

President's Message

The Happiness of Being Able to Express Gratitude

Rev. Nichiko Niwano
President of Rissho Kosei-kai

The Mind of Rejoicing

Chapter 18 of the Lotus Sutra, “The Merits of Rejoicing,” describes the merits attained when someone rejoices in hearing the teaching and shares that joy with someone else. If you hear the teaching and your mind receives it gratefully, you want to tell someone about it. Then, that inspiration and joy are transmitted from one person to the next, so that the merits attained by the fiftieth person are still very great, to say nothing of the immeasurable merits attained by the person who first experienced the mind of rejoicing. As you well know, this teaching is called “the fiftieth person who in turn hears the Dharma Flower Sutra.”

Incidentally, the Chinese characters that form the word “rejoice” (Jpn., *zuiki*) mean “upon seeing the good deeds of other people, joy arises in the mind.” I think that when you see or hear about someone doing good deeds, you feel inspired by them. Many people are impressed and inspired when they see media reports about volunteers cooperating in the reconstruction of a disaster-stricken area, or healthcare professionals making a tremendous effort against the coronavirus pandemic, aren't they?

Another possibility is that a casual snapshot of something in your daily life brings you a refreshing feeling of joy that lingers in your mind. I read a newspaper story about a two-year-old girl who walked up and down a train car greeting each passenger with a bob of her head. No eyebrows were raised about letting her walk around the moving train car, and as more and more passengers were impressed by her innocent gesture, a heartwarming atmosphere filled the car.

Whether it's the healthcare professionals or the little girl on the train, why do we feel impressed, soothed, and joyful when we see such a scene? Because we have the same innocent heart as the little girl and the same desire to help those who are suffering as the healthcare professionals. Even if we aren't taking action ourselves, when we're touched by others' good deeds, we're there taking part in them. The rest may be a matter of how we embody these feelings.





We Are Capable of Gratitude

We all have different personalities, energy levels, physical abilities, and social positions, so what we're each capable of doing differs. For example, it isn't possible for everyone to imitate the man the Japanese media dubbed a "super volunteer" for his incredibly selfless efforts to help survivors of recent natural disasters. However, human beings are said to have a unique capability to turn inspiration and joy into the power to live and be grateful.

When you think about it, even though plants and non-human animals are incapable of expressing gratitude, they live in great harmony while fulfilling their respective roles. Only we human beings, with our human minds, suffer from jealousy, anger, greed, and, sometimes, disharmony. Perhaps human beings are capable of being grateful because it's the only way we can harmonize with nature. In order for us to maintain harmony in our own minds and get along with everyone else at home and in society, it's important that we're the kind of human being who can always be grateful.

Fortunately, we know that by gladly accepting whatever happens with gratitude and happiness, we can have real peace of mind. Regardless of whether we have money or status, we devote ourselves to becoming human beings who can truly feel happy at all times.

This line from the Dhammapada sums up our inspiration and gratitude: "It is difficult to receive life as a human being and for we who will someday die, it is difficult to keep the life we now have." Honestly sharing with others the intrinsic human joy of receiving life and living here and now—which we see in the teaching of the fiftieth person who in turn hears the Dharma Flower Sutra—will spread true happiness.

From *Kosei*, November 2020





Guided by the Buddha's Compassion



Mrs. Pyung Euna
Rissho Kosei-kai of Korea

This Dharma Journey talk was delivered at Rissho Kosei-kai of Korea on December 22, 2019, during a memorial service for unborn children.

HELLO, everyone. My name is Pyung Euna; I belong to the Yongsan chapter. I am truly grateful for the opportunity to deliver my Dharma Journey talk on this special occasion.

I was born in Seoul in 1969 as the eldest daughter of my father, Pyung Ill Ung, and my mother, Jeon In Ja. I have a brother and two sisters. When I was twenty-four, I married my husband, Park Jong Ill. We have a daughter, who is twenty-five years old now.

