

## Spring Memorial, Konko Church of Chicago, March 3, 2024

Good Afternoon, Everyone! Thank you very much for attending the 2024 annual Spring Memorial Service of the Konko Church of Chicago. I hope you are all in good health & in excellent spirits.

The Konko Faith has annual memorial services twice a year, in spring & in autumn. They always remind me of our mortality & the next world. Death shall come to every human being. No one can escape from it. The more clearly we understand this fate, the more we cannot help but think of what is most important in our life, and how we might live a more meaningful life during our limited lifespan.

Our founder taught, ***When people die, they are reunited with Kami. The body dies, but the soul keeps on living. The body, which was taken from Earth, will return to Earth. And the soul, which was bestowed by Heaven, returns to Heaven. Dying is when your body and soul separate.***

As our founder taught, our soul, bestowed by Kami at birth, keeps on living after death. Therefore, those who practice faith and polish the gem of their heart, do not have to be afraid of death, and can enter the next world with gratitude.

These days, I feel like I am getting old. My legs feel unsteady and I sometimes feel I'm about to fall down. The end of my life may not come immediately, but it won't be that far away. When I think of that, and firmly believe that true world peace will not be attained without Wagakokoro, I cannot help but develop my peaceful joyful heart (Wagakokoro) to the extent of helping to accomplish true world peace.

My senior colleague and disciple of Rev. Soichiro Otsubo, Rev. Tateo Suenaga passed away on December 26 last year at age 79. My junior colleague and disciple of Rev. Otsubo, Rev. Tetsumi Nakamura passed away this year on January 29 at age 74. They are both around my age. Let speak of these close friends, colleagues and Konko ministers.

After ten years faith training at KC Airaku, Rev. Suenaga went to Brazil in April 1977 to do missionary work by getting the 6-month visa as an instructor of tea ceremony. That was because Brazil would not allow any religious people from abroad to enter.

In Brazil he did his best to sit all day at the Mediation seat praying to help those in difficulty. Then Kami's miraculous workings revealed themselves, and many people gathered to his place. He then returned to Japan with his family in October as guest speaker for the 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Ceremony of KC Airaku.

After that ceremony, he tried to return to Brazil. For two years Rev. Suenaga tried everything. But because he did religious activity in Brazil, the Brazilian government would not allow him or his family back.

Finally, Rev. Otsubo told him, "*This time go back to Brazil as a religious person.*" Rev. Suenaga knew it would be impossible, but made up his mind to sincerely follow what Rev. Otsubo said. Through Kami's miraculous arrangement Rev. Suenaga was able to return to Brazil with his family as a minister with a permanent visa.

Since then he devoted himself for 44 years to serving Kami and propagating the Konko Faith in Brazil. Today, there are 9 churches in Brazil. During these 44 years, he traveled east and west in Brazil to build the foundation for each of these nine churches. All nine churches are prospering and have a bright and promising future.

Rev. Tetsumi Nakamura served Kami and people as the head-minister of KC Iino in Miyazaki for many years. In his childhood days his grandmother often told him, “*Tetsumi-yai!* Your first name is Tetsumi. When you ease up on doing something, in Japanese, *Te wo nuku* – that has another meaning as taking the character ‘Te,’ then your name becomes *Tsumi* or sin.”

In his high school days, he was the friend with Rev. Otsubo’s second son, Mitsuaki Sensei. He often visited KC Airaku and later he was so fascinated by Rev. Otsubo that he became one of the trainees under his guidance. The more he realized what his grandmother had said to him, the more he tried to train himself to deepen peace & joy in his heart through daily happenings, like polishing by this happening and renewing by that happening. For a long time through such faith practice, he was blessed with a beautiful Wagakokoro family and church in Iino that attracted many people.

My parent minister, Rev. Soichiro Otsubo lived an admirable life with Kami. Here are two quotes of his. They were the last words he left for us:

*It is through Kami’s blessings and due to this Faith that I will be able to enter into the next world with such gratitude & delight.*

*There are no other words I might leave for the world than Wagakokoro (the peaceful, joyful heart). I have been seeking Wagakokoro in myself throughout my whole life. I seek Wagakokoro at every moment on each & every day. And continuously pray I’ll seek Wagakokoro in the next world.*

During his lifetime he had achieved such a blessed heart. He had done all this just by doing his best to accept everything that happened as *Kami’s Sacred Doing*, which is what had deepened his heart.

Rev. Soichiro Otsubo passed away on Nov. 29, 1994. His successor, Rev. Katsuhiko Otsubo happened to hear his mother, Isoe Ookusama mutter next to the coffin of her husband: *All you did & said were for Konko-sama!*

Rev. Tateo Suenaga did his best, with all his heart to spread the Konko Faith in South America. All he did was for Shodai Oyasensei, and try to reveal the greatness of his parent minister which was: to show the way for anyone to live an ordinary human way of life and become a *Living Divine Being*. Each and every thing he did

was for Oyasensei. So those who knew him might mutter: *All you did & said were for Oyasensei.*

Kami is eagerly wishing to establish the Wagakokoro era in this world, in order to attain true world peace and well-being for all humans. Wagakokoro is the essential foundation for human happiness. Seeking the peaceful heart of *Wa* and the joyous heart of *Ga* is life's desire. Wagakokoro is achieved by mutual fulfillment between Kami and people.

Through each happening in my daily life I wish to do my best more precisely to develop peace and joy in my heart with the same spirit as *Shodai Oyasensei* to brighten the world with my Wagakokoro.

Through such sincere faith practice I would like to become such a person that those who know me will mutter at the end of my life: *All you did & said were for Wagakokoro.*

Through today's annual spring memorial service and the many blessings of our faith practice to emulate the peaceful joyful heart in day-to-day life, I pray earnestly the Wagakokoro spirit take root and establish a great era for the mutual fulfillment of Kami and Humanity. May Wagakokoro come alive in each of us. May Kami's smile shine through us. May peace and joy spread worldwide.

As the soul leaves the body, I pray we have the peace and joy within to shine in the next world.