President-designate Kosho Niwano visited earthquake-stricken areas in northeastern Japan from April 13 to 18. Reconstruction activities are ongoing in these areas. She visited fifteen branches related to the twelve RKK Dharma Centers within the Ibaragi, Fukushima, Tohoku, and Ohu blocs. As she toured the areas, she held members’ hands, and spoke with them. A total of 3,700 members gathered together.

Ms. Ayako Maeda, a flutist of the Tokyo Kosei Wind Orchestra, came to perform, and peaceful music filled the air. When she concluded with the Japanese song *Furusato* (Hometown), many people sang along, and the crowd became a teary-eyed chorus.

President-designate Kosho touched on the change in the minds of the people she had felt following the earthquake, saying, “Everyone came without hesitation to express the mind of compassion.” She also referred to the meaning of bodhisattva practice. “Founder Nikkyo Niwano’s biggest gifts to us are a smiling face and bodhisattva practice. If we are too concerned with ourselves alone, our hearts may be crushed. When this happens, the best way to sustain our hearts is by taking care of others. Once more, I realize that bodhisattva practice doesn’t only benefit others, it truly benefits oneself.” And she spoke about what the Founder told her family following the Chernobyl nuclear accident. The Founder said, “Don’t worry about anything. We will simply devote ourselves only to doing our best along the Buddha Way.” She recalled the strong sense of security provided by her grandfather and his strong religious faith.

She also spoke of support overseas, saying, “People all over the world are thinking of you. A lot of clothes were delivered from Bangladesh.”

Aftershocks are still occurring, and the people are still dealing with feelings of fear and grief. Through Rev. Niwano’s visit, warm feelings have filled the hearts of people in these afflicted areas.
Since the earthquake, we have received lots of support from RKK overseas branches. We have also received much heartening assistance from organizations overseas.

The Oklahoma Dharma Center received US$700 as a contribution from Quan Am Vietnamese Buddhist Temple. The two organizations have a good relationship through interfaith work with the Oklahoma Dharma Center.

In addition, we received an e-mail on March 12, the second day of the earthquake, from Rev. Abhi Janamanchi of Unitarian Universalists of Clearwater, with whom we have a cordial relationship. He asked other religious organizations in Clearwater for support, and collected relief donations of US$1,500. Adding these funds to the contribution of US$2,500 from members of UUA Clearwater, he sent us a total donation of US$4,000.

In March 29, we received support and warm encouragement from a land owner from the Sri Lanka Dharma Center. He said, “Sri Lankan Airlines announced they would not stop flights to Japan, even if others did for fear of radiation. . . . Perhaps we feel this [disaster] as something that has happened to us personally. I see that people want to do something practical to help.” And he also offered to donate half the Center’s monthly rent for the next three months, and to use the money for the rebuilding Japan.

The Karuna Foundation in Australia, which has a long-time relationship with us, has informed us that they have been conducting a fund-raising campaign for the equivalent of one million yen to support tsunami victims.

In addition to these efforts, other organizations such as Won Buddhism in South Korea, Focolare in Italy, the Buddhist Association of China, and Tzu Chi of Taiwan have also offered their support, which is a great encouragement for the recovery of our nation.

We would like to express our deepest gratitude for the generous support from all over the world, and the contributions extended to the faraway country of Japan.
Interview with President Niwano

Interviewer: How do you feel right now after coming back from your visit to the disaster areas?

President Niwano: When I actually moved into the disaster areas, I saw such devastation that for a moment I could hardly imagine a recovery. The sight made me realize how massive the force of nature is, and its horrific destructive power. The victims have been forced into difficult, sad, and terrible situations. However, in such situations, all the members are trying very hard to live together with their zen-yu, or good friends in their sangha. I was truly moved by their attitude. I felt that I was the one who was receiving encouragement, from them, instead of being the one who was supposed to give it.

There is a saying, “The muddier the water, the bigger the lotus lower.” No one has any idea how long it will take for the disaster victims to overcome their burden of hardship or sorrow. However, I believe that if we remember sayings like the one about the lotus flower, we will think of this catastrophe not only as a great tragedy but accept it as an opportunity for everyone to grow as human beings. I think this is exactly the right way to honor those who perished and to live as they would wish us to live.

Interviewer: President Niwano, you have encouraged and shaken the hand of each afflicted member during your visit to Fukushima, Miyagi, and Iwate Prefectures.

