

New Year's Day Sermon

Happy New Year! Thank you for joining us to welcome in the 2021 New Year. Also, thank you very much for all the prayers & support you've given KC_CHI throughout the past year. There are many people unable to attend, but are praying from near & far with us in spirit. May each & every one of you enjoy a happy, healthy & prosperous New Year!

It has been rather a difficult year, hasn't it? The year 2020 started with coronavirus and ended with coronavirus. The spread of the novel coronavirus brought about a tumultuous situation which has crushed the whole world. It was also the year of wondrous workings, full of Kami's earnest wishes to manifest, through this pandemic, genuine human happiness and true world peace. And on top of that, for us, Rev. Katsuhiko Otsubo, our second parent minister passed away on June 5 at age of 76.

In his final message, he talked about Kami's desires toward the world & humankind: *"Given the unprecedented situation of the spread of new infections of coronavirus, I think it is time to answer the fundamental questions of what human beings are and what faith is."* Furthermore, he added, *"From now on, things that we can't even think or imagine will happen. In that sense, now is the time for Konkokyo; it is time for the true value of Konkokyo to be tested. In any case, there is no doubt that we are in the midst of a major transformation."* In so saying, he had wanted us Konko believers to be of great service for the 'Wagakoro World Missionary Movement' that would illuminate the world.

The 'unexpected thing' that he had foreseen, has happened in the United States. In the presidential election last November, there were various unjust discrepancies, and America seemed to be divided into two. Behind the scenes it was rumored that the Chinese Communist Party might be involved. Also, an 'Executive Order' could be issued and a 'State of Emergency' declared. It could be possible. Especially during this modern era every pus-filled reaction, like 'all things being done by people's own power', was about to spurt out. It was a warning to human beings of the fact that they

had forgotten such a precious way of life. That would be, “Seeing and accepting Mother Nature, the universe, as a living thing, and living together with it. Hasn’t the modern world lost sight of this way of living?” It seems that Kami eagerly hopes that the world and humankind will fundamentally change their way of living and come to purify the world.

Rev. Soichiro Otsubo, our first parent minister, taught us, “Going beyond capitalism and also beyond communism, materialistic values become changed to spiritualistic. The human heart that was facing outward should be revolutionized to look inward. This isn’t a revolution with conflict. It’s a revolution using Wagakokoro.”

It is Kami’s earnest wish to establish the Wagakokoro era, the era of peaceful joyful hearts in all people of the world. It is what Kami is working on. No matter what the problem is or how difficult it might be, 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.

We should experience how Wagakokoro affects us and prove how having a Wagakokoro brings about divine favor. First of all, it must begin within my heart, then in my home, and then all around me to the extent it will brighten the world.

Now I cannot help feeling the necessity and certainty of such a Wagakokoro Revolution. With that in mind, I wrote the following poem to welcome the New Year 2021:

“While the world today/ Is deepening in turmoil,
Now it is the time/ To brighten and make it shine/

With the true light of Konko.”

「混迷を 深めゆく世に 金光の 真の光と なるはこの時」

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 through 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 five 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.

The New Year 2021 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 2021 with feelings of excitement and 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. And let us pray that 2021 shall further the Wagakokoro Movement.