I became a member of Rissho Kosei-kai in 2004. At that time, my husband's business had failed and he'd found a new job as the general manager of a hotel far from our home. He was living by himself to work there. I also worked to contribute to the family income, but it wasn't easy to make ends meet. All my anger and frustration were leveled against my husband.

During this difficult time, I was invited to a seminar on family education by Mrs. Im Sure Jeong, whom I'd met at the parent-teacher day at my daughter's school. She'd invited me to the Dharma center many times since we met, but my first visit was to attend the seminar.

What I heard at the seminar fit my needs perfectly. During the lectures, I reflected on myself and my intense anger toward my husband. I realized that he must have been suffering too, from his failure in business and the guilt of not being able to fulfill his responsibility as a breadwinner. When I thought of the loneliness he must have felt, tears dropped from my eyes. The seminar gave me a positive impression of Rissho Kosei-kai, so I underwent the procedure to become a member and had the focus of ancestor appreciation installed at my home altar.

After a while, my husband quit his job at the hotel

and returned home to Seoul. Life with no income started again, but this time I didn't have anger or hatred toward him. Instead, I had the idea that we would go to the Dharma center and study the teachings together while my husband was taking leave from work.

At the Dharma center, we learned three positive habits: to exchange cheerful greetings, respond clearly when you're called, and arrange your shoes together neatly when you take them off. When I first heard of these practices, I thought, "What's good about that?" I felt no inclination to practice them.

However, one day at home, my husband, who had just come out of another room, said, "Oh, no, I forgot to arrange the slippers." As he put them neatly side by side, I felt like the whole house suddenly lit up—it was as if hundreds of electric lights turned on at once. More than ten years have passed since then, but even now, I vividly remember that moment. It was like a miracle.



Mrs. Pyung delivers her Dharma Journey talk at the Dharma center of Rissho Kosei-kai of Korea.

Shortly after that, my husband found a new job, but he couldn't adapt to the new workplace and soon quit. He started working at another company but quit again, and he has since changed his job repeatedly. As I could do nothing to help him, every time he quit a job, I sought guidance from Rev. Lee Kyung Ja, the minister of the Dharma center at the time, who later served as the advisor to Rissho Kosei-kai of Korea. Her guidance always released me from my persistent desire to change my husband and the situation.

In spite of Rev. Lee's objections, my husband started another business, got swindled, and was left saddled with a huge amount of debt. We had no choice but to sell our house, and we moved in with my mother-in-law.

My mother-in-law and my husband's sisters were surprised to see the Buddhist altar we brought in, and they made a huge fuss. My husband is the youngest of three brothers and three sisters, but his sisters didn't grumble to him at all—they threw their complaints on me and demanded that I put it away, soon. I couldn't control my anger against them for denying my faith. Rev. Lee kindly comforted me and told me to prioritize keeping peace in the family above anything else.

As I didn't want to give in to my in-laws' demands, I made a point of saying, "I'm going to work," when I left for the Dharma center every morning. I told myself that the circumstances might justify the lie. I came to feel grateful to my own parents, who gladly accepted my faith.

Soon, a year had passed since I started going to the Dharma center, and I began to feel that my practice was stagnant compared with other members who had received the Gohonzon (an image of the Eternal Buddha Shakyamuni as the focus of devotion) at the Tokyo headquarters, or others who had been appointed area leaders.

Initially, I thought my lack of ability put me in this situation, but I came to blame my husband's sisters, who I believed had been preventing me from making normal progress. My feelings toward my husband's family were getting worse, and I felt so ashamed of my negative emotions that I couldn't ask Rev. Lee for guidance. The trapped negative emotions piled up, and gradually I became unable to accept things

honestly. Over time, I stopped going to the Dharma center. I decided to start working again.

On February 7, 2015, Rev. Lee, who had been sick, passed away. Though I knew she cared about me and my family, I could hardly visit her in the hospital because I felt ashamed for not staying close to the Dharma center or the teachings.