President Niwano: I have heard people in the disaster areas tell about how they lost family members or about their houses being swept away by the tsunami. When I heard their stories I felt choked with emotion. But surprisingly, most of their hands were very warm. I felt the energy of their determination to go forward even in a situation so full of difficulties. I saw this determination in their faces.

Many leaders are working hard to help fellow members or their communities, putting their own problems aside. I greatly admire their attitude and deeply believe without a doubt that they will gradually overcome their sufferings and sorrows together with everyone.

Interviewer: At this moment, many people want to do something to help the victims. How do you think they can prepare to make themselves useful to the victims?

President Niwano: I think they should try to sympathize with the victims’ sufferings and sorrows as if they were their own. I traveled throughout Japan in 1992 to visit people I had come to think of as honorary relatives. This time, when I visited the disaster areas, I felt that we were all one family. I wish us to deepen our bonds singlemindedly, and for us to cooperate and help one another as a family.

However, we must keep calm as we go about the work of recovery. I think that it is important to recognize that some people feel bitterness and sorrow, but we must avoid being overwhelmed by emotion, and just try to assess the victims’ needs and do all we can do unremittingly.

Interviewer: As I visited the disaster areas, I was reminded of the true meaning of the phrase “being a cheerful, kind, and warmhearted person,” which is in the Guidelines for Faith and Practice in 2011.
President Niwano: Cheerfulness is part of the Buddha wisdom and means never being swayed by emotion but living bravely by making the Dharma our light. Kindness includes sympathy, and warmheartedness includes compassion. That phrase means that we should go forth on the path of mutual liberation in the light of the Buddha wisdom, cultivating compassion and human warmth.

When I thought about this year’s Guidelines for Faith and Practice, I realized that they include meaningful things that we have to care about in the situation we are in right now.

Among the people in the disaster areas being evacuated from their own neighborhoods because of the tsunami or nuclear accidents, some have lost family members, homes, or jobs, and have no hope for the future.

However, they can carve their future by living a day at a time. I urge them to encourage and help one another, making the most of the people and things around them.

Interviewer: What can we learn from this disaster?

President Niwano: I think we have a mission to apply what we have learned from our experience of the disaster caused by the earthquake and tsunami, which happened on a scale that is said to occur only once in five hundred to a thousand years, for the sake of the future, and future generations. Nature’s power is unpredictable, so the current safety standards will have to be fundamentally reviewed. The process may need flexible and immeasurably creative thinking.

Also, in the aftermath of the disaster, there have been rolling blackouts because of the interruption of power supplies from the disaster areas. In the nearly seventy years since the Second World War, Japan has become materially advanced as one of the world’s great economic powers. However, we have forgotten our true heritage and have indulged in excesses of every kind, with overconsumption and waste. We need to reflect on our sense of values and lifestyle and think anew to move forward into the future. As I mentioned earlier, I think it is very important for us to take this opportunity to overcome this catastrophe together and grow as human beings instead of resigning ourselves to it as a tragic misfortune.
Special Issue
Believing in Tomorrow
by Ms. Hiroko Ono
Head of the General Affairs of the Iwaki Dharma Center

Iwaki City in Fukushima Prefecture was supposed to be a town free of disaster. With a cool climate in summer, and mild conditions in winter, the town faces the ocean and is rich with beautiful, natural vistas. Ever since the day the unforeseen, unparalleled earthquake hit, great aftershocks have continued.

Next year will mark the sixtieth anniversary of founding of the Iwaki Dharma Center; it is one of the Dharma centers with an extensive history. Rev. Takeno has been the minister of the Dharma center since 2009, and he also serves as the minister of the Taira Dharma Center, located in the same city. There are few cases in the nation in which one minister is responsible for two Dharma centers. Rev. Takeno goes back and forth between the centers many times a day, and the centers are always full of cheerfully smiling people.

The Eastern Japan Earthquake occurred on March 11. Iwaki City was struck by violent shaking with a seismic intensity of 6 plus. Just after that, the great tsunami reached the area and devastated the coastal side of the city. Moreover, the accident happened at the Fukushima nuclear plant. In addition to this threefold triple suffering, some unreliable and uncertain information began to spread, saying that the entire Iwaki city area had become a dangerous radiation zone. Actually, in spite of very little damage caused by radioactivity in the city, the delivery of supplies from all parts of the country was delayed. People tried to keep away from the evacuees and the cars coming from Iwaki. The fourth kind of suffering Iwaki had to face was from these harmful rumors. The Dharma center was temporarily closed at 4:00 p.m. on March 15 due to the breakdown of the essential utilities, frequent occurrence of aftershocks, and unspecified nuclear accidents. It was a heartbreaking decision.

