



SHANZAI

Rissho Kosei-kai

Special Issue



Guidance by President Niwano

Learn and Then Put Into Practice

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Continuing the Spirit of “Nana Korobi Ya Oki” (Stumble Seven Times but Get Back Up Eight)

I wish all of you a happy New Year.

We are greeting our second New Year since the massive earthquake and tsunami that struck northeastern Japan in March 2011. Today, there are still more than 320,000 persons living in temporary housing. Recovery and reconstruction will certainly require a lot more time.

As I mentioned last year, Japan is a country of frequent natural disasters, having experienced numerous major earthquakes and tsunamis up to now. At such times, our ancestors overcame their hardships and built the Japan of today. My hope is that we will continue that spirit of “Nana korobi ya oki” (Stumble seven times but

get back up eight) and, with our hearts united as one, build a society and a nation that is better than ever before. As for our own Rissho Kosei-kai, I hope that all members will continue to support it wholeheartedly.

Due to the massive earthquake and tsunami, Japan can be said to have come to a turning point in many respects. The accident at the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant, in particular, has caused much suffering over a wide area. There are also serious problems from radioactive waste, the “nuclear trash” that comes from nuclear power generation. We are told that this is material with a half-life of tens of thousands of years. The whole future of energy must be discussed and decided on the basis of a long-term perspective and with a sense of our responsibilities to posterity.

What is more, our relationships with China and other neighboring countries have recently fallen on difficult times. Not only between governments, but also between peoples, emotional and uncompromising attitudes are gathering strength; this is something to be alarmed about. When we respond to anger with anger and force with force, it brings about an endless cycle of mistrust and conflict. The important stance for us, as religious practitioners and as Japanese, is to continue calm and sincere conversations with our fellow passengers on Spaceship Earth, and endeavor to realize the world of the One Buddha Vehicle, a world of great peace and harmony.

Recently our organization has published statements called “Toward a Truly Prosperous Society—Beyond Nuclear Power” and “Our View on Amending the Constitution of Japan: Making Pacifism a ‘Treasure for Humankind.’” I would like you to refer to these as each of us, on our own initiative, ascertains the future course of Japan.



Guidelines for Members' Practice of the Faith: Every One of Us Should Deepen Our Understanding through Daily Practice

I would like members' guidelines for the practice of the faith for the year 2013 to be the same as for last year, as follows.

Since 1998, the sixtieth anniversary of our organization's founding, its general goal has been "Rissho Kosei-kai cultivates the fields in the heart and mind of each and every person."

Since its seventieth anniversary, in 2008, our organization has 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 our basic form for taking refuge in the Three Treasures of Buddhism.

In the spirit of Shakyamuni and of the founder and cofounder, let us now walk the path we must walk as human beings, deepening our sense of compassion and consideration for others, with cheerfulness, kindness, and warmheartedness, which are important for the great peace and harmony of the world.

Additional remarks

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

These guidelines for the practice of the faith indicate the future course of action to be cherished, based on the historical meaning of the basic form that we have

established for taking refuge in the Three Treasures of Buddhism.

It is my earnest desire that all of you will further deepen your understanding and connect it to your daily practice.

We are encountering now the teachings of Shakyamuni by way of the founder and cofounder. These teachings are not just to be comprehended, but have their real worth in being put into practice in daily life.

At the root of the Japanese word *manabu*, meaning "learn," is the word *manebu*, meaning "emulate." Applying this to the membership of Rissho Kosei-kai, the implication of "learning" is the process of coming into contact with the teachings of Shakyamuni and the words and deeds of the Sangha and, with the thought of "I would like to be like that," emulating them and putting them into practice.

There is the saying "Practice makes perfect." Even if at first you think something is difficult, repeated practice will gradually make it familiar, and eventually you will master it.

It is frequently the case that we unintentionally become self-indulgent and cause problems, but we reflect on ourselves in the light of the teachings. When one is inexperienced those shortcomings can't be helped, but in the spirit of "the now, here, and me," nothing is more vital than always putting the teachings into practice. I believe the person who embodied this was the founder.

The founder established Rissho Kosei-kai and led us to become the organization we are today. Furthermore, he put his heart and soul into the establishment and development of the World Conference of Religions for Peace. In the process he was the victim of much defamation. He developed a stomach ulcer and a duodenal ulcer and underwent surgery. The founder undoubtedly suffered private anguish.

But even with all that, the founder didn't complain, didn't feel sorry for himself, never sank into low spirits, and absolutely never criticized anyone who accused him. He accepted everything with a sunny smile. One could easily think this was an innate talent, but I accept it as the result of the founder's practice of abiding by the Buddha Dharma, always putting the teachings into practice.

Taking the founder's practice and diligence as an example, I believe we too should keep practicing continuously.



Living Beautifully like the Lotus Flower and Believing in the Sutra of the Lotus Flower of the Wonderful Dharma

As long as they live, people cannot escape trouble. Immediately following the massive earthquake and tsunami, I said the following.

“The lotus flower blooms in muddy, dark, dank water; the muddier the water, the larger the flower. We should not accept the disaster simply as tragedy; I believe it is important for all of us to let what happened be the catalyst for our greater growth as human beings.”

No matter what difficulties we encounter, this is what we should always keep in mind.

The flower of the lotus is said to have three major characteristics.

The first is called the “flower-fruit simultaneity.” Ordinary plants bear fruit after their flowers have blossomed, but the lotus plant flowers and bears fruit at the same time. This is also what is called the nonduality, or simultaneity, of cause and effect and is the symbol of cause and effect being one and the same. In other words, it means that in the same way that the lotus draws sustenance from mud, the very fact of having painful, sad experiences can lead to enlightenment.

The second is being “untainted by muck.” The lotus plant comes up out of dirty, muddy water. Regardless of this, it produces spotless, beautiful flowers. Chapter 15 of the Lotus Sutra, “Springing Up Out of the Earth,” says of the bodhisattvas “and [they] are as untainted with worldly things as the lotus flower in the water.” This indicates the importance of living according to the teachings, untainted by the self-centered values of the world.

The last characteristic is that lotuses have no nonfruit-bearing flowers. There are no failed blooms. Practically all lotuses produce flawless flowers. We can say that this symbolizes all sentient beings’ possessing the buddha-nature, the preciousness of all living beings, and their potential.

In the environs of the Great Sacred Hall at the Rissho Kosei-kai headquarters complex in Tokyo, when summer comes there are many lotuses in bloom. The large blossoms are splendid, but even the small flowers are lovely and touch the heart. It is important for your own flower to bloom to the full. The role of us who put our faith in and practice the teachings of the Sutra of the Lotus Flower of the Wonderful Dharma is to become like those lotus blossoms, and at the same time make our homes and workplaces, our communities, and on a larger scale, our country and the world, as beautiful as lotus blossoms.

In 2012 Rissho Kosei-kai began implementing our Eleventh Administration Plan, whose main theme is “The gift of life and the power to live: let us be cheerful, kind, warmhearted people.” The aspiration to be “cheerful, kind, warmhearted” is not limited to members of Rissho Kosei-kai, but should be a universal aspiration for all people to cherish. Its spirit should prevail on the personal level, obviously, as well as regional, national, and even global levels.

I would like all of you to take this to heart and in all aspects connect it to your actual practice for this year.

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