

Monthly Service at Konko Church of Chicago December 15, 2024

Good morning! Happy Sunday in this *new* week of Kami's blessings! And thank you very much for joining today's service. This is our monthly service for December 2024. I hope each one of you is in good health & excellent spirits on this beautiful winter morning.

On Nov. 29, KC Airaku held the 30th Anniversary Memorial Service for my mentor, Rev. Sochiro Otsubo, founding minister of Airaku Church. He devoted himself to serving Kami & people throughout his life and pursued our founder's life of faith with all his heart so sincerely that he finally made clear the way for anyone to manifest the true Way of Konko.

I met Rev. Otsubo at age 15 and was awestruck by his great dignity and gentle nature. The more I listened to his teachings, the more I could not help but be drawn to them and the essence of our founder's faith. It was through Kami's great arrangements that I, then, became one of his trainees to be of service for true world peace. I was 26 years old then. I trained myself under his guidance for nearly 20 years.

As our founder taught, "To practice faith is to live day to day," Rev. Otsubo deepened his faith day to day. So, my days in training were spent just trying my best to understand his everyday Gorikai (Teaching) and each day was most fulfilling by doing that. I owe everything I am today to Shodai Oyasensei. I could learn and understand the founder's faith through him and have had an earnest desire to manifest the true way of Konko in the world. I cannot help but express my heart-felt gratitude to him.

In order to attend Shodai's 30th anniversary memorial service, I flew to Japan on Nov. 12. Then I took trains to Konko town on Nov. 14. It was after worshipping and seeing Konko-sama return home after a day serving as principal mediator in the main worship hall, I was kindly taken to Otoshima Church to stay overnight. The so-called Konkokyo Summit, or Hummingbird Meeting was being held there by its senior minister, Rev. Tokuo Iwamoto. Those attending were Rev. Kiyoji Konko (brother of the 6th Konko-sama), Rev. Tsukamoto (missionary director), Rev. Oishi (former head-minister at KC Rio de Janeiro), Rev. Kinya Suenaga (former director of the Korean Konkokyo), and Rev. Iwamoto. In short, we exchanged fruitful conversations about the essence & the future of Konkokyo. The next day I attended the ceremony for celebrating the Establishment of Konkokyo.

Then from Nov. 21 I stayed at KC Airaku. On the day before the 30th anniversary memorial of Rev. Sochiro Otsubo, a vivid semicircle rainbow appeared covering the church. I had no choice but to realize that Shodai & KC Airaku was a bridge between Heaven and Earth and people.

People gathered who could not help but express their gratitude to Shodai Oyasensei at the ceremony hall at KC Airaku. They came from South America, North America, and all over Japan. Shodai Oyasensei's 30th anniversary memorial ceremony was attended excitedly by more than 400 people. Rev. Seiji Akiyama, head-minister at KC Mogi das Cruzes, Brazil served as head-officiant. I had the role of assistant head-officiant. I truly felt the appreciation the ministers and followers had for Shodai Oyasensei has been deepening year after year, even though 30 years have passed. I am one of them.

Occasionally through Shodai, I received Kami's revelations to lead my life of faith or the important words given by him to do so. Today, among the many I've received, I would like to talk about three divine revelations or words given for me.

First of all this was the first revelation I received from Kami. After failing the entrance examination for Tokyo University, I became a trainee under his guidance - though only for three months. One night I received a divine dream. In the dream, there was a small puddle beside me where I was bowing down. From the puddle, Shodai appeared like a magical Aladdin lamp and said, "If you feel sorry and sad, blessings will be given." (わびて 悲しゅうなれば おかげをやる) Then he disappeared into the puddle. In my dream, I was so impressed that naturally I was in tears. It woke me up. But even in reality, I was squirming in tears.