Ms. Hiroko Ono, the 43-year-old head of the general affairs of the Iwaki Dharma Center, is one of the afflicted members. The oceanfront restaurant she had managed was damaged by the tsunamis. The building where the company that her husband had worked for was also swept away. Her family temporarily evacuated Fukushima Prefecture, but came back to the city on March 21.

She often visited Rev. Takeno, who had been staying at the Taira Dharma Center, for consultation. She eagerly wanted to go visit the members to confirm their safety, but many of the leaders at the Dharma center were disaster victims, just as she was. So such an effort was hardly possible. Ms. Ono was concerned about her family, herself, and the heavy duties she had been assigned as a RKK member. Although she was feeling anxious and conflicted, she finally came to a realization of how to help the crisis. She told Rev. Takeno, “We should reopen the Dharma center!” He was reluctant to do so, and said to her that many of the leaders were in such difficult circumstances it might be difficult to maintain the center. But she didn’t give up. She said, “I will open the Dharma center by myself. I will stay there as long as I can.”

This brought the temporary shutdown of the Iwaki Dharma Center to an end. Rev. Takeno requested the headquarters to send support. Responding to his call, the headquarters decided to dispatch a support team called Zen-yu tai (good friends), and the team arrived at the Dharma center on March 31.

Still, Ms. Ono had mixed feelings. She wondered whether members would really come and what would become of the Iwaki Dharma Center. Traces of the extensive damage caused by the quake still remained. It was all the members could do to simply lead their daily lives. The harmful rumors were still prevalent as well. All of this made Ms. One very insecure.

But, members started to come to the Iwaki Dharma Center after the reopening. In such a situation, it was impossible to conduct and arrange the daily duty or night duty for taking care of the center. But people visited the center one after another, saying, “Ms. Ono is working very hard. We should do what we can to help.” Student members (who had no school due to the disaster) made the center sparkling clean and organized aid supplies. Mr. Konno, a president of a company and the head of the Izumi
Chapter, brought along his employees who are also members of Rissho Kosei-kai, and he served as chanting leader for sutra recitation every day at 9:00 a.m. After the recitation, five people who were responsible the service changed from their formal black suits into work clothes and went to the members’ homes, where their help was needed. There was not a single day when they could not arrange each person’s duties for everyday recitation.

“We shall, as much as possible, bring the center back to the normal operations starting April 15,” Rev. Takeno announced to Ms. Ono and other leaders. His wished that even though the situation was very difficult, the lamp of the Dharma should not be let to go out; rather, he hoped that members would accept the mission to make the lamp ever brighter. However, soon after he made this decision, a great aftershock with a seismic scale of 6 lower hit Iwaki again. It was on the evening of April 11, just a month after the initial earthquake. Water and electricity were cut off again. Immediately Rev. Takeno ran to the Dharma center and opened all the curtains and lit the candles, thinking that members might come.

Then, one after another, cars came to the center. Members, who were frightened and anxious following the aftershock, began to arrive to the Dharma center. Men’s group members pulled out an electricity generator and put the emergency lights on. Young Wives’ group members boiled hot water in the kitchen to provide hot drinks and meals to the people there. More than thirty members gathered together and encouraged each other.

Though aftershocks continued, members kept coming to the Dharma center and making sure of each other’s safety. The Dharma Center became the place where people shared information, found comfort, and helped each other. A lot of members were afflicted by the tsunami. One of them came to the Dharma center to ask for help. She wanted to move the undamaged furniture out of her house, because the first floor of her house was flooded, and her family was forced to leave the house. When she asked for help, she was surprised to find that about 20 of Men’s and Youth Group members extended a helping hand to her. Every time Ms. Ono and other core leaders saw members coming into the Dharma Center, they ran to them and said, “It’s good to know you are safe.” It was the Sanga heartening and supporting each other.

President-designate Kosho Niwano visited the Iwaki Dharma Center on April 14, and a total of 150 members came together for the event. “Founder Nikkyo Niwano, President Nichiko Niwano, and the Sangas of Japan and over the world are with you.” Those words of President-designate Kosho resounded in the Dharma center, and touched the heart of each member.

The next day was the memorial service for Shakya-muni Buddha on April 15, and normal operations of the Dharma center had to be resumed. Ms. Ono kept welcoming members with a smiling face. Although many members came together the previous day, they came to the Dharma center again, as a pilgrimage.

