

Seeking the Way in Daily Life

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Marking Fifty Years since the Founding of Religions for Peace:
Looking back on Founder's Wish with Deep Emotions



We are observing the first new year since we entered the Reiwa era. I believe that each of you have your own expectations for this year.

Last year we experienced a succession of natural disasters in Japan, such as Typhoon No. 15 (Faxai) and Typhoon No. 19 (Hagibis), which victimized many people. A great number of people have had their houses and farms destroyed, others have had their lives disrupted by electrical outages and the loss of their water supply, and there are many who have no prospect of resettling. I would like to once again offer my deepest condolences for those who lost their lives and my heartfelt sympathy for the survivors of those hardships.

Japan is a land in which natural disasters occur with frequency. I believe it is essential for each and every one of us to build on our past experience and be prepared with the wisdom we can gain from it. Self-help (having emergency supplies on hand, checking on your local risk of danger) and cooperative help (neighbors assisting each other) are both very important measures for minimizing damage and harm.

These recent natural disasters were particularly intensified by the worldwide effects of global warming. There is an extremely high possibility that this is due to human activity. In the midst of abundance, Japan has continued with overproduction, over-consumption, and waste. I believe we have reached the tipping point for serious reconsideration of our current value system.

On the other hand, last year the tenth World Assembly of Religions for Peace took place at Lindau, Germany. Additionally, this year will mark the fiftieth year since the establishment of Religions for Peace. The establishment and growth of Religions for Peace was one of the major wishes of our Founder. I am deeply moved to think that its course has now spanned half a century.

The world assembly was held with the welcome and cooperation of the Federal Foreign Office of Germany. Participation in the world assembly has not been limited to religious leaders; over the years we have observed, strengthened, and broadened connections with the governments of many countries and with the United Nations. I have no doubt that the late Founder and the many leaders who preceded us are well pleased.

For the duration of the world assembly, our members held a devotional service in the Great Sacred Hall at the organization's headquarters in Tokyo as well as in all of our Dharma centers. I was able to

attend the world assembly myself, carrying thoughts of all of you in my heart.

It is a fact that, for peace to become a reality, international and professional discussions and actions are a necessity. The roots of this come from establishing peace in our nations, communities, and homes. In the home, we need to cultivate peaceful minds and a sense of humanity that is rooted in religion. Let us reiterate this—a daily life of faith is connected directly to world peace.

This coming July and August, the Olympics will be held in Tokyo for the second time, bringing a great number of people to Japan from overseas. It is said that thirty or forty million travelers will be visiting not only Tokyo but also places all over Japan during the year. To ensure they will see the best of Japan, let us greet them with the basic human qualities of cheerfulness, kindness, and warmheartedness, and let us make ourselves helpful whenever possible.



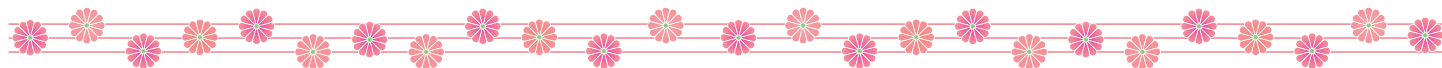
**Anywhere You Happen to Be Is “This Place Is Indeed the Place of the Way”:
Everything You Practice Every Morning and Evening Is Itself the Buddha Way**

My “Guidelines for Members’ Practice of the Faith for 2020” are as follows.

The universe and nature are undergoing creation and change without a moment’s pause. Just like this truth of the universe, we must not stagnate but instead always apply ourselves to facing everything that comes our way with a renewed spirit.

This year our organization observes the eighty-second anniversary of its founding. The cornerstone of its history to this day has been built upon the unsparing dedication of our Founder and Cofounder, as well as a number of leaders and members who preceded us.

Looking forward to the one hundredth anniversary of Rissho Kosei-kai, I hope that each one of us will be



firmly resolved to repay our debt of gratitude to our predecessors, in the spirit of “This place is indeed the place of the Way.”

Because it has been my wish that they penetrate and soak in, the “Guidelines for Members’ Practice of the Faith” have been essentially unchanged for three years. This year I have refreshed the Guidelines in part by adding the new phrase, “in the spirit of ‘This place is indeed the place of the Way.’”

As you all know, this expression is a passage from the “Meditation on the Place of the Way” that appears at the beginning of the *Kyoten*, a sutra recitation book.

The place of the Way might bring to mind the Great Sacred Hall, Dharma centers, and so forth. But wherever you happen to be, or where you live, wherever you are—actually, all of these are “places of the Way.”

When I speak of this, I always use a sumo metaphor. The Dharma centers are like sumo wrestlers’ stables. The sumo matches take place in homes, workplaces, schools, and local communities.