After I got a job, I had to work on weekdays, so I visited the Dharma center only on weekends and holidays. When I heard Dharma talks by Rev. Lee Hang Ja, who became the minister of Rissho Kosei-kai of Korea after Rev. Lee Kyung Ja, I always felt refreshed. After a while, however, there were some weekends when I was exhausted by work and couldn't go to the Dharma center. Later, there was also a period when I was away from the Dharma center for more than a year. Because of this, my interest in the teachings and my sense of belonging to the sangha gradually faded.

At my workplace, even though I'd kept the teachings in mind as I interacted with my colleagues at first, gradually I became unable to control my anger. I began to live at the mercy of my emotions.

I had to change the way I lived. Wishing to regain the mindset I'd had when I encountered the faith, I quit the company I'd worked for more than six years. I began going to the Dharma center every day, and I visited for twenty-one days in a row, praying and sitting in the Dharma circle.

In December of the same year, I attended a memorial service for unborn children. There, Rev. Lee Hang Ja said that the phrase "everything is within me" meant accepting everything that happened to us with gratitude—as the workings of the Buddha's compassion that caused us to grow. This guidance resonated strongly with me. Until then, I'd thought that "everything is within me" meant that when any trouble occurred, it happened because I was wrong, and that everything was my responsibility. This is why I'd feared to see things in light of the teachings: my mind was full of my own way of thinking, and I couldn't afford to listen to what others had to say or understand their words. This ended up making the suffering even bigger.

I learned that when we're faced with suffering we

Spiritual Journey

can't handle, if we accept it as the Buddha's arrangement to help us to grow, we won't invite new suffering—getting hit by the second or third arrow—while trying to escape the first.

I wished to learn more about this teaching that embraces us in great peace of mind, so I decided to visit the Dharma center every day, in the mornings and afternoons. I also started to work part-time in the evening to help make ends meet. I worked from 5 p.m. to 11 p.m., got home at midnight, and went to bed after 1 a.m. This became my routine.

Under such circumstances, I was sometimes irritated to see some members turn down Dharma center duties even though they had financial leeway and didn't have to work—it would have been easy for them to rearrange their schedule. When I confessed these feelings in a Dharma circle, I received guidance that “living in comfort doesn't mean having plenty of time and money to spend on traveling or luxurious meals. It means having a flexible mind and living without wavering, no matter what may happen.” This guidance made me determined to set a clear goal in my practice and walk toward it single-mindedly.

The problems related to my husband's career and the financial difficulty of my home remain unimproved. The company where my husband now works hasn't paid salaries to the employees for the past three months. He might lose his job again. For a while, I wondered why we must keep suffering from the same problem even though I've been practicing the teaching so diligently.

When I reflected on myself, I realized that although I thought I understood the guidance and practiced the teachings, it was only superficially. Deeper in my mind, I was constantly complaining and being swayed by anxiety about the future. However, what's different now is that I understand my husband's feelings and no longer feel ashamed of him. Instead, I am truly grateful for him: he is making every effort to fulfill his responsibility for his family despite all the difficulties in his workplace. I am aware now that my role as his wife is to believe in him. I would like to straighten myself up and be diligent in practicing the teachings while always reflecting on myself.

I have a daughter, whom I raised with affection and attentive care. When she went out into the world to work, I worried if she would succeed. But she has grown up to be a reliable person who dedicates herself to her work. She is also a dependable daughter who takes care of her parents. If I had not encountered the teachings of Rissho Kosei-kai, I think I would have raised her into an adult who couldn't do anything by herself.

I used to have the stupid idea that a mother should do everything for her child, and that if she couldn't, it was better not to give birth to the child. I would like to use this opportunity to deeply repent of my ignorance and apologize to the life that dwelled in my womb but was not able to be born.

