

Living the LOTUS

Buddhism in Everyday Life

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 Founder's Essay 

How to Find Partners

IN business, it's said that rather than thinking about how to sell a product, if you are able to become constantly focused on the feelings of buyers, you are sure to succeed. This is also the secret to relationships between people. At first, everyone is the opposite. We force our own thinking on others assuming that it is correct. We are dissatisfied when things don't turn out as we intend—this is the definition of selfishness. And no matter how much you try to force them, the people around you will not go your way.

This is why I always accept the other person's opinion up front. Then I consider how I can align or harmonize my thinking with theirs. If you do this, everyone will feel comfortable doing their very best for you.

No matter how hard you try to push through your own opinion, there are limits to what one person can do. The question is how you can gather talented people who will cooperate with you with hearts and minds as one. This is what's important. When you adopt the reverential attitude that everyone is undertaking bodhi-sattva practice through their work, the need for you to assert yourself completely ceases. If you accommodate yourself to others, they will definitely meet you halfway, and you will absolutely understand one another.

From *Kaisozuikan* 9 (Kosei Publishing, 1997), pp. 124–25

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Rissho Kosei-kai is a global Buddhist movement of people who strive to apply the teachings of the Threefold Lotus Sutra, one of the foremost Buddhist scriptures, in their daily lives and contribute to world peace. It was founded in 1938 by Rev. Nikkyo Niwano (1906–1999) and Rev. Myoko Naganuma (1889–1957). With the guidance of President Nichiko Niwano, Rissho Kosei-kai members actively share the Dharma widely and engage in peace activities both locally and internationally in cooperation with people from many walks of life.

The title of this newsletter, *Living the Lotus—Buddhism in Everyday Life*, conveys our hope of striving to practice the teachings of the Lotus Sutra in daily life in an imperfect world to enrich and make our lives more worthwhile, like beautiful lotus flowers blooming in a muddy pond. This newsletter aims to help people around the world apply Buddhism more easily in their daily lives.

The Mind of Reverence and the Mind of Remorse

by Rev. Nichiko Niwano
President of Rissho Kosei-kai



Advice from the Buddha

This month, let's examine right action, one of the practices of the Eightfold Path. Right action is defined by a dictionary of Buddhist terms as right deeds or proper actions. It also indicates the correct form of the body's actions, which comprise one of the three actions of body, speech, and mind. In fact, "right thinking" (mind) and "right speech" (speech), which are discussed in the June and July issues of this journal, are the two other components of "the three actions." They indicate the correct form of the mind's actions and the correct form of speaking.

What kinds of things, then, are right actions of the body? According to a Buddhist handbook, they are three: not killing, not stealing, and not engaging in sexual misconduct.

To quote the Dhammapada, "Everyone trembles before violence and everyone fears death. Compare yourself to others and you will not kill them or cause them to kill." Indeed, if you think about yourself being killed, having something stolen from you, or being in the position of suffering from improper sexual conduct, you could never do such things to someone else.

Shakyamuni realized the way of liberation from the sufferings we experience in this world. He thoroughly perceived the causes of suffering and identified the three precepts regarding the body—not killing, not stealing, and not engaging in sexual misconduct—as the means to avoid causing suffering. Therefore, I think it is natural that we accept these precepts not as an admonishment but as advice that helps us live each day brightly and joyfully, like Shakyamuni giving us warm advice, saying, "If you never forget this, you will be able to live easily and peacefully at home and in society."

Right Action Is a Matter of Course

Right actions of the body are "not killing living beings," "not stealing things," and "not getting involved in improper sexual relationships." Certainly, there is no mistaking that these are right, as killing and theft are matters that even the law addresses. Even so, if we are told that a list of prohibitions saying "you should

not . . .” constitute right action, we may feel that right action is, psychologically, a very high hurdle. If that’s the case, before we start feeling that we must keep the precepts, we should become people who, at all times, naturally, “cannot help but act in a way that avoids causing suffering (right action).”

