

Speech for 2024 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. I trust that all of you are enjoying the best of health and excellent spirits on this beautiful autumn day. I am very happy and greatly honored to have new two people kindly join us for today's celebration, Mr. Martin Perdoux and his wife, Mrs. Eileen Favorite who live in Chicago.

15 years have passed since KC Chicago was established in 2009. So, KC Chicago is celebrating the 15th anniversary this year. However, instead of having the anniversary celebration today, we have the usual grand ceremony. We do not have guests from Japan or ministers & believers from other Konko churches of North America. Even so, this is one of the most important celebrations.

What a golden opportunity we have this year to deepen our faith. It's our 15th Anniversary, and the celebration of the 165th Anniversary of our Founder receiving the *Divine Call*. The 210th Birthday of our Founder was celebrated on September 29. And this coming November there will also be the 30th Memorial Anniversary for my mentor, Rev. Soichiro Otsubo, the founding minister of KC Airaku – which is where I trained under his guidance for nearly 20 years.

Therefore, I would once more like to make clear the most important concept of the Konko Faith. That would be the reason why Kami would send our Founder, *Ikigami Konko Daijin*, to us and why establish mutual fulfillment between Kami and people.

Through his sincere & conscientious faith in Kami, Kami trusted our Founder so greatly that he received the *Divine Call* at age 46. Since then, he devoted himself to

sacred Mediation, helping people in trouble, without a thought for himself. Kami also tested him in all aspects of his life. Kami was so happy with his sincerity, and how steadily he was deepening his faith. So, the time came for Kami to reveal to our Founder the essence of the Konko Faith, or the true Way of Konko.

The Meiji government ordered our Founder, Konko Daijin, to remove all of the altar fixtures in 1873 – he was age 60. He was totally denied any way of connecting people with Kami. This was the greatest ordeal of his life. But even so, he respected it as Kami's doing 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 might happen, and no matter how difficult it would be. Through deepening peace & joy in our hearts we can perceive the endless divine favor and partake of boundless divine virtue.

With such important revelations in mind, since moving to Chicago in 1997 to establish a church, I have done my

best to deepen peace & joy in my heart through respecting each & every happening in my daily life, believing that the opening of this faith depends upon my own peaceful joyful heart. Through Kami's great arrangements, KC Chicago was established in 2009.

However, I could not help but realize my efforts to deepen peace & joy in my heart have not been enough. I had severe stomach pains for a few days. Then I went to emergency and was hospitalized for 4 days around the end of this August. I was afflicted with bowel obstruction.

Despite the fact that I had always wanted to live a Kami-centered life, I discovered that until then, I had done almost everything with my own power. So, the more severe the pains were, the more I clung to Kami and the more earnestly I prayed to Kami to become *one with Kami*. I then felt I was in the best position to direct my heart toward Kami moment by moment. Because of this, I realized, "This major illness of mine was actually Kami's great love."

Then I prayed and talked with Kami moment to moment: "Through these pains, please deepen peace & joy in my heart, so to be of great service for Kami's wish to establish the *Wagakokoro Era* in this world."

I had such precious training that I felt a sense of unity with Kami. I don't want to go back anymore. I wish to live my life where it dawns in prayer & goes down in prayer. I want to sit at the Mediation place all day long every day without a thought of myself, and pray for each person whom I've gotten to know, for the prosperity of humankind and true world peace.

When thinking about the human world, which is deepening with crises toward catastrophe, we can't help but feel that the movement to establish the *Wagakokoro Era* in the world is urgently needed.

Each moment is precious and each happening is precious. So, I now wish to do my best at each moment to respect each happening, whatever and no matter how difficult, to deepen peace & joy in my heart and realize that it is Kami's intension for me. Through this training, I would like to become a person filled with a peaceful joyful heart that naturally radiates around me, and then shines throughout the world.

Since then, Kami's works have been so vivid. Kami is preparing our worship hall as the place for anyone to stay comfortably as long as possible even in cold winters or hot summers. Kami brings new people to our church who are living in the Chicago area and beyond.

I would like to devote myself to the extent of my physical and spiritual abilities to manifest the true Way of Konko and fulfill Kami's wish for the world.

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.