

Ikigami Konko Daijin Grand Ceremony

S e r m o n O c t o b e r 2 4 , 2 0 2 1

Good morning! Happy Sunday in this New Week of Kami's blessings! Thank you very much for taking time to attend our 2021 Ikigami Konko Daijin Grand Ceremony here at KC Chicago. Due to the coronavirus pandemic, attendance today is limited. I really appreciate that many of you are offering prayers with us from your homes in Chicago, in other states & other countries, too. I hope each one of you is in good health & excellent spirits on this wonderful autumn morning.

I now really feel Kami wishes KC Chicago to renew itself. Therefore, this grand ceremony is the start of our *new Wagakokoro (hearts peaceful & joyful)* here in Chicago. For that objective, Kami wishes that I renew myself, that is, to live by decisively respecting the process of my life. Kami is requesting that I deepen the unbreakable peace & joy in my heart each & every moment without wavering even the slightest.

The essence of the Konko faith is simply described in the *Divine Reminder* that our founder received from Kami in 1873. Its message includes: "Divine blessings depend upon Wagakokoro," or one's own peaceful joyful heart. Opening the way is the most important blessing.

Since starting Mediation here in 1997, I have believed that "Opening the true way of Konko depends upon my peaceful joyful heart." I have done my best to develop my peaceful joyful heart through everything that happened in my life. However, to be honest, I have often failed, no matter how sincerely I tried. My heart has been so narrow & fragile that I sometimes could not accept what was happening with gratitude. But now I realize my weak points, that is, what kind of things I have failed to accept. But, I believe, a strong foundation for respecting everything with pleasure can be built.

Recently, from Kami, I have received that something is imminent, it's coming soon. And Kami is requesting that I renew myself, that I live decisively, by respecting the process of my own life. Let me explain.

When I went to the bathroom, I spotted a bright-red blood clot on the stool in the toilet bowl. It was Tuesday, September 14. Immediately, I remembered 24 years ago.

At that time, each time I went to the bathroom, my stools were full of fresh blood. This continued for four days. On the fourth day, I desperately prayed in front of Kami's altar, "Please through this, develop peace & joy in my heart." Then I lost strength and wasn't able to sit at the Mediation seat anymore. I went and I sat on the edge of the bed. Then suddenly I spit up blood, before somehow losing consciousness.

After regaining consciousness, three hours later, I found my face smeared with spittle and fresh blood. I could not stand, so I crawled on all fours, took a shower and laid down. While praying in bed to Kami, I began to feel that if Kami would be using me for Divine purposes, then Kami would give me new life. If not, I felt so sorry for failing to serve Kami, even though I couldn't help it. At that time, I received this poem from Kami.

Facing the cycle of life,
Giving my life to Kami,
 My heart accepts even death.
 What a relief!

So, this year on **Sept. 14th**, upon seeing fresh blood again in the bathroom, this poem quickly came to mind. On top of all of that, I think Kami was also teaching me something else.

Shodai Oyasensei taught us, "With a single heart, it all comes into being." He also taught, "With a single heart, it all breaks down." Even unknowingly the latter teaching is easy for us to follow. However, the prior one cannot be done unless we always are conscious of decisively respecting the process of life. It is the heart into which all comes into being. It is a great heart. It's an unbreakable peaceful joyful heart that doesn't waiver no matter what.

Kami is finally requesting that I perfect my Wagakokoro. I was just so thankful and tried to aim for that very heart. Then, Kami bestowed such a divine blessing on me, as if I had already developed an unbreakable Wagakokoro, even though I haven't as yet achieved that.

On the second day, my bloody stools suddenly had stopped. I was finally conscious of being decisive more decisive than ever before. I am inspired now to bring my Wagakokoro to fruition so that all things can come into being.

As I have said, Kami is now working for **me** to renew myself to such a degree that I can receive amazing divine works (some with more difficulty) one after another. Therefore, I cannot help but be mindful that I have no power, no ability and no merit. I cannot help realizing that there is no way for me to reach divine blessings without depending on Kami; there is no other way, than for me to entrust **everything** to Kami. By realizing this, I see that Kami wishes me to burn with true desire to fulfill my role for Him, our Divine Parent Kami.

We have so far received tremendous blessings from Kami since coming here in 1997 to serve Kami & people in Chicago and beyond. For the past 24 years, Kami has supported us in front and behind, and has done exquisite work. Without it, we wouldn't even be here now. No matter how much I extend my appreciation to Kami for that, it can never be enough.

Even so, with my devotion as it is, it is only my family who receive the blessings.

From now on, Kami eagerly wishes that I would live my life *decisively* respecting the process of life, and that my Wagakokoro would grow to echo into Heaven & Earth. Kami wishes people to really be saved with the precious workings coming through this worship hall. And in that way Divine glory will shine much more brightly with dignity.

I now keenly realize Kami wishes me to have the dignity to influence more and more people, more widely, and more deeply so as to establish the era of peoples' peaceful joyful hearts. And at this time, without any sign of the coronavirus pandemic coming to an end, I cannot help but realize this necessity more and more and more.

May Kami's wish come to fruition. [合掌]