

Monthly Service at Konko Church of Chicago November 13, 2022

Good morning! Happy Sunday in this *new* week of Kami's blessings! And thank you very much for joining today's service. This is our monthly service for November 2022. I hope each one of you is in good health & excellent spirits on this beautiful autumn morning.

My wife, Kanako & I left for Japan on Friday, Oct. 7 to join the 55th Anniversary Celebration of KC Airaku. It was held on Sunday, Oct. 16, filled with the peace & joy of all attending. Through Kami's arrangement this trip was full of Kami's awesome workings and we had many meaningful & enjoyable times together with those we met .

We arrived at Konko Headquarters on Sunday, Oct. 9 to attend the Ikigami Konko Daijin Grand Ceremony in Honbu, that was held on Oct. 10. I saw Rev. Yomisu Oya, director of the Konkokyo International Center (KIC) on Oct. 9 to request that Mr. Massimo Claus in Italy be given a chance to stay in Honbu to experience actual Mediation with our spiritual leader, the sixth Konko-sama. The Italian, Massimo Claus eagerly wishes to become a Konko minister to let people in Italy and beyond know this true way of Konko for fulfilling their lives with Kami.

In order to let you know his sincere wish for the Konko faith, I would like to share his message for the 55th Airaku Celebration:

Dear members of the Airaku Church,

I am Massimo Claus, and I am writing to you from Italy.

On this wonderful occasion, I thought I would make my voice heard, which although of little importance, nevertheless comes from a country far away, both geographically and culturally, from Japan and Konkokyo. Despite these great differences, Konkokyo still managed to win my heart and steer my life in a different direction.

After being a Buddhist monk for many years, Konko Daijin's words managed to heal, and still heals, the wounds in my life. There are still no Konko churches in my country, but thanks to the daily streaming of the Airaku service, every day I have the opportunity to join my voice with yours in the worship of Kami. I am deeply grateful to Kami and to all of you for this great opportunity. In this way, KC Airaku has become my church and my home.

I am also deeply grateful to Takeuchi Sensei, because through his example, from the very beginning of our acquaintance, he was able to help me follow the true Konko way, later delivering me into the hands of Shodai Oyasensei to be able to have the same warmth in my heart.

Right away, Shodai Oyasensei's understandings made such an impression on me that my wife Laura and I decided to translate them into our language so that people in our country would also establish contact with the Airaku Church and Konko Daijin's teachings.

Now, Shodai Oyasensei also speaks Italian, and I am very honored that his teachings reach people through my voice. Every day I pray to receive his help and guidance.

Thank you for your attention and commitment.

With a grateful heart,

Massimo Claus ”

Ms. Ashton Kish, Ms. Comfort Artemis and Mr. Carter Seth also sent their congratulatory messages for this anniversary celebration of KC Airaku from the USA as well. Thank you very much!

I have been praying for Massimo to become a Konko Daijin in Italy and realizes everything that happens is Kami's sacred doing, or all is Divine Love. He has had an earnest desire to stay in Honbu & Japan as long as possible to learn everything about the Konko faith. Rev. Oya said that he had been thinking the best time & the best way for Massimo to learn our faith in Japan.

I also saw Rev. Michiyo Iwasaki, the Chief Administrative Minister of the whole Konkoko organization and talked about Massimo's wish.

After the 55th Airaku Celebration Kanako & I visited Yakushima to extend our appreciation to Rev. Nobuo Iwakawa of KC Yakushima. He conducted the funeral service for Mrs. Kimie Furuya, Kanako's mother who had passed away on May 6.

And this time, to my great honor, I was asked to deliver a sermon for the 110th Anniversary Celebration of KC Hakozaki that would be held on Sunday, Nov. 6. Therefore I could stay in Japan longer than usual and have free time to visit some churches that the ministers of the Shin-Ai-Kai association were at. Shin-Ai-Kai, or Kami's Love association of KC Airaku is the group of ministers who respect Rev. Soichiro Otsubo as their master. I visited KC Kameari, KC Reihoku, KC Konoha, KC Kouzan, KC Otake and KC Koujaku. They all greatly welcomed me and let me enjoy myself. All of them had their suitable altars and atmospheres where divine virtues would be overflowing.

I also visited the Ise Grand Shrine. It is a Shinto shrine dedicated to the sun goddess, Amaterasu. It is said to be built 2000 years ago. It had two main shrines, Naiku & Geku. There was no cloud and the sun shone brightly when I visited. It made me feel Amaterasu, the sun goddess, greatly welcomed me. In order to show my respect to Amaterasu I walked a lot to visit Geku & Naiku, praying to Nittenshi, the sun deity, and thinking of our founder who visited this Ise Grand Shrine in his early days. It was not glittering at all, but I felt prominence and composure backed by much history there.

I delivered my sermon for the 110th Anniversary Celebration of KC Hakozaki on Nov. 6. The worship hall there was surrounded by an awesome atmosphere that you could not help but long for and be filled with divine virtue and the sincere hearts of believers. I talked about my personal faith history filled with Kami's great arrangements ever since I saw Rev. Otsubo and respected him as the master of my life. My speech was said to be full of laughter & excitement so that the worshippers there did not feel its length.

This time I received a special one-month training program in Airaku from Kami and have returned to Chicago with a keen awareness of the great desire that Kami has for me, for Airaku Church, and for Konkokyo.

Now, I am overflowing with the desire to "receive a pure and fresh Wagakokoro, and to manifest the true Grace or Dignity of heaven and earth." In order to do so, I would like to purify the impurities, the selfishness & egoism that are nestled within me by respecting whatever may happen in my life. Therefore, I would like to confront the event that will reveal my impurities, and I can hardly wait to see what will happen.

I **now** always offer this prayer:

"I wish to put an end to the history of mankind, which has been ruled by force, and to help fulfill the divine desire to manifest the Wagakokoro era, in which Kami and mankind worship, rejoice, and enjoy each other. For this purpose, I have prayed with excitement and joy, 'Let me be of help in the world, in all countries of the world, and in all states of the U.S.A., where Konko Daijin will be born one after another, by taking the course of events as my life for nurturing my Wagakokoro that may resonate throughout heaven and earth and enrich the world.'"