

Living the Lotus

Buddhism in Everyday Life

New Year's Issue

2022

New Year's Message

Living a Lively Life

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**“Until the Whole World Becomes Happy,
Individual Happiness Cannot Exist”**



I wish you all a Happy New Year.

Since the year before last, the menace of Covid-19 has had a huge effect on our daily lives. Although the number of persons infected with the virus has decreased in Japan, it is again on the rise in some countries of the world. We must not drop our guard, and we must continue our efforts to prevent infection.

Even though our Dharma centers have been closed, our members have continued to support each other through letters, phone calls, and emails, because compassion for others is in their nature. I have been enormously impressed by this.

I have said in the past that I would hope that the Covid-19 pandemic would be an opportunity for us to reconsider what people should value most.

As the infection spreads, the most important frame of mind for a person to have is one of caring about others—being concerned about another's health, wondering if they are struggling with their lives, being concerned that their children are alright. By reflecting upon our daily lives while cultivating such an attitude, we can become aware of the many everyday matters which in prior times might have been ignored.

In the past, I have discussed the two meanings of the kanji character 省 (*shō*), “to eliminate,” and “to reflect upon.” I believe that the Covid-19 pandemic over these past two years has revealed to us the things we should be eliminating, and those things we should be reflecting upon.

With this pandemic, even if infections in Japan were to cease, there is no knowing when the threat would return if infections in other countries continue.

The situation strongly brings to mind the words of Kenji Miyazawa (1896–1933), a Japanese novelist and poet of children’s literature: “Until the whole world becomes happy, individual happiness cannot exist.” We can think of these words by Miyazawa as a more modern expression of the Buddha’s great compassion for us; we should all reflect upon these words.

With these things in mind, I would now like to share with you my “Guidelines for Members’ Practice of the Faith for 2022.”

In March of this year, Rissho Kosei-kai celebrates its eighty-fourth anniversary. Since the inheritance of the Lamp of the Dharma, thirty years have passed.

It is expected that, this year too, we continue quarantining ourselves and working from home in our daily lives. While we look ahead to the current situations of the Covid-19 pandemic worldwide, we should commit ourselves together through our faith as husbands and wives, as fathers and mothers, as parents, to foster young boys and girls, as well as young people, who will bear the next generation, and put our family relationships in order, with the aim of shaping their characters. In addition, we should also move forward to achieve a splendid country, which is based on the spirit of great peace and harmony, by carrying on the best tradition of our country. I hope that we will all work creatively and earnestly for these goals.

As I told you last year in this publication, our important mission, the primary goal into which we must put all our efforts, is human development, “the raising of human beings.” This mission must include the members of all generations: “husbands and wives” of us mean young couples (young generation), “fathers and mothers” are those of us in the prime of our lives (middle-age generation), and “parents” are those who are aged (old-age generation). This is of greatest importance, not just to our organization but to our society and nation as well.

The foundation for this, first and foremost, is teaching at home within the family. Because wise family governance (putting family relationships in order) provides steadfast character building and discipline, it is also an enhancement to public education (schools) and ties in with “the raising of human beings” in a true sense.

Furthermore, I have said in the past that to really put family relationships in order, it is essential that our homes have a Buddhist altar as the center of family life, and that we observe the Three Practices for the home—we exchange morning greetings, we respond clearly and positively when we are spoken to, and we line up our shoes neatly after taking them off. As members, we have come to always honor these practices.



Each of Us Should Have the Desire to and Take Action to Creatively and Seriously Establish a Splendid Country

I am adding the following sentence this year to what I have said in the past about the education of children and young people. “In addition, we should also move forward to achieve a splendid country, which is based on the spirit of great peace and harmony, by carrying on the best tradition of our country.”

The name for Japan in ancient times was “Yamato.” The kanji characters for that name mean “great peace” or “great harmony.” Maintaining that spirit consistently has become our national ideal.

Prince Shotoku (593–622), in his Seventeen-Article Constitution (604), included the phrase “Harmony is to be valued.” The spirit imbued in this phrase was not only the norm for nation-building at the time, but it also lives on in the national characteristics and spirituality of the Japanese people of today.

It is said, furthermore, that the traditions and history that are the hallmarks of Japan are to be found in its emperor system.

The Japanese imperial family have no personal family names. This is meant to indicate that over a long period they have always been one with the people. Since the time of Japan’s founding as a nation, the Japanese people have been able to create a rich, uniquely Japanese culture and tradition, even while facing many difficulties. We can say that this is because the emperor has been the cornerstone of the nation, and the Japanese people became united on that basis and worked together in harmony.

