

Speech for 2023 Ikigami Konko Daijin Grand Ceremony

Good Morning Everyone! Thank you very much for joining the Ikigami Konko Daijin Grand Ceremony of the Konko Church of Chicago, celebrating the 140th anniversary of his passing. I trust that all of you are enjoying the best of health and excellent spirits on this beautiful autumn day.

Our founder passed away on October 10, 140 years ago. So now is just the right time for us to get a better understanding of what the Konko Faith is, or what Kami wished to reveal in this world through our founder.

When he was a farmer, he lost many members of his family. At age 42, he was stricken with illness so severe that the doctor did not think he could recover. But, his life was spared through his sincere & conscientious faith in *Konjin*, the most fearful deity in those days. He discovered that *Konjin* was not an evil deity, but one who saved people. This was actually his first encounter with *Tenchi Kane No Kami*, the most benevolent deity.

Since then, he had a strong desire to know more of Kami's heart, and did his best to seek it with such thoughts as: *The heart of the Universe I want to know. If there is a way for it, point it out for me, Great Universe!*

Two years later his brother, Shigeemon, was possessed by *Konjin* and requested our founder to build a shrine to *Konjin*. Even though it was a request from a mad man, and because he had been sincerely seeking Kami's heart, he accepted this request saying, *I will do whatever I can*. Kami was very pleased; and later, Kami spoke of this request as *Kami's First Request*. This was also the origin of his faith. He himself wrote of it as the start of his faith and of receiving blessings from *Konjin*. Since then he did his best to respect whatever happened as Kami's doing through sincerely following Kami's instructions.

Two years later, at age 46, he received the *Divine Call*. He devoted himself to sacred Mediation, helping people in trouble, without a thought for

himself. Kami was very happy with his sincerity, and how steadily he was deepening his faith.

Later the time came for Kami to reveal to our founder the essence of the Konko Faith, the true way of Konko.

The Meiji government ordered our founder, Konko Daijin, to remove all of the altar fixtures. He was totally denied any way of connecting people with Kami. This was the greatest ordeal of his life. Even so, he respected it as Kami's wish and thought deeply to himself, *Even if there is no worship place and no mediator, no matter what happens, will people still be able to receive Kami's Divine blessings at any time or place?*

Finally, it was then Kami found in him the person to trust with Kami's true feelings and reveal to him the unprecedented truth about Kami. For the first time in human history *The Divine Reminder* was disclosed to our founder. It was March 15, 1873. And then, one after another that same year, our founder would receive other important revelations to clarify *The Divine Reminder*, the golden rule of human life.

On April 4, Kami revealed, *Everything that happens is Tenchi No Kami's doing. This includes major upheavals.* This revelation leads all humans to deepen the peaceful joyful heart through each & every happening, whatever happened, and no matter how difficult it was. Through deepening peace & joy in our hearts we can perceive the endless divine favor and partake of boundless divine virtue.

On the tenth of the leap month of June, Kami revealed, *Though Konko Daijin is a common citizen, he has much virtue and he reveals the divine virtue of Tenchi Kane No Kami.* This revelation declares that anyone, any common citizen, can practice faith to embody *The Divine Reminder* and receive the divine virtue of *Tenchi Kane No Kami*.

Living an ordinary life, any human being can practice faith to develop peace & joy in the heart by respecting any happening as Kami's doing and then

shall be able to find a truly rewarding life with Kami.

On August 19, our founder then received the teaching that has now become known as *Konko Daijin Gorikai #3*. It describes the world of mutual prosperity for divinity and humanity that would point toward a realization of an ideal world for Kami and people. This is the ultimate world of the divine request and Kami's wish for Konkokyo. When Kami's request is fulfilled in people and their requests reach the fulfillment of the divine request, then the joyful world of divine and human interaction will open up.

For the next 10 years, our founder put *The Divine Reminder* into practice in his daily life. The year Konko Daijin died, he wrote this impressive poem to his son, Hagio Konko:

*The true way of Konko,
Has been made clear,
Shines through Heaven,
And will last forever.*

What a marvelous conviction our founder had about this 'true way' of Konko. It is a way based totally on *The Divine Reminder*. It leads us on a sure path of mutual fulfillment between Kami & humanity. It is the way to live life for true world peace. In Japanese, is expressed as *WaGa Kokoro*; in colloquial English, it's the peaceful & joyful heart. In *The Divine Reminder* is the most essential foundation for humanity to seek true happiness and peace of mind. *This true way of Konko will shine through Heaven and last forever.*

Our founder, Konko Daijin received *The Divine Reminder* from Kami 150 years ago. Beyond this 150-year history, Kami now eagerly wishes that each of us would embody *The Divine Reminder* and deepen our peaceful joyful heart to such an extent that it would echo between Heaven & Earth and enrich the world we live in.

We humans are born in this universe & return to the universe. Therefore, while alive in this world the most important thing is to develop our heart to totally agree with that of the universe, that is, with *Kami's Heart*. The peaceful joyful heart is to *be one with Kami*. We human beings are born in this world to train ourselves to have unbreakable peace & joy in our hearts.

For that, we first should realize the greatness and importance of the peaceful & joyful heart. All human conditions of happiness will be brought about through it, as is stated in *The Divine Reminder*. Whatever the sin or karma or any obstacle there may be, before the peaceful joyful heart, it will disappear like pouring boiling water onto frost.

With this realization let us do our best to deepen peace & joy in our heart through respecting each & every happening in our daily lives. And, let us become someone with a peaceful joyful heart who has great influence on those people around us. We should dedicate our best to doing this, so we might shine from within & radiate it out toward the world around us.

Depth of religious experience
Height of moral character
Greatness of influence
On those around us

When we succeed the *Wagakokoro* era – the era of peaceful & joyful hearts of people in the world – step by step will come to be realized.

Let us pray for the world! Let us work hard for this world! Let us strive for a world that is filled with the peaceful & joyful hearts of all people. May this earth we love so much, become a place where divinity & humanity will meet together in prayer, rejoice together in gratitude, and delight together in mutual satisfaction.

I thank you (from such a heart)