of Amida’s Compassion by explaining that the concepts of “konomama” (as I am) and “sonomama” (as I am/it is) are equivalent to Shinran’s idea of “jinen honi,” which means that one is naturally or spontaneously led to the Pure Land.

As we graduate from placing our trust on a mythic Benevolent Being to realizing the truths of life as pointed out by the historical Buddha, we should go forward with “konomama” in mind -- not fretting about our lack of spiritual progress -- and remembering that “sonomama,” the understanding of life “as-it-is,” includes the principle of change. We do not have to despair that evil and suffering will always be with us. Living naturally, “konomama,” in harmony with the rest of humanity, with real concern and creative solutions to problems, we can effect a desirable change in the health and living conditions not only within our own homes and immediate surroundings but throughout the world. Our concerted efforts will, thus, set in motion the natural process that transforms our sorrowful world into a joyful Pure Land, which is in essence the state of enlightenment.

Gassho,
Kimi Yonemura Hisatsune

[Some years ago, my husband and I met the wonderfully pious Rev. Tamekuni at the home of his daughter, Yoshie Kyhos, who lives with her now retired husband Professor Don Kyhos in Davis, California, and attends services at the Sacramento Betsuin. Rev. Tamekuni’s granddaughter, Nancy Okumura-Foley, is an active member of Marin Temple in Mill Valley, California.]