

“Our Earnest Wish”

Rissho Kosei-kai

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“In no time at all, our country, which was left a burnt-out wasteland when the war ended, became the most economically stable country in the world. And for public safety, there is no place so good as Japan. If I must say who gets the credit for this, I’m sorry to say it isn’t religious leaders, it is thanks to politicians.

“It simply is not the case, however, that now we Japanese are so happy that we need not concern ourselves with politics and that it is enough for religious people to light some incense and a candle, and pray. The foundation of Japan’s constitution is that sovereignty rests with the will of the people. We citizens have rights. We must choose the best politicians, so that they make good policies.”

So said Founder Nikkyo Niwano at the 1980 ceremony marking the anniversary of Rissho Kosei-kai’s foundation. Today, we are able, finally, to realize the importance of his words.

Soon we will hold the election of the House of Councilors, the upper chamber of the Japanese Diet. This election is different from those that have preceded it. In this election, we will determine the course of our country, Japan. We will make a historic choice.

World War II taught we Japanese the universal principle of humanity that “those who live by the sword, die by the sword.” The great many people who became victims of the war gave their precious lives in exchange for a new Japanese Constitution imbued with the spirit of the sovereignty of the people, respect for

fundamental human rights, and pacifism. Successive postwar government cabinets have valued the spirit of our constitution, and continued to lead Japan toward peace and prosperity. However, today that foundation seems to be crumbling.

Last year, a forced vote on the so-called Peace and Security Preservation Legislation produced an accomplished fact: namely, that the government entrusted with upholding the constitution can arbitrarily change the interpretation of it. On that day, before we knew it, we had lost something valuable—a democracy rooted in trust.

For example, the mass media seems to be struggling at introducing different opinions about that legislation, although they always had done so before. Six years ago, Reporters Without Borders ranked freedom of the press in Japan at eleventh in the world, but at present its rank has fallen to seventy-second.

Unfortunately, it is we ourselves who have brought about this state of affairs. Our minds are preoccupied with securing our own lifestyles, so much so that we have been unable to pay attention to political and societal changes.

Now we sense the danger.

In this election, the choice made—the vote cast—by each and every one of us determines what kind of country our children, our grandchildren, and all of us here now will live in. It cannot be done over again, this day on which we express our earnest wish for the future. As the sovereign people, and as Buddhists, we are sincerely approaching this election as the opportunity to once more reclaim a government we can trust.

Long ago, the Japanese nation was called Daiwa, which means “great peace,” and established in the spirit of “cherishing and respecting harmony among the people.” Now, the choice made by each and every one of us will determine the course of Japan hereafter.