Truly, a lot of things come up in our daily lives. Because some people are self-centered, reaching a mutual understanding or getting along with others are not always easy.

If we encounter people who are not well matched with us, who speak unkindly or harshly to us, or who ignore us, it can cause us to feel sad and have troubling thoughts.

But human beings are motivated to overcome things when they are uncomfortable or inconvenient. If we had no struggles, I think we would not be able to improve.

Therefore, when we encounter hardships, we should take it as an opportunity to grow as human beings, where we can say to ourselves, “this is when I need to show what I’m made of” and do our best of what’s in front of us. That is the spirit of what the phrase “This place is indeed the place of the Way” means.

Especially for lay Buddhists, everything in daily life is a part of the practice. It’s not a matter of doing something particularly special, but rather it’s things

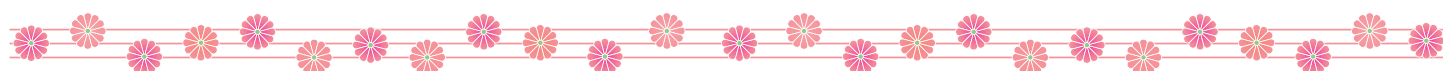
like joining and conversing with others, it’s doing work, it’s spending time with school activities, it’s cooking and cleaning, and so forth. By wholeheartedly engaging in these things without shirking, we learn good habits and become balanced both physically and mentally.

The home, in particular, is where reliance on others and selfishness are most likely to appear. Because people are in close contact at home, we know that thoughtless or hurtful remarks can fly. Holding our tempers, setting aside our selfish thoughts, and putting the teachings of the Buddha into practice are the strict and best things to do in that setting. And that is why the home is considered “the basic training ground in the development of a human being.”

The following *doka*, didactic poem, was written by Shido Munan (1603–76), a monk of the Rinzai Zen school of Buddhism.

Do not be deluded
By the word “Way”;
Know it is but the acts
You perform morning and evening.

The Buddha Way can sound terribly imposing and difficult to comprehend. But all it is saying is, the Way is whatever you do every morning and evening. This *doka* is a good representation of the spirit of the phrase “This place is indeed the place of the Way.”



**The Mind That Wants to Liberate Others
before Liberating Oneself Is Intrinsic in Everyone**

So then, specifically, what are the things that we do that are in accord with the teachings of the Buddha?

Rissho Kosei-kai makes the Lotus Sutra its basic scripture. And at the center of the teaching of the Lotus Sutra lies the bodhisattva practice.

Those who wish to attain enlightenment for themselves, and who also have the desire to liberate others, are called bodhisattvas. Applying this attitude diligently, without fail, no matter where one happens to be, is called “bodhisattva practice.” Expressed in more familiar terms, it means learning the teachings of the Buddha, making them your own, and showing kindness and consideration to others.

There is an expression, “Emancipate all others before emancipating yourself.” It tells us to do our practice with the wish to liberate others before liberating ourselves. This represents the preciousness of the bodhisattva practice.

We tend to think that unless we liberate ourselves, we can't liberate others. There are also people who are self-occupied and unable to think about others.

Attaining the attitude that we wish to liberate others before ourselves does not always require strenuous practice. It is a mindset that is intrinsic in all of us.

We're able to deeply empathize with the suffering or sadness of others when we ourselves are confused or troubled. The emotions of feeling truly sorry for another or wanting to do something for another well up naturally. Under such a circumstance we will give them a helping hand, thinking of ourselves last.

Especially a mother, if her child has fallen into a river, will jump in to save the child, regardless of whether or not she herself knows how to swim. One would expect her to think “I can't swim so I can't save my child,” but she will in fact be single-minded about saving her child and will throw herself into the river.

Even though humans differ from one another superficially, their true nature, which lies in the depths of their hearts, is identical. We all want to live purposeful lives and be happy. And instead of always quarreling, in the bottom of our hearts, we all want to get along.

But such a thing cannot happen if one has been living life aimlessly. And for that very reason we should strive to grasp the Buddha's teaching, check it against our daily lives, and then to consider how well they match, and to continually repeat this process as our basic way of living.

There are no limits on the Buddha Way, and there is no such thing as reaching the end. Even if we feel that we understand it a little bit, when something happens, our self-centered mind might appear, causing us to get angry or lash out verbally. When that happens, we should reflect, reconsider ourselves, awaken a new feeling, and live by cherishing each day and every moment. We can say that this is our diligence.

“This place is indeed the place of the Way”—With the self-realization that the act of living is itself the practice, let us devote ourselves again this year, with diligence.



Kosei Shimbun, January 5, 2020