The way to reconstruction has just started. She still fears continuing aftershocks and unpredictable radiation from the nuclear power plant. In addition, she is also anxious about her job and future, her husband working in such a devastated situation, and their three children. She must keep facing difficult issue, but she is doing so with a positive mental attitude. Believing that tomorrow surely be better, she stays close to Rev. Takeno, cooperates with the core leaders and chapter leaders of the Dharma Center, keeps smiling, and welcomes people who come to visit.

Believing in Tomorrow
Reportage of a member Ms. Hiroko Ono
Head of General Affairs of the Iwaki Dharma Center
Dharma Centers and Their Branches in the Areas of the Catastrophe

Tsunami Area

Fukushima No. 1 Nuclear Power Plant

Tokamachi

Tokyo

Nagamachi Branch
Nihonmatsu Branch
Koriyama D.C.
Inawashiro Branch
Kitakata D.C.
Nishiaizu Branch
Ryonuma D.C.
Aizu D.C.
Shirakawa D.C.
Tajima Branch
Hachinohe D.C.
Sannoohe Branch
Ichihara D.C.
Funabashi D.C.
Chiba D.C.
Kashima D.C.
Hanamaki D.C.
Kamaishi D.C.
Morioka D.C.
Kesennuma Branch
Ofunato Branch
Higashi D.C.
Shimodate D.C.
Kamikita Branch
Sannohe Branch
Gonohe Branch
Towada Branch
Koriyama D.C.
Tokamachi

Sendai D.C.
Shiraishi Branch
Date Branch
Kakuda Branch
Funehiki Branch
Ishinomaki Branch
Kogota Branch
Ishinomaki D.C.
Hitachi D.C.
Ibaraki D.C.
Tairu D.C.
Iwaki D.C.
Funabashi D.C.
Sakura D.C.
Sakai Branch
Takamatsu Branch
Mikkaido Branch
Edosaki Branch
Kashiwa Branch
Hasaki Branch
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A Memorial Service for the Spirits of 
the Victims of the Eastern Japan Earthquake and Tsunami 
and a Prayer for the Quick Recovery of the Survivors and Their Communities

○ Homage 
○ Meditation on the Place of the Way 
○ Taking Refuge in the Three Treasures 
○ Invocation

We put our faith in
The Eternal Buddha Shakyamuni—Great Benevolent Teacher, World-honored One;
The Tathagata Abundant Treasures, witness to the Lotus Sutra;
The emanations of the Buddha in the ten directions in the past, present, and future;
The four Great Bodhisattvas: Superior Practice, Boundless Practice, Pure Practice, and Steadfast Practice;
The Bodhisattva-Mahasattvas: Manjushri, Universal Wisdom, Maitreya, and all other Bodhisattva-Mahasattvas;
Great Bodhisattva Nichiren, revered practitioner of the Lotus Sutra;
Founder Nikkyo, Great Teacher of the One Vehicle;
Cofounder Myoko, Bodhisattva of the Way of Compassion;
The guardian spirits of Rissho Kosei-kai;
And the countless heavenly spirits in the ten directions.
May you all be present among us and know our deep devotion.

We members of Rissho Kosei-kai, all of pure heart, gather together to conduct this sincere memorial service for the spirits of the victims of the Eastern Japan Earthquake and Tsunami, and offer our heartfelt prayers that the survivors will quickly recover and rebuild their communities.
Here, we reverently pray that the spirits of 

_Ji-sei-in-ho-my-an-higashi-nihon-daishinsai-toku several thousand more than ten thousand persons, including men and women, boys and girls_

will delight in the taste of the Dharma through the sutra recitation of this memorial service.
We further pray that the suffering people will return to a peaceful life as soon as possible and that recovery of their communities will speedily be achieved.
We earnestly pray for guidance in all things through the merit we receive from reciting the Great Vehicle Sutra of the Lotus Flower of the Wonderful Dharma.

(Strike the gong and chant the O-daimoku once)
Having respectfully recited the Great Vehicle Sutra of the Lotus Flower of the Wonderful Dharma, may we transfer its merits to and thus reciprocate the boundless compassion of

The Eternal Buddha Shakyamuni—Great Benevolent Teacher, World-honored One;
The Tathagata Abundant Treasures, witness to the Lotus Sutra;
The emanations of the Buddha in the ten directions in the past, present, and future;
The four Great Bodhisattvas: Superior Practice, Boundless Practice, Pure Practice, and Steadfast Practice;
The Bodhisattva-Mahasattvas: Manjushri, Universal Wisdom, Maitreya, and all other Bodhisattva-Mahasattvas;
Great Bodhisattva Nichiren, revered practitioner of the Lotus Sutra;
Founder Nikkyo, Great Teacher of the One Vehicle;
Cofounder Myoko, Bodhisattva of the Way of Compassion;
The guardian spirits of Rissho Kosei-kai;
The guardian spirits of Rissho Kosei-kai;
The guardian spirits of member families of Rissho Kosei-kai;
And the countless heavenly spirits in the ten directions.