In order to do so, the key phrases are “the mind of reverence” and “the mind of remorse.”

As Buddhists, we revere the Buddha and are diligent in pursuing our vow to become like the Buddha. However, in doing so, we often notice our own shortcomings.

This is, according to Masahiro Yasuoka (1898–1983), a renowned Japanese authority on Eastern thought, “your mind of reverence, in other words, the mind that tries to advance to an even slightly higher spiritual state and approach greatness. Thus, it is the mind, at the same time, that makes you reflect upon yourself and feel remorse for your shortcomings.” What rescues us, however, comes next. Yasuoka goes on and writes the following words.

“Self-reflection is to continue being concerned about yourself, disciplining yourself, and admonishing yourself”—in other words, if you give rise to the mind of reverence and the mind of remorse, you are apprehensive of your own shortcomings and become careful that your actions are in line with the wishes of the gods and the buddhas. We can also interpret this as meaning that if we take refuge in the Buddha and his teachings, then we can become human beings for whom right action is a matter of course.

Furthermore, it is also said that the mind of reverence and the mind of remorse are connected to the human instinct to seek progress and improvement. If this is the case, then for those of us who are about to forget ourselves and stray from the path, these two minds are what bring us back to an authentically human way of life.

We could even say that “right actions” are actions that are supported by both the mind of reverence and the mind of remorse, and that those two minds and those actions are—from the day-to-day relations of human beings to the relations of nations—important in building peace in all of them. I think they manifest a great power right now in any situation in which we are apt to lose sight of the Buddha’s Way.

From *Kosei*, August 2018





The Joy Attained by Seeing Things as They Are

by Ariunaa Bataa
Ulaanbaatar Chapter

This Dharma Journey talk was presented at the memorial day ceremony held at the Ulaanbaatar Chapter on April 15, 2018.

I am pleased to have this opportunity to share with you my spiritual journey on this auspicious occasion of the memorial day for Shakyamuni Buddha. My name is Ariunaa Bataa. I was born in 1966. I have two daughters. I specialize in food development and have a qualification as an accountant. I encountered Mrs. Zorigmaa, the head of the Ulaanbaatar Chapter, in 2005, which gave me an opportunity to join Rissho Kosei-kai. Invited by Mrs. Zorigmaa, I participated in memorial day ceremonies and events of the Ulaanbaatar Chapter a number of times. At first, however, I did not intend to become a member. I had been indifferent to religion since I was young, and did not believe in the existence of buddhas. Soon after I graduated university, I even argued with a monk of Gandantegchinlen Monastery about whether or not buddhas exist. Soon after I had completed the course of the department of philosophy at the university with perfect score, I became haughty enough to believe I

knew everything. As I recall those days now, I feel deeply ashamed of myself.

While participating in Rissho Kosei-kai's ceremonies, my understanding of the teachings gradually deepened, and I came to realize the magnificence of the teachings, which aimed at "practicing putting others first," "developing our own personality," and "leading all people to happiness." Then I found myself attracted to heartfelt interactions among the sangha members and *hoza* (Dharma circle), and began to look forward to the next events for the members. In 2009 I became a member of Rissho Kosei-kai.

Soon after I joined the organization, Mrs. Zorigmaa appointed me as head of educational affairs of the Ulaanbaatar Chapter. I turned down the appointment, saying that as a new member I had not yet had understanding of the teachings, and that there were a lot of things I did not know. Mrs. Zorigmaa told me that it was important to practice the teachings at the same time as I was learning them, instead of doing so after having learned them. Receiving her guidance, I decided to accept the appointment. I have since engaged in dissemination and teaching the ritual etiquette of Rissho Kosei-kai at the Ulaanbaatar Chapter and other local branches. I have also been working on a project to support the training of nurses in Mongolia, which was launched by Rissho Kosei-kai headquarters in Tokyo, recruiting and training students. I have also served as accountant at the Ulaanbaatar Chapter, and area leader of the Bayangol district of Ulaanbaatar.

