

New Year's Day Sermon

Happy New Year! Thank you for joining us to welcome in the 2022 New Year. Also, thank you very much for all the prayers & the support you've given KC_CHI throughout the past year. There are many people from near & far unable to attend, but are praying with us in spirit. May each & every one of you enjoy a happy, healthy & prosperous New Year!

It has been a rather difficult year, hasn't it? The year 2021 started with coronavirus and ended with coronavirus, as well as the previous year. The spread of the novel coronavirus brought about a tumultuous situation which has crushed the whole world. And even more than that, the Omicron variant of Covid-19 has recently been spreading rapidly. But also, it was the year of some wondrous workings, full of Kami's earnest desires to manifest, through this pandemic, genuine human happiness and true world peace.

As you know, since our Ikigami Konko Daijin Grand Ceremony that was held Oct. 24, Kami has had us start a new Wagakokoro (peaceful & joyful heart) here in Chicago. There have been new things happening one after another ever since then.

- 1) Our older son, Mitusnori & his wife Yim were blessed to buy a new house in Hoffman Estates. Before they moved in, I conducted 'A New Home Blessing Ceremony' in the living room Sunday, Nov. 21. Just before the ceremony, I was praying toward the sun through the window as the clouds cleared away and the sun appeared, shining brightly. Realizing Kami's protection, I performed the service with much more emotion.
- 2) Our youngest son, Daichi, recently got a girlfriend. He introduced her to us on November 22. Right away I thanked her very much for becoming Daichi's girlfriend. And I also realized the divine wish Kami had for them through the date itself. 'November 22' could be pronounced

- as 'Yoi Fufu' in Japanese, which means 'a good couple.' I hope they develop a deeper relationship and are able to fulfill Kami's wish for them.
- 3) Through Kami's special arrangement after waiting a long time our daughter Hiroko, her husband Donghoon, & their three kids for the first time could take a week vacation in Georgia & Florida around the end of the year. I have prayed for them & believe it shall be an enjoyable, grateful trip, filled with Kami's awesome workings.
 - 4) I have exchanged e-mails with a gentleman living in KY since March of 2019. He recently e-mailed me on Nov. 29, 2021 saying: "I have got 4 people interested in this group. I believe they would be great for a book study, etc. I will contact the UU Church to have the meetings. I found out they are connected with internet and wondering if we could contact you so you might be able to lead [us]." I don't know what he calls this group, but any name would be fine. I suggested the name, *Wagakokoro Society in KY*. I really do love to talk with young Americans about the Konko Faith. And I can hardly wait for joining with this group.
 - 5) I started to exchanging e-mails with another gentleman living in NC on Dec. 2. He wanted to talk with me through Zoom, by which we could see each other online. I now have Zoom mediation with him on Saturdays. It is things like that happening one after another so that Kami's wish for us can be fulfilled to deepen peace & joy in our hearts.

Now I truly feel Kami's earnest wish to establish the *Wagakokoro* era, the era of peaceful joyful hearts for all people of the world. It is what Kami is working on. No matter what the problem is or how difficult it might be, even this coronavirus pandemic, it is just to focus on how to face it with a *Wagakokoro*, how to bring about a *Wagakokoro* from it. As everything that happens is Kami's sacred doing, Kami's glory surely shall appear through just trying to do it. Kami's virtue is a necessity for accomplishing the task – to establish the era of peaceful joyful hearts for all people.

So, with that in mind, I wrote the following two poems to welcome in the New Year 2022:

"In this year as well / Manifest with all my heart / The Airaku world.

And then, let it develop / Into the glorious Way."

「今年はも 合樂示現 畏みて 道のヒレイと なすよしもがな」

"Coronavirus / Through Divine Heart of Kami / Is to cleanse the world.

Manifest this wish of Kami / For saving humanity."

「コロナもて 世界清めの 神心 現わせ給え 世を救うため」

Airaku is where Kami & man meet together in prayer, rejoice together in gratitude and delight in mutual satisfaction. It is a world in which Kami & man commune together. That is, both Kami & man are saved and prospering. Airaku is the ideal in Konko Faith. Wagakokoro is the heart leading to Airaku.

Here is our Founder's poem. I would like to keep it in mind throughout this year as well:

"The true Way of Konko / Makes the world bright/

Shines throughout Heaven/ And will last forever"

「金光の 真の道は 明らけき 天に貫き 幾世久しき」

Every morning in my daily prayers, I pray sincerely that I can be of great service for many young people in today's world. May they come to know the essence of the Konko Faith. I hope KC Chicago becomes a Wagakokoro Center, where many young people come together to learn how to find fulfillment with Kami & live their lives truly in serving for the genuine peace of the world. For six years I have recited the following poem daily and will continue to do so.

"To you, young people!

Your true Way to happiness / Is found in this Faith.

Come & learn it faithfully. / Become a light for the world!"

「若者よ 真実の道 ここにあり 来たり学んで 世の光となれ」

The New Year 2022 has launched. Since realizing Kami has expectations for us, we should make this year one of the most promising years. Let us all welcome the New Year of 2022 with feelings of excitement. And let us do our best to deepen the peace & joy in our hearts so as to serve Kami & people in the world, and for Kami's wish for humankind to be fulfilled.

Thank you!