In April 2019, thanks to Rev. Lee, I took part in the Leaders' Training Seminar in East Asia as a staff member from Rissho Kosei-kai of Korea. It was held at the Tokyo headquarters for five nights and six days, and we had participants from South Korea, Taiwan, and Mongolia. We shared a very pleasant time, and I learned about the basic vision for Rissho Kosei-kai (looking toward the organization's one hundredth anniversary), members' assigned roles and responsibilities and their meaning, how to support members in the Way, and the meaning and purposes of Dharma center duties and Dharma circle.

I also renewed my gratitude to our former minister, Rev. Lee Kyung Ja, and our present minister, Rev. Lee Hang Ja, who had communicated the Founder's teachings to Korea despite the difficult situation surrounding Japan and Korea due to the history of the two countries. I renewed my awareness of the preciousness of our former minister's dedication—she'd actively served as a bridge between Japan and Korea.

When we first moved in with my mother-in-law and weren't allowed to have the home altar installed, I decided to do whatever I could at that moment. I began to hold monthly ancestor appreciation service at the *Kaimyo* room of the Dharma center (a room where Dharma teachers give posthumous names to deceased members as well as the deceased family of members). I offered sutra recitation for those whose posthumous names were inscribed on the memorial

book, in the order of the date they passed away. Meanwhile, my wish to have my home altar installed in the house gradually grew stronger. Eventually, I consulted my husband, deciding that I would leave the house if my wish was not accepted. My husband gladly accepted, and I was finally able to have the home altar enshrined in the house in April of this year. At first I was a little worried about the reactions of my mother- and sisters-in-law, but my mind was brightened by being able to recite the sutra and offer greetings to the Buddha and my family's ancestors.

I can't express how grateful I am to have the altar at home, especially under the present circumstances, as the spread of COVID-19 prevents us from performing Dharma center activities normally. When I recite the sutra before the home altar every morning and evening, my mind becomes calm and peaceful.

My nature is to be enthusiastic and engage in things earnestly in the beginning, but I get bored easily and often leave things halfway. Thanks to Mrs. Im, who guided me to the faith and who always acts steadfastly, single-mindedly, and patiently, I've been able to stay connected with Rissho Kosei-kai. I have also guided several people to Rissho Kosei-kai—my children in faith—and I will emulate Mrs. Im and continue my diligent effort to bring as many people as possible to the teachings.

Thanks to the teachings of Rissho Kosei-kai, I've become able to interact with people with a kind heart and cheerful smile. Thanks to my Dharma center duties and other roles I've taken in different Dharma activities, I've become willing to help other people and contribute to society. I would like to express my gratitude, from the bottom of my heart, for all the support and guidance I've been given.

I received a precious gift to be born and encounter the Lotus Sutra, and I would like to lead a life that is as valuable and meaningful as possible.

Eternal Buddha Shakyamuni and Founder Niwano, thank you very much. President Niwano, thank you very much. And all members of the sangha, thank you very much.



Mrs. Pyung (second from the left) with members of the Nerima Dharma Center, Tokyo, after a Dharma dissemination practice.

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

The Sutra of the Lotus Flower of the Wondrous Dharma Chapter 19

The Merits of the Teachers of the Dharma



The Merits of Purifying the Six Senses

This chapter explains the merits associated with the six sense organs—the eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, and mind—that any good man or woman will attain through receiving and embracing, reading, reciting, expounding, or copying the sutra. Shakyamuni Buddha speaks at great length about these merits, telling Bodhisattva Ever Diligent that a person who does any of the five practices above “will attain eight hundred merits of the eye, twelve hundred merits of the ear, eight hundred merits of the nose, twelve hundred merits of the tongue, eight hundred merits of the body, and twelve hundred merits of the mind.” This manner of expression is so highly symbolic that today’s readers may be confused by it. So, it’s essential to get to the underlying truth it expresses.