When I participated in the leaders training seminar



Ms. Ariunaa shares her Dharma Journey with members at the Ulaanbaatar Chapter.

held at the Tokyo headquarters in 2011 and 2012, I made friends with wonderful bodhisattvas from around the world. I was moved by the attitude of the participants from other countries, who were always willing to accept everything according to the Buddha's teachings. I wished that I could become a person like them.

In October 2017, I received the Dharma teacher certificate and was chosen as a member of the team who would prepare for the ceremony enshrining the Gohonzon (the focus of devotion) at the Erdenet Hoza Center, some 350 km away from Ulaanbaatar. Through this role, I feel I am receiving the opportunity to take a deeper look into myself.

On July 1, we had the Gohonzon enshrined at the Erdenet Hoza Center. To prepare for it, on May 8 and 9, the four of us—Mrs. Zorigmaa, Mr. Zorigt, the chapter accountant, and I—went to the Erdenet Hoza Center. When we arrived at the center, the area leader remained seated on a chair and didn't seem to welcome us. When we recited the sutra, I felt uneasy, since the area leader did not join us, but was instead doing something different. When the recitation service was over, I asked her the current situation of Dharma dissemination of the center and the dynamics of the membership, as well as the center's finance and accounting. That moment the expression of her face suddenly changed. She then spoke to us, "We have been learning the teachings properly and doing our best to fulfill the assigned responsibilities. Why you don't try to recognize our efforts? When the deputy director Rev. Hirose visited us from the headquarters, she encouraged us and gave us words of praise." I was displeased by what she had to say and criticized her in my mind, thinking that it was normal to stand up and welcome guests who came from a great distance.

At that time, however, I remembered President

Niwano's Dharma guidance: "We must see things as they are without judging right or wrong" and "We should try looking at things from different angles and finding good points in others." When I regained a sense of calmness, I looked around at my surroundings, and I noticed that on that day the area leader was taking her grandchild to the center. She may usually join in the recitation service, but she couldn't do so that day, as she had to take care of her grandchild. I also thought that the area leader had spoken that way because she was anxious that the amount of donation at the center was not satisfactory. When I understood these things, I became able to appreciate her daily effort and revere her buddha-nature.

In fact, when I went to the Khuvsgul branch in March for dissemination, we had a similar experience. As I had not met the person who was in charge of the branch, I was wondering what kind of person she was as I traveled there. To tell the truth, in the background of that dissemination trip was a mission I was assigned by Mrs. Zorigmaa. Last year, the person in charge of the Khuvsgul branch expressed her hope to take part in the Oeshiki One Vehicle Festival. However, as she was being treated for cancer at the time, Mrs. Zorigmaa was concerned about her health, and advised her not to participate in the festival that year. Mrs. Zorigmaa's guidance seemed to hurt her feelings, however. After that, the person in charge of the Khuvsgul branch began to make phone calls to the Ulaanbaatar Chapter to express her desire to resign her position. That was why Mrs. Zorigmaa asked me to look at the situation of the branch before I left for Khuvsgul for dissemination.

When we arrived at the Khuvsgul branch, the person in charge of the branch remained seated in a similar manner that we would later experience at the Erdenet Hoza Center. As I believed that it was normal to stand up and greet reverently when you have guests

from distance, I was at first bewildered by her way of dealing with us.

However, I tried to look at good points in the person in charge of the Khuvsgul branch, and I told her the things about her that I thought were wonderful. Then, together with her and seven other members of the branch, we held a service, praying for her complete recovery from illness. I noticed that her countenance was gradually becoming calm. I was pleased to learn that, after I returned to Ulaanbaatar, she called Mrs. Zorigmaa, telling her that she would continue serving as the person in charge of the branch.

If I had not joined Rissho Kosei-kai and encountered the teachings, I could not have gained the way I look at things now. I am grateful for Rissho Kosei-kai and the teachings, which have allowed me to know the importance of “making the most of every moment and having an attitude of seeing things correctly and without preconceptions.”