(Strike the gong once)

Now, we have conducted a sincere memorial service for the spirits of the victims of the Eastern Japan Earthquake and Tsunami, and we have offered our heartfelt prayers that the survivors quickly recover and rebuild their communities.

We reverently offer and transfer the merits of this recitation to the spirits of

*Ji-sei-in-hyo-an-higashi-nihon-daishinsai-toku several thousand more than ten thousand persons, including men and women, boys and girls*

so that they may delight in the taste of the Dharma and quickly accomplish the wonderful fruit of supreme enlightenment through the sutra recitation of this memorial service.

We respectfully pray and ask that you extend your hand of compassion and sympathy through your divine communication with us, so that profound guidance and protection may be given to the people in the disaster-stricken area for the speedy restoration of their peaceful lives as well as quick recovery of their communities.

(Chant the O-daimoku three times)
Rissho Kosei-kai has opened a bank account for your donations to help members who were impacted by the Eastern Japan Earthquake.

(1) **Name of Donation**
Donation for the Eastern Japan Earthquake Victims

(2) **Payee**
Name of Bank: Mizuho  
Name of Branch: Nakano  
Address of Branch: 4-44-18 Honmachi, Nakano, Tokyo  
Account Number: 1185601  
Swift Code: MHBKJPJT  
Name of Account: Higashi Nihon Daishinsai Kyuenbokin

(3) **Reception Period**
From March 15 to May 31, 2011

(4) **Please Note**
When you transfer the money, please be sure to clearly state the name of your branch, as well as your name, so that we can identify the donor.

(5) **For More Information**
Contact your nearest Local Dharma Center or Rissho kosei-kai International staff:  
Ms. Kanao or Ms. Suzuki  
Ms. Kanao (email: eriko.kanao@kosei-kai.or.jp)  
Ms. Suzuki (email: sayuri.suzuki@kosei-kai.or.jp)
Overcoming Our Aversions

by Nichiko Niwano
President of Rissho Kosei-kai

Two Sides of the Same Coin

By and large, people are convinced that there are things that they naturally dislike or are not good at. For instance, I personally feel it is extremely difficult for someone of my personality to make a public speech. Even now, I cannot say that I have conquered this, but as I have learned the Buddha’s teachings, my sense of discomfort has gradually diminished.

As in the old poem, “How sad that the newborn child / Gradually comes into knowledge / And grows distant from the Buddha,” the more we acquire worldly knowledge, the more we compare ourselves to other people, become set in judgmental thinking, and convince ourselves of our personal dislikes and lack of ability.

According to the Buddha’s teachings, however, the lives of all the people in the world are equally worthy of respect, and therefore what really matters is that each of us shines forth the light of the life we have received.

Making comparisons between others and our selves is meaningless, and also unnecessary.

Buddhism describes this world as saha-world, or the land of suffering. Furthermore, Shakyamuni teaches us that as long as people are alive, they experience suffering and that in this world, things often will not go as we wish. By learning the wisdom of the Buddha’s teachings, we can remain calm and composed when we encounter things we dislike or are not good at; we can even change our feelings into acceptance of such experiences as steps leading to our spiritual growth.

When we think that suffering and pleasure are two separate, distinct things, we want to have pleasant experiences only. But just as our own lives consist of both birth and death, so, too, are suffering and pleasure fundamentally parts of the same thing. Suffering is the seed of pleasure, and so the joy of overcoming thoughts of suffering far exceeds any joy attained without suffering. Unpleasant or painful experiences temper our minds and hearts to accept things that will be hard to deal with, and therefore they are the seeds of our spiritual growth.
Discoveries That Come from Practice

In this season, which follows closely on the start of Japan’s new fiscal year, many people are having new experiences in the workplace, at school, or in their local community that confront them with things they are not good at or dislike doing. Some of these people would like to turn and run away from them, if possible. However, thinking that something is unpleasant or disagreeable only increases one’s suffering. And besides, when we consider that this feeling of aversion derives from the ego that wants to do as it pleases, we can see that it is merely another dimension of our likes and dislikes.