The Four Fearlessnesses of the Bodhisattva

In the first verse section of the chapter, right before the Buddha expounds on the merits of the eye, these four lines appear: “All of you, listen to the merits / Of those in the midst of a great multitude / Who have fearless minds / And teach this Dharma Flower Sutra.”

“Fearless minds” here means to share what one believes with confidence, without fear or hesitation. Traditionally, this concept has been called the “four fearlessnesses of the bodhisattva,” paralleling the fearless mind of the Buddha. We could say this is the most important mindset for bodhisattvas trying to spread the teachings of the Lotus Sutra in the age of degeneration.

The first fearlessness is in “total grasp and recall,” which means teaching the Dharma fearlessly after learning all the teachings by heart so one can never forget them.

The second fearlessness is in “thorough knowledge of all Dharma medicines,” which means teaching the



Dharma fearlessly by thoroughly knowing the medicine of the Dharma and the minds and capacities of all living beings. One who can prescribe the medicine of the Dharma in accordance with each person’s individual capacity and mind will be able to teach the Dharma confidently.

The third fearlessness is in “skill in asking and answering questions,” which means teaching the Dharma fearlessly with good and sufficient questions and answers. One who can answer any question and overcome any objection persuasively in accord with the Buddha’s teachings will be able to teach the Dharma without fear.

The fourth fearlessness is in the “ability to resolve doubts,” which means teaching the Dharma fearlessly by sufficiently resolving doubts. Since the ultimate purpose of the Buddha’s teachings is the liberation of all living beings, only a person who senses the Buddha’s great compassion can determine the Buddha’s intention in answering subtle questions about how to interpret the teachings. A bodhisattva who can sufficiently resolve doubts in this way will be able to teach the Dharma fearlessly.



When we look at the difficulties of teaching the Dharma, some of us may grow timid. However, we must not be afraid. The four types of fearlessness are those of the ideal teacher, and whoever qualifies as an ideal teacher has already become a great bodhisattva. But no one begins as a great bodhisattva—one becomes one only after long, ceaseless effort and repeated trial and error.

Therefore, those of us who train in the bodhisattva practice must always bear these four ideals in mind when we attempt to teach the Dharma. When we encounter a difficult problem or are asked a question that we're unable to answer properly, we ought to say frankly, "This question is beyond my ability to answer right now. I'm going to examine it more carefully and, if necessary, ask someone more qualified than myself. Then I will answer you."

We must not dream up a reply on the spot just to get by. Admitting we aren't certain about something doesn't lower others' estimation of us as teachers, but rather increases their confidence in us.

How Actual Life Conforms to the Dharma

One sentence toward the end of the chapter must not be overlooked: "If they talk about the secular texts, governance, means of livelihood, and so forth, all will be in accord with the true Dharma."

"They" here refers to teachers of the Dharma, and this statement means simply that when we teach about daily life, discuss government, or give business advice, it will all spontaneously conform to the True Dharma.

The True Dharma is by no means limited to individual spiritual concerns—it has much to do with society at large. And so, it brings true life to secular law. If this were not so, it would ultimately have no power to liberate all humankind. We must mark this point well.

This is an English translation of text that originally appeared in Japanese in *Hokke sanbu kyo: Kaku hon no aramashi to yoten*, by Rev. Nikkyo Niwano, the founder of Rissho Kosei-kai (Kosei Publishing, 1991 [revised edition, 2016], pp. 183–87).