Last year, through the preliminary training for the recipients of the Dharma teacher certificate, I learned the significance of the posthumous name. I had been suggested by Mrs. Zorigmaa a number of times since long time before it to receive the posthumous name for my deceased mother and hold memorial services for her. However, as I was unsure about the meaning of the posthumous name, I didn't heed her suggestions, and always dodged them by saying I would do so the next time. Last year, however, thanks to the training for the Dharma teacher certificate, I was able to deepen my understanding of the meaning of the posthumous name. So I received the posthumous name for my mother, and now I hold devotionals for her regularly.

At the Ulaanbaatar Chapter, I am now serving the role of accepting the application for posthumous names from members and reciting the sutra during the ceremonies to enshrine the Gohonzon at mem-

bers' home altars. I used to give priority to my convenience when the enshrining ceremonies would take place. But now, I prioritize my role in the faith over everything else, and if there are members who ask for posthumous names for their family or relatives, I arrange to submit applications to the headquarters at once and forward to them the posthumous names as soon as they arrive from the headquarters. I also came to have desire to hold memorial services myself for the deceased. Whenever I hear people who received the posthumous names express their appreciation and say they were glad to hold devotionals for the deceased, it warms my heart.

Last year, because of several unforeseen reasons, I was late in forwarding a posthumous name to a member of the Erdenet Hoza Center. During the dissemination trip to Erdenet, I handed the posthumous name to the member and apologized for the delay, and held the memorial service for her ancestors together with her. After I came back to Ulaanbaatar, I was very happy to hear that the member was grateful for receiving the posthumous name and continued holding devotionals.

As I was introverted and was not good at communicating with others, for a while after I joined Rissho Kosei-kai, I couldn't easily express gratitude for other people's kindness. When I found people who were in trouble and needed help, I wished to help them, but I was too shy to take action.

It will be ten years next year since I first became a member. Thanks to learning the teachings and participating in Dharma circle many times, I no longer feel any distress in expressing my feelings. For example, when I found a person who was short of bus fare and in trouble, I did not hesitate to pay the shortfall for her. I don't feel ashamed about offering my hand to people in trouble any more.

I am also sharing the Dharma with the hope that as

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many people as possible become happy through the teachings of Rissho Kosei-kai.

Up to this point, I have introduced Rissho Kosei-kai to five people and have taken them to the Ulaanbaatar Chapter. However, because they have been busy with work, they haven't come back to the Dharma center, although I invited them many times. As it took a long time for me to join Rissho Kosei-kai, I would like to accept the way they are and keep watching over them warmly, while inviting them occasionally to the Dharma center, until the time arrives when they become willing to learn the Dharma.

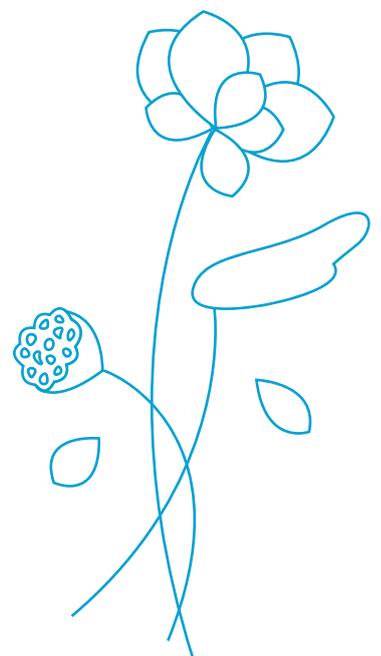
On the occasion of holding a ceremony to enshrine the Gohonzon in the Erdenet Hoza Center, the Ulaanbaatar Chapter made a special donation box to express all members' unified support, and I am taking the initiative in asking members for donation. Moreover, the Ulaanbaatar Chapter accepted two members of the Erdenet Hoza Center who were going to take part in the invocation ceremony to be held at the headquarters; I recited the sutra together with them, and instructed them on the ritual etiquette of Rissho Kosei-kai. I hope I can continue to be a help for the area leader of Erdenet to the best of my ability while

