

# Living the LOTUS

*Buddhism in Everyday Life*

1  
2014

*Special  
Issue*

Guidance by President Niwano

## Let Us Convey Our Joy

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### Redoubling Our Efforts to Cherish Everyone We Encounter



I wish you all a very happy New Year.

The Ninth World Assembly of Religions for Peace was held in Vienna in mid-November of last year. We were moved deeply by the fact that Religions for Peace, established by our Founder and like-minded colleagues, now had a forty-some year history and had held nine world assemblies.

The theme of the ninth world assembly was “Welcoming the Other.” This is, I am sure, something that you, as members of Rissho Kosei-kai, have already put into practice through your daily encounters with other people, the joy of which you have experienced from the bottom of your heart. Even world peace starts with achieving harmony within a close family and community. I believe that we should redouble our efforts to cherish every person we encounter.

Furthermore, in the speech I delivered at the world assembly, I was able to thank the many religious figures from around the world who helped with their donations following the great earthquake and tsunami that struck northeastern Japan in March 2011. Even today, there are many people in the devastated areas who are still living in temporary housing. The serious consequences of the accident at the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant are continuing. There is no mistaking that there has been an increase in survivors’ physical and mental fatigue. For its part, our organization is concerned about the emotional and spiritual well-being of those who have been affected, and we are considering long-standing assistance for them.

## **Building the Great Sacred Hall— The Founder’s Wish for Each and Every Person to Become a Person of True Faith**

What follows is my guideline for members’ practice of the faith for 2014. It is fundamentally similar to my guidelines for 2012 and 2013, but I have added a new part.

We celebrate this year as the start of a second half of a century since the Great Sacred Hall was erected.\*

Since 1998, our organization’s general goal has been stated as “Rissho Kosei-kai cultivates the fields in the heart and mind of each and every person.”

Since 2008 we have promoted the enshrinement of the Gohonzon (an image of the Eternal Buddha Shakyamuni) in every member’s home.

In this historical context of events, we have established the foundation for our taking refuge in the Three Treasures of Buddhism.

Let us face the future, following the bodhisattva path (the path of human beings) from this day forward with the original human sense of compassion and consideration for others (with cheerfulness, kindness, and warmheartedness), in the spirit of Shakyamuni as well as the Founder and Cofounder.

### Additional remarks

Let us always remember to pray for those who perished in the great earthquake and tsunami in that struck northeastern Japan.

In the words of a classic poem,

Sowing grain seeds is best for a one-year plan,  
Planting trees is best for a ten-year plan,  
And for a lifelong plan, nothing surpasses the  
development of human beings.

When we think about the world’s future, those words make us keenly aware of the world’s many problems, such as lack of food security, nuclear accidents, and degradation of the environment. We can gain the experiences of sowing grain seeds and planting trees as well as of striving to develop the people in each sphere of our membership—at the levels of the individual, the chapter, the Dharma center, and the whole of Rissho Kosei-kai. Let us choose and pursue some of these goals and contribute to our community, our country, and our world.

This is the year of the fiftieth anniversary of the

building of our Great Sacred Hall in 1964. That was the year of the Tokyo Olympics, and the liberalization of international travel for the Japanese people. I accompanied the Founder and my mother on a pilgrimage to sacred places in India. It was a year full of significance.

Over the past half century, the Great Sacred Hall has become, as the main center of training for our lay Buddhist organization, a place for the practice of polishing each other’s minds. Through the Dharma talks of the Founder, members’ religious testimonies to the faith, and hoza, or Dharma circles, that have been held there, certainly very many people have become awakened, and their hearts and minds have been transformed there. One can sense the weight of its fifty years of history.

I believe you all know that the spirit of Buddhism and the wishes of the Founder are symbolized in the Great Sacred Hall. An image of the Eternal Buddha Shakyamuni, the Great Benevolent Teacher, the World-honored One (the Eternal Original Buddha) is enshrined there as our focus of devotion. The Great Sacred Hall is circular in shape because it represents the Lotus Sutra, which is called “the rounded teaching” and is the “teaching of a perfect harmonious whole.” The metal carving of a great bodhi tree above the curtain in front of the sacred platform, the paintings of the Three Bodhisattvas displayed in the main entrance hall, and the great steeple and the precious stupa on the rooftop all also have deep significance.

What the Founder wanted more than anything else at the time the Great Sacred Hall was built, however, was for each and every Rissho Kosei-kai member to be a person of true faith.