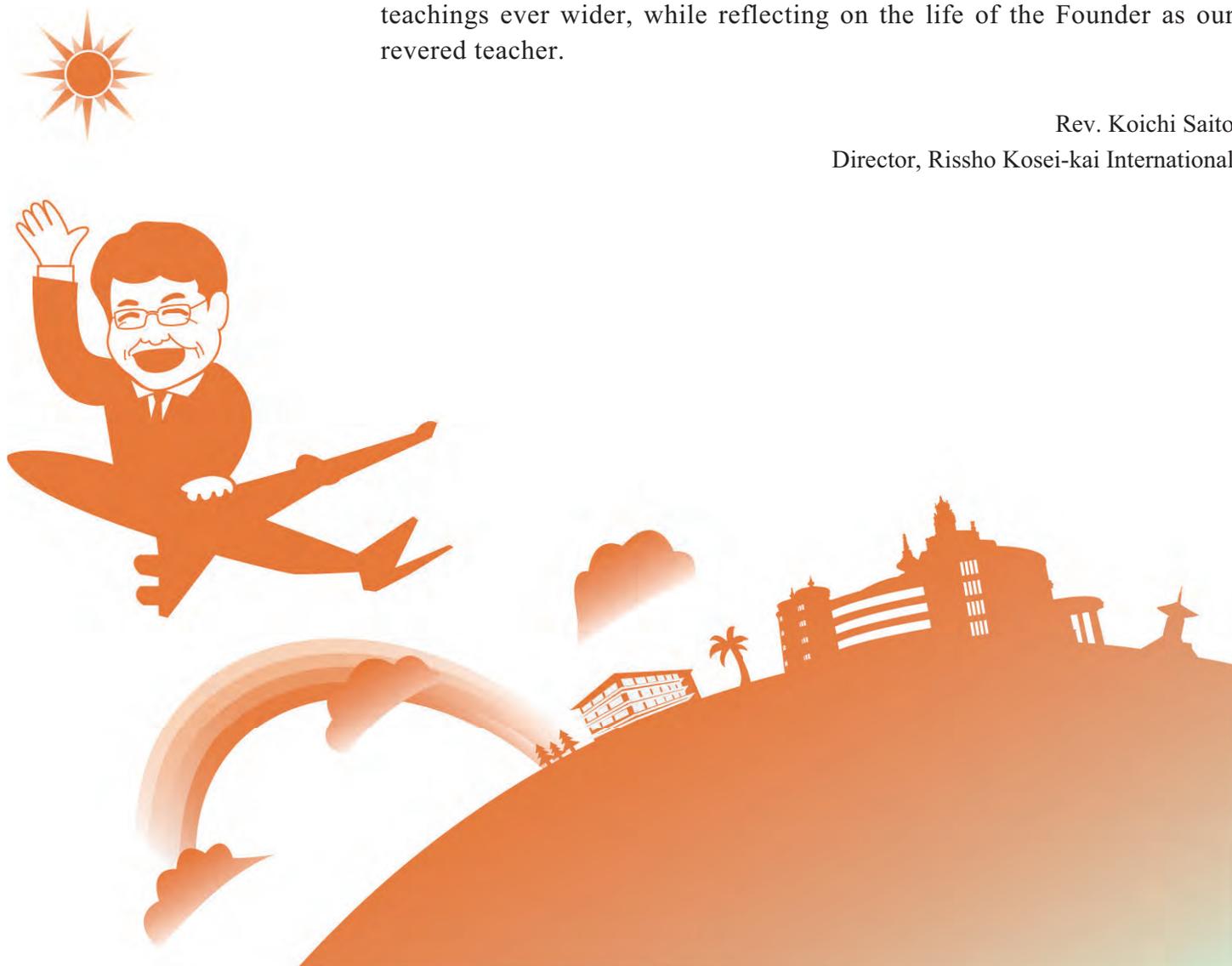
The Bodhisattva Practice of Expressing Gratitude

NOVEMBER is the month when we begin to look back on the year. I think many of you had new learnings even amid the unusual circumstances due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The most important of all was the opportunity to reflect on your life and ask what is truly important to you.

In his message for this month, “The Happiness of Being Able to Express Gratitude,” President Nichiko Niwano refers to the “fiftieth person who in turn hears the Dharma Flower Sutra,” a phrase that appears in chapter 18 of the Lotus Sutra, “The Merits of Rejoicing.” President Niwano reminds us of the significance of the joy one experiences when first encountering the teachings, and the realization that we all have the desire to do good just like the Buddha. He tells us that it’s important to honestly share with others our joy and gratitude for being alive.