After the morning prayer service that day I sought mediation with Shodai about this impressive dream of mine. He taught me: "The sadness I feel after feeling sorry is the deep emotion that our founder wrote about in 'Memoirs of Konko Daijin.' He wrote, "As I write up to this point, I am filled with deep emotion. Then Kami-Sama encouraged, 'Konko Daijin, these deep emotions are not only your own. If I, Tenchi Kane No Kami were a poet, I would express these emotions through poetry.'" I think these words of Shodai are the Divine guidance which determined the faith for my lifetime.

Secondly, another divine dream changed my life completely. During my university days I joined the radical student movements to change this world for the better. As a believer of Konkokyo, who was trying to help people in difficulties, I stood up together for discriminatory and oppressed people, and struggled to change the world. I tried for four years to do that as one of the members of the extremist sects for four years. Then I had a divine dream.

In that dream my family sought Mediation with Shodai. It seemed that I met him for the first time. My father introduced me to him at the Mediation place. There he said to me, "It is the same with Konkokyo's wish, trying to help people in difficulties as with your feelings that you fight for those who are discriminated against and oppressed." However, at that time, I thought that it would be cowardly if people were just praying and not standing up

for fighting. So, I was not convinced of those words of Shodai's and looked down. Then, Shodai said, "If you continue to join this movement, your life would be over in 4 or 5 years." With this dream, I deepened my wish to pursue the essence of Shodai's faith, so I decided to return to Airaku to become a trainee under Shodai's guidance.

As for the third, it happened the day when I and my family left KC Airaku to do missionary work in the USA. It was on September 5 in 1994. At that time Shodai was undergoing dialysis and moving around in a wheelchair. He came to the worship hall at KC Airaku and offered his prayers as I offered my prayers for departure. I expressed my deepest gratitude to him and moved to the church entrance. While saying good-bye to those who were seeing us off, someone shouted that Shodai had come to the entrance. Immediately I rushed to him. He was unconscious in his wheelchair. Soon he regained consciousness and said to me, "I just received the revelation of a whole dried radish. Because it is dried whole, it will never rot."

What a revelation it was! How deep Kami's wish to me is! Immediately I swore to Kami and Shodai, saying, "Through deepening my unbreakable peaceful & joyful heart, please let me become a major root for missionary work in North America."

Let me explain. 'Whole dried radish' is written '丸干し大根' in Japanese and pronounce 'maruboshi daikon.' 'Maru' means 'circle' and 'Marui kokoro' means 'round heart,' the same as peaceful & joyful heart. 'It will never rot' means 'unbreakable.' Daikon in Japanese means 'radish.' 'Dai' means big or major and 'kon' means 'root.'

Through this revelation Kami's deep wish for me became clear. I felt an overwhelming desire to fulfill this wish of Kami, and at the same time I was made aware of the weight of my responsibility. From the beginning of my missionary work in the USA, I wished to prove that my peaceful & joyful heart surely would open this true way of Konko.

Each moment is precious and each happening is precious. I now try to totally get rid of my selfishness. And realizing I have no power, no ability and no talent I will do my best to leave everything up to Kami to do anything each and every moment. I try to look deep in my heart through each precious happening and do everything Kami's way.

By keeping the image of whole dried radish, I wish to deepen my peaceful and joyful heart toward an unbreakable one. I now feel my great responsibility to manifest the true way of Konko in the world. Here are the prayers I recite: "By the Virtue & Mediation of Shodai Oyasensei & our Founder Ikigami Konko Daijin let me pray to Tenchi Kane No Kami that the prosperity of humankind & true world peace will be attained.

Please end the cycle of human history that for thousands of years human powers continue to seek to dominate others, and establish an era of Wagakokoro (peaceful joyful

heart), whereby Divinity & humanity can meet together in prayer, rejoice together in gratitude & delight together in mutual satisfaction. Let me do my best to accomplish this divine wish.

For that, please let me devote myself to respecting each happening as Kami's doing with gratitude, and deepen my peaceful joyful heart to the extent it resonates throughout heaven & earth and embraces the world."