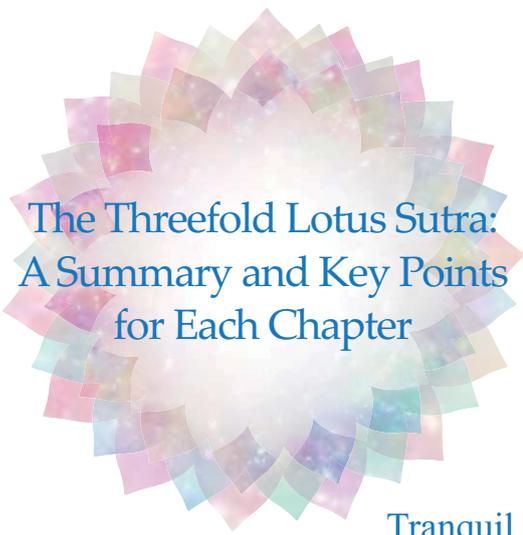
always being considerate of her feelings.

Thanks to the teachings, I have become more cheerful than before and my mind is calmer now. I hope I will continue to learn the teachings and put them into practice. I would like to express my heartfelt thanks to Mrs. Zorigmaa for guiding me to this wonderful Way. I would also like to thank all sangha members, who have always supported me, from the bottom of my heart.



Ms. Ariunaa leads sutra recitation.





The Threefold Lotus Sutra: A Summary and Key Points for Each Chapter

The Sutra of Innumerable Meanings Chapter 2, Expounding the Dharma



The Bodhisattva Great Adornment now leads the assembled bodhisattvas in asking the Buddha what they should practice as bodhisattvas to accomplish Supreme Perfect Awakening without deviation. Shakyamuni responds to his question as follows.

Tranquil and Empty in Nature and Attributes

“The doctrine of Innumerable Meanings is the way that leads all to accomplish Supreme Perfect Awakening. In order to understand the doctrine, to begin with, we should perceive the following truth.

“All things in this world are equal and always in a state of great harmony. Among the phenomena we observe with our eyes, we may see that all things are large and small; appearing and disappearing; fixed and moving; different and changing in every way. But it must be perceived that, fundamentally, they are all based only on one truth (One Dharma), just like emptiness, which is everywhere the same.”

This is the teaching of “All things are tranquil and empty in nature and attributes.”

“Nature” indicates the properties or characteristics of things, and “attributes” refers to the observable aspects of those properties or characteristics.

“Emptiness” means that all things exist in the Dharma of dependent origination, and there is not a single thing that is absolute or at the root of all things. Therefore, it also means all things are, in essence, equal. “Tranquility” indicates the state of being in great harmony. In other words, it is the ideal and non-static state in which all things are continuously developing in great harmony.

Having stated this truth that “All things are tranquil and

empty in nature and attributes,” the Buddha goes on to say that few perceive this truth, and that people see only the apparent forms before their eyes. They make false and arbitrary assessments, supposing that “this is a gain,” and “that is a loss.” Giving rise to such unwholesome ideas and creating all sorts of bad karma, they are thereby unable to free themselves from the realm of error, in which they experience much suffering and pain.

Bodhisattvas should perceive all of this clearly, give rise to heartfelt sympathy and great compassion, and determine to relieve the suffering of all living beings. To this end, practice is essential to perceive in all its depth the true and real aspect of all things. Thus, the cause of human suffering is shown, and the mental attitude of the bodhisattva who would liberate living beings from suffering is made clear.

The Buddha then instructs the bodhisattvas to observe closely the differentiated state of all things and their state of constant change. The Buddha expounds it in detail as follows.



The Innumerable Meanings Arise from the One Dharma

It is essential to grasp the faculties, natures, and desires of living beings, and as living beings’ natures and desires are innumerable, so are the ways of teaching them the Dharma innumerable,

But though the teaching is thus infinitely varied, the innumerable meanings arise from the One Dharma and this One Dharma is, namely, the state of having no attributes. Such absence of attributes is totally undifferen-

tiated and makes no differentiation. As it makes no differentiation, all things are equal, and this state is called “ultimate reality.”