He said, “We have built a religious facility that compares with any in Asia or indeed the world, yet it means nothing if all we teach is a faith for our own benefit. The attitude and behavior are still lacking. Or again, if we cling to the enshrined statue of the Buddha itself for our liberation, and come to the Great Sacred Hall just to worship it, then the building we have worked so hard to build is no more than an empty shell.” This sort of concern by the Founder can be seen in many of the organization’s periodicals of the time.

Furthermore, he very clearly explained that the teachings of Shakyamuni are those of wisdom that urge us to understand the Truth and live by the Truth.

It is said that a half century is a good time for reflection. I would like to declare that the important meaning of this, the year of the fiftieth anniversary of the building of the Great Sacred Hall, is to reapproach the Founder’s guidance and review our faith.

After I inherited the Lamp of the Dharma from the Founder, the central wish I wanted to convey to all of

you is the same as the Founder's. The focus of devotion for our organization is the statue symbolizing the great Life of the universe, that is, the Truth and the Dharma to which Shakyamuni became enlightened. To worship this image does not mean relying on a transcendental existence, but instead it means to live by taking refuge in the Truth and the Dharma and abiding by them. To put it another way, it means simply discarding the self, following the Buddha's Way of seeing things in the

course of our daily lives, and putting this into practice.

My New Year's guidance for last year was titled "Learn and Then Put Into Practice," and included an implication as I have described above.

I mentioned in my guidance, among other things, that the true value of Shakyamuni's teaching lies not only in simply knowing it, but also in putting it into practice in our daily lives. I spoke of how the Founder demonstrated this through his own actions.

## **Think Deeply about the Wishes of the Founder, Learn the Teachings, Put Them into Practice, and Then Share Them with Others**

This year, what I want to add to "Learn and Then Put Into Practice" is the importance of sharing the teachings with others. It is said that the noblest happiness resulting from being born into this world as a human being comes from encountering the Truth and the Dharma. We are also taught that genuine compassion involves understanding, practicing, and sharing with others the Truth and Dharma that Shakyamuni mastered so completely and revealed to us.

There may be some people who think that it isn't easy to convey the Truth and Dharma to others. But all of us—myself, the leaders of the Dharma centers, members who have joined Rissho Kosei-kai only recently—are all companions. It is fundamental that we pass along to those who are with us, with all our hearts, the things that we have become aware of, that have moved us, no matter how incomplete or imperfect we may be.

There are many people who are living their lives eagerly, who in their homes, their places of work, and their communities are thankful for everything and uncomplaining. Others will naturally react to such an attitude with empathy and a response, thinking "I would like to live like that!" This is also an excellent way of disseminating the teachings.

By simply getting close to those who are troubled and listening to them, you can relieve their minds greatly. Getting into the habit of smiling and speaking cheerfully is also a way of demonstrating the spirit of Buddhism. Delivering documents to other people is also an important way of disseminating the teachings. There are innumerable ways to share the teachings with others, depending on the person and the circumstances.

We are told that Shakyamuni was at all times in a state of complete spiritual freedom, and that as he

walked the world disseminating the teachings he was always full of good cheer and joy. The Founder, as well, had a smile as bright as the sun as he preached the teachings. Buddhism is indeed "a perfection in the practices of benefiting oneself as well as others," and we must not forget that sharing it with others leads to our own joy and liberation.

At the ceremony marking the dedication of the Great Sacred Hall, the Founder made the following remarks.

"Now that the Great Sacred Hall has been completed, and the statue of the Eternal Original Buddha has been enshrined in it, what we must think about anew is, 'The time for us to begin true dissemination starts now. Today shall be commemorated as the day when Rissho Kosei-kai's history of spreading the Dharma took its first step.'"

This conveys the Founder's strong spirit we members need as we face a future in which we must always be moving forward and creating in order to liberate people.

We must think deeply about the wishes of the Founder and look upon this year as the start of a second half of a century since the completion of the Great Sacred Hall, uniting ourselves in one heart in devoting ourselves to learning the teachings, putting them into practice, and sharing them with others. I believe this is of utmost importance.

And so it is my fervent desire that all of you treasure your cheerful, kind, and warmhearted "original human minds," and live a purposeful life of happiness through following the bodhisattva path.

\* The celebration of the Great Sacred Hall's completion was held on May 15, 1964.