I spent my childhood in the mountainous area of Niigata Prefecture, and once walked barefoot on the snowy winter roads. As long as I was curled up warmly at home, I felt like never venturing outdoors. But, when I finally did go outside, walking barefoot made my feet so cold at first that my toes tingled. After walking for a while, however, my feet warmed up, and before long the warmth spread through my whole body.

In my child’s mind at that time, I thought I had conquered the cold by fully experiencing freezing temperatures. There are many things in our daily lives that we think are difficult to deal with. They actually reflect nothing more than our preconceived notions and needless worrying, which we can overcome once we go ahead and do them. Once we do so, unexpected new discoveries and joys await us.

Once, when a Zen master was asked by a disciple, “How can I avoid the heat and the cold?” the master replied, “When you start to feel cold, make yourself experience freezing cold, and when you start to feel hot, make yourself as warm as possible.” This interesting anecdote tells us that when we make ourselves deeply experience something we dislike and push through with it, the desire to run away from it disappears. Instead of scheming and strategizing, it is important that we lead our lives honestly by learning to accept things whatever experiences come to us, and making them part of our practice.

When we know that the experience of suffering and the experience of joy are both necessary to cultivate our buddha-nature, we will be able to embrace even things that we thought were hard to confront.
One day a few months after our son was born, our youngest daughter was playing with her tiny brother as I was changing his diaper. She said, “Babies really are cute. How come they’re always so cute? Mama, I bet you love the baby the best, don’t you?”

Her words piercingly communicated the complicated emotions she must have been feeling—until recently she was the baby of the family, and was now only three years old. As the new baby had become quiet, I laid him down to sleep and took our daughter onto my lap and, holding her, said, “Can you keep a secret? Don’t tell the baby, but in many ways it’s you I love the best. Why are you so sweet?” Hearing this, her face lit up with an indescribably warm expression, and she calmly started petting her new little brother again.

About a week later, this time in the presence of her two older sisters, the three-year-old again brought up the subject, asking, “Of all your children, which one do you love best?” To their mother, they are all equally appealing, yet at the same time I love each of them differently, each in his or her own special way. This would be very difficult to communicate in words to a small child, however, and while raising the two older girls, I had also held each one of them and told her how much I loved her when we were alone together.

But our youngest daughter had chosen to ask me this when all three were present. I could understand her motivation. When I was trying to think of a reply, our second daughter offered me assistance by saying, “You love us all the same, don’t you?” I breathed a sigh of relief and said, “That’s right—of course I love all of you.” Our youngest girl would not accept that as an answer, however, and said, “All right, but if you had to choose one of us, which one would you say you love best?”

Our two other daughters also were still young, only seven and nine years old, and then there was their infant brother. I worried about what they all would think, but felt that I had to respond to the three-year-old, and answered, “Well, if I had to choose just one of you, I guess I would say that I love you best.”
President-designate Kosho Niwano

President Nichiko Niwano’s oldest daughter, Rev. Kosho Niwano was born in Tokyo. After graduating with a degree in Law from Gakushuin University, she studied at Gakurin Seminary, the training institution for Rissho Kosei-kai leaders. Presently, as she studies the Lotus Sutra, she continues to act as President-designate, making speeches for participants in the main ceremonies of Rissho Kosei-kai, and handling activities for interfaith cooperation at home and abroad. She married to Rev. Munehiro Niwano and mother of one son and three daughters.

This was just what she wanted to hear, and she quickly wore a very pleased expression while her two sisters looked on and laughed. Even so, they did not deny their little sister her satisfaction, but just accepted the situation and in doing so had saved their still-immature mother a lot of trouble.

I gave them a wink and silently mouthed my thanks.

One morning a little while after this occasion, as I was taking our youngest daughter to kindergarten she said to me, “There was no family Buddhist altar at my friend’s house. Why was that, Mama?” I am usually at a loss for words when my children ask me such direct questions, and so at this time I just answered, “I don’t know. I wonder why.” We walked on as I tried to think of some way to give her a better reply.

But the little one piped up and added, “Even though the Buddha is watching over all of us,” I never expected to hear that from our three-year-old. Caught off guard the best I could do was simply respond, “You’re right. Even though all of us are being watched over.”

Although I was still immature in some ways, my intention has always been to treat my children so that they all feel equally loved. However, I needn’t have worried about this—the Buddha is indeed watching over us all. That is what I felt I learned from my smallest daughter that day.