Here, the meaning of the term “ultimate reality” in Buddhism is made clear. Ordinarily we understand this term to mean simply the real attributes of things, but it is important at this point to remember this deeper sense of the term, when we encounter it in such expressions as the

“ultimate reality of all things.” Therefore, here, it is still impossible for ordinary people to actually understand what “ultimate reality” really means.

The Bodhisattva Great Adornment continues to ask the Buddha as follows. “World-Honored One, you have now expounded the teaching of Innumerable Meanings again. (Although we understand that this teaching is fundamentally the same as what you taught before), in what way is it different from what you expounded in the past? What is the reason that you are now declaring that a bodhisattva who practices the teaching of Innumerable Meanings is certain to quickly attain the highest awakening?”



The Buddha Have Not Yet, in These More Than Forty Years, Fully Revealed the Truth

In response, the Buddha observes that after he attained enlightenment under the Bodhi tree and gazed upon the world, the conclusion was inescapable that, in their present state, living beings were not prepared to have enlightenment explained to them. For this reason, he sought to lead living beings to their own liberation by preaching to them in a fashion appropriate to their circumstances, faculties, natures, and desires.

Continuing in this fashion to teach within the bounds of their understanding, the Buddha has not yet had the occasion to reveal the innermost truth of the Dharma, and thus more than forty years have passed without a complete explanation of the ultimate truth.

Yet all that has been taught until now is founded on the truth. Like water, which everywhere is water and yet differs as does the water in a valley stream, a ditch, a pond, or the ocean, the teachings at the beginning, midway, and now have not been exactly the same. Although the words may appear the same, there have been increasing depths of meaning.

The truth that all the buddhas have taught is only one. The manner of explaining this one truth has been as varied as the many things people have sought in their minds. Furthermore, the body, or ultimate substance of the buddhas, is one. It changes into countless bodies, and each of these displays countless changes in its working. This is none other than the inconceivable realm of the buddhas. It is a realm that is hardly known even to the bodhisattvas verging on buddhahood, let alone to *shravakas*—those who practice intellectually and *pratyekabuddhas*—those who practice experientially. It is a realm to be explored in

depth only upon attaining buddhahood, a realm to be known to none but buddhas. One who would gain the enlightenment of a buddha must go deeply into these Innumerable Meanings and master them.

Indeed, that is so. When we are taught that all things are tranquil and empty in nature and attributes, and they all arise from the One Dharma, most of us probably get only a vague, general idea. But no one can affirm that he understands it clearly and fully. If you want to perceive it clearly, you must gain the knowledge and wisdom that are one with those of the Buddha. Then one is oneself a buddha. That is why the Buddha said in chapter 2, “Skillful Means,” of the Lotus Sutra: “Only a buddha together with a buddha can fathom the ultimate reality of all things.”

But this does not mean that we should despair. At the time of the sermon that comes to us as the Sutra of Innumerable Meanings, not even Shariputra, the disciple who was first in wisdom, had attained enlightenment. And so it was that later, when he taught the Sutra of the Lotus Flower of the Wonderful Dharma, the Buddha patiently explained the Dharma in order that all living beings might be brought to enlightenment. So it does not matter if one does not perfectly understand the Sutra of Innumerable Meanings. It is enough at this stage to keep in mind, even if only faintly, the meaning of the “ultimate reality” of all things.

This is an English translation of text originally appeared in Japanese in *Hokke sanbu kyo: Kaku hon no aramashi to yoten*, (Kosei Publishing, 1991 [revised edition, 2016], pp. 16–23).



Right Action Is Important to Building Peace

IN August, the words “war” and “peace” come to mind. In Hiroshima and Nagasaki, peace memorial ceremonies are held every year, during which people offer silent prayers for the repose of the spirits of the atomic bomb victims and pledge world peace. People remind themselves of the inscription on the memorial cenotaph for the atomic bomb victims, “Let all the souls here rest in peace, for we shall not repeat the evil.”