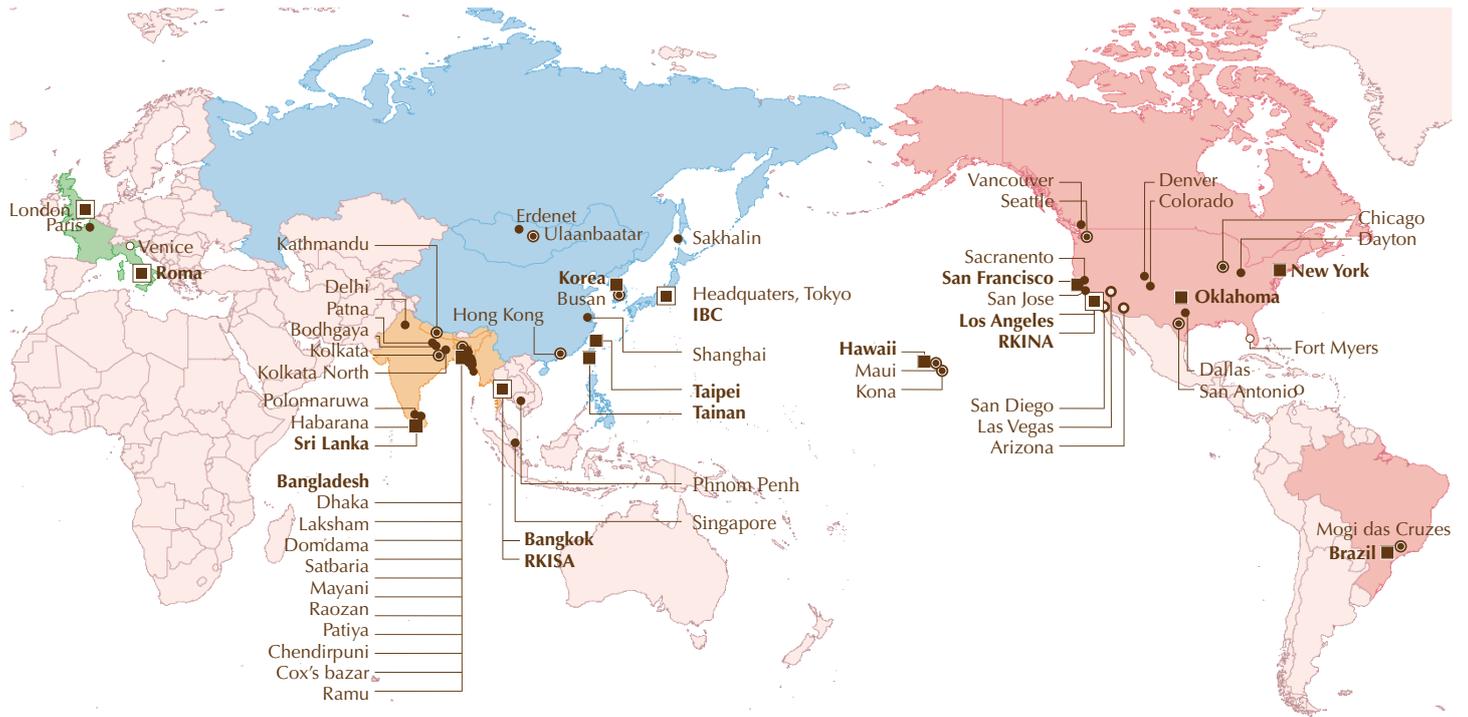
This month, we celebrate the anniversary of the birth of Founder Nikkyo Niwano. On this day, we will renew our vow to repay our debt of gratitude to Founder Niwano and gather our efforts to disseminate the teachings ever wider, while reflecting on the life of the Founder as our revered teacher.

Rev. Koichi Saito
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