

## *New Year's Day Sermon*

Happy New Year! Thank you for joining us to welcome in the New Year. Also, thank you very much for all the prayers & support you've given for KC\_CHI throughout the past year. Furthermore there are many people who were unable to attend this service, but are praying with us in spirit from near & far as well. May each & every one of you enjoy a happy, healthy & prosperous New Year!

I left for Japan with my precious wife, Kanako on Monday, Nov. 11 and stayed Japan for 19 days this time more than usual. As I told you in my sermon for our December monthly service, it was filled with Kami's awesome workings everyday, each & every moment. Then I felt I received Kami's gift as if I would gain divine virtue, as our founder said in one of his teachings: "Receive Kami's words in gratitude, and then your gift will be divine virtue so great that it cannot be loaded onto even a boat or cart."

I felt Kami would place my heart on one-up dimensional world after my heart's struggles for a long time as if the well of my heart were completely clean through bathing the dignities of the 160<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Divine Call & the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Memorial of my mentor, Rev. Soichiro Otsubo.

I now come not to fail to deepen my heart toward unbreakable peaceful & joyful heart, whatever happens & no matter how hard it may be.

What made me feel through Rev. Katsuhiko Otsubo's guidance this time was that I had to enrich the 'root-base' of my heart, rather eagerly wished to do so. Then I realized this has been Kami's first wish for me. The first words I received from Kami were as follows: "Kami bestows blessings when being filled with deep emotion after apologizing."

Kami revealed this revelation to me at age 18 when I trained myself at Kabame in Kurume city under the guide of Rev. Soichiro Otsubo. I am grateful for these words of Kami who has foreseen my life.

With all in my mind I wrote the following poem of mine to welcome the New Year 2020:

“I wish to deepen the ‘root-base’ in my heart,  
 With the realization that I have no power,  
 Leaving all to Kami,  
 My peaceful & joyful heart echoes between Heaven & Earth!”  
 吾無力 底根深めて 神任せ  
 ああ和賀心 天地に響く

Rev. Soichiro Otsubo left us the following word: “Open the Way at the 25<sup>th</sup> year.” I attended the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Memorial service of Rev. Otsubo and stated my words of appreciation to him with deep emotion during the service. I now realize this word means to me as follows, “Open my heart at the 25<sup>th</sup> year.” Kami has wished me such a wish since I started my missionary work in the USA 25 years ago.

Rev. Otsubo gave the poem of teaching to Rev. Tateo Suenaga when he went to South America to propagate the Konko Faith there about 40 years ago. Now that poem touches my heart as hoped in North America as well.

“I wish you to tell the truth, clean the people’s hearts &  
 Give the light to the lost world of darkness. You are not afraid at all.  
 You will propagate the Konko Faith & manifest peaceful & joyful hearts  
 To North America beyond the great waves.”

汝真理を語り 人心を清めん 迷暗の世界に 光明を与ふ  
 恐るるに足らず 万里の波濤  
 北米大陸に 金光教を広め 和賀心を示現せん

Every morning in my daily prayer, 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 service of genuine world peace.

I have recited the following poem daily for four years and will continue to recite it every day:

*"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  
来たり学びて 世の光となれ*

*Now and in the future, may this Konko Church of Chicago be filled with the peaceful and joyful hearts of all who come. May it become a place where Divinity and Humanity will meet together in prayer, rejoice together in gratitude, and delight together in mutual satisfaction. I am a happy human, simple & innocent. I am a human being that can't but put trust in "All is Divine Love" & "All are Kami's sacred doing."*

*The New Year 2020 has arrived. This year will be one of the most promising years Kami will expect for us. Let us all welcome the New Year of 2020 with the feelings of excitement.*