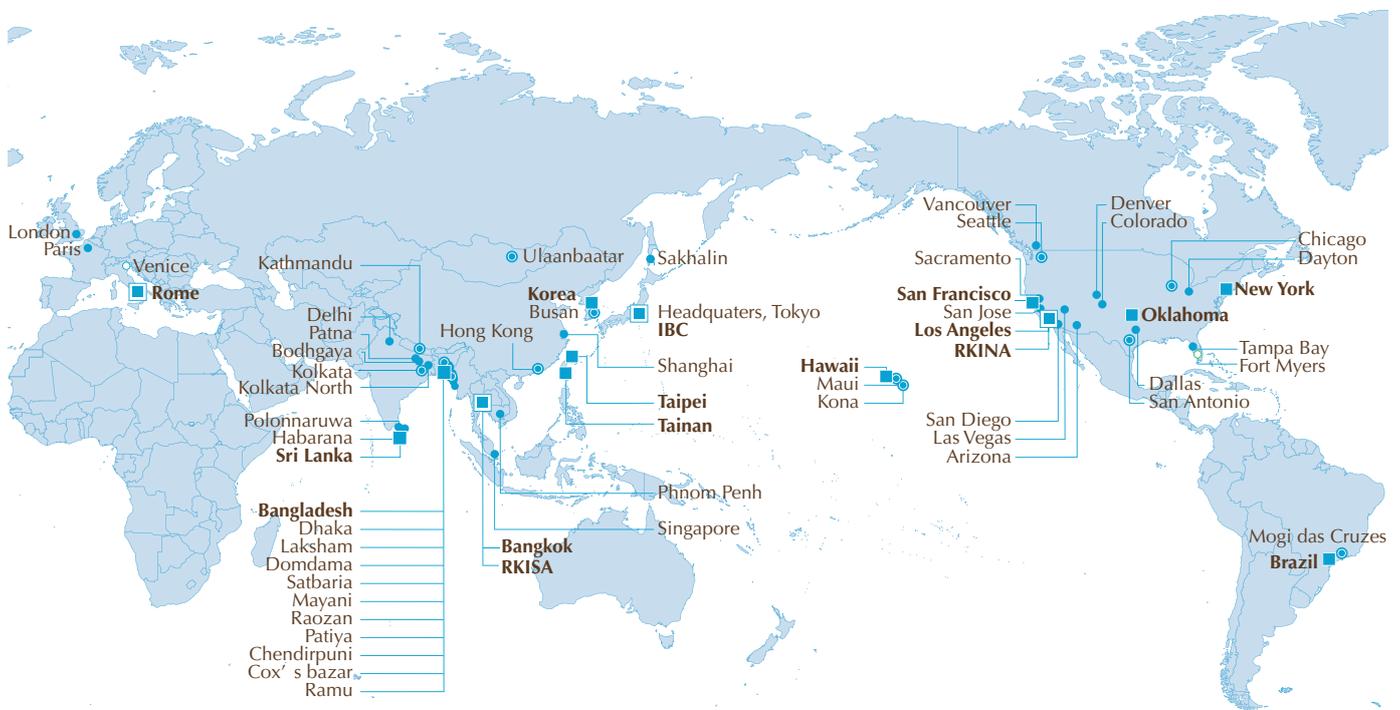
As an expression of religious people’s devotion for peace, the World Day of Prayer for Peace was held in Assisi, Italy, in 1986. To keep alive the spirit of Assisi, the Interreligious Gathering of Prayer for World Peace has been held on Mount Hiei in every August since 1987.

President Nichiko Niwano confirms in his message for this month that right deeds, or right action in Buddhism’s Eightfold Path, means the behavior supported by the minds of reverence and shame, and that these minds and actions are important to building peace, from the day-to-day relations of human beings to the relations of nations.

I hope we would take a step toward peace starting by reflecting on our own everyday actions.

Rev. Koichi Saito

Director, Rissho Kosei-kai International



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