Meanwhile, post-war Japan has pursued economic profit and rationality. Japan’s history and traditions, and the spirit that cultivated them, have been neglected to the point that they even seem to have been forgotten.

Turning my attention to the entire world, I can see that nationalist thinking has been on the rise. In that context, I believe that it is very important for Japan to play a variety of roles as a member of the global community, making full use of the spirit of peace and harmony that is incorporated into Japanese tradition.

For that to happen, it is most important that our own country does well. The desire and the action needed to establish a splendid country should not be left to just the politicians; it is up to each one of us as citizens to open our hearts further and work creatively and seriously.

The Slogan “Cultivating the Fields in Our Hearts and Minds” Is Ultimately All About Knowing Who You Really Are

As I also mentioned in my Guidelines for Members’ Practice of the Faith, November 15 of last year was the thirtieth anniversary of my inheritance of the Lamp of the Dharma from the Founder. As I look back, I’m amazed that it’s really been thirty years.

Since that occasion I have been saying, “A single line. I would like all our members to line up side by side, starting off as one.”

Every one of you members has the buddha nature. Just as you do, I wish to walk the Buddha Way as a single bodhisattva, lined up, side by side with others. That thought is included in the phrase “a single line.”



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In 1992, the following year of the Inheritance of the Lamp of the Dharma, I embarked on a tour I called *shinseki mawari* meaning visiting relatives. I visited 130 sites, including Dharma centers in Japan and overseas, and was able to meet with our fellow members.

We all live by interacting with, depending upon, and being influenced by each other. Looking at it from a broad view, one can say that not only human beings, but all things in the universe are related to each other, in other words, they also are one's relatives. Among all these relations, the closest and most empathetic relatives are our members, and that is why I said I would be "visiting relatives."

When the Founder first heard that phrase, he was very pleased, saying, "Visiting relatives—what a wonderful phrase!" and "Nichiko has been happy to attend services lately." The Founder also joked, saying, "He should have inherited the Lamp of the Dharma earlier."

However, on October 4, 1999, almost eight years after I inherited the Lamp of the Dharma, the Founder entered nirvana at the age of ninety-two. Until then, I always felt that when something came up, I could simply ask the Founder for help. Then when he passed away, I felt that in doing so he was prompting us to become independent of him.

As I have often said, the teachings of the Founder, stated briefly, were devotion to one's parents, revering one's ancestors, and bodhisattva practice.

Above all, bodhisattva practice is central to the teaching of the Buddha. It means to aspire to one's own enlightenment and move along the bodhisattva path. Stated in more familiar terms, it is to walk the Way with the mind of compassion and consideration. I believe that this is what the Founder most wanted to convey.

The number of still living members who had received direct guidance from the Founder is decreasing. I encourage those members to share, with as many people as possible, the experience of mindfulness and liberation they received from the Founder.

What I most wanted to tell after inheriting the Lamp of the Dharma was that I wanted you to know your true selves. Talking about other people, or discussing the world are easy to do. The most important thing, however, is to reflect upon and know ourselves.

So then, how do we go about getting to know ourselves? With this in mind, on the occasion in 1998 of the sixtieth anniversary of the founding of Risho Kosei-kai, I began presenting the basic vision, "Cultivating the Fields in Our Hearts and Minds," under which we have all journeyed together to this day. "The fields in our hearts and minds" refers to the idea that our hearts and minds are excellent places in which to plant the seeds of buddhahood.

In many cases, people tend to view themselves in a set way, perhaps as being limited and small, and thinking "this is who I am." They then tend to become subservient or, contrarily, arrogant. But is that their true self?

Even Shakyamuni experienced human sorrow and suffering before he became enlightened to the Truth and the Dharma. So, we who are also human naturally have an ability to comprehend the Truth and the Dharma, and we have the power to solve problems ourselves.

Once we come to know our true selves, we can begin to overcome the various problems confronting us and start to live truly meaningful lives.

This is why the slogan “Cultivating the Fields in Our Hearts and Minds” is ultimately all about knowing who you really are. The most important things of all to know is that the “you” who are living now in this world has the same heart and mind as the Buddha, that you have the ability and responsibility to solve the issues of your lives and the world, and that you must realize these things for yourselves.

Over the thirty years that have passed since I inherited the Lamp of the Dharma, the number of our members who have come to know this for themselves and have been living vibrant lives has steadily increased. On the other hand, a great number of our members remain unaware of their true selves.

It is my sincere hope that by enriching their connection to the Dharma and guiding them along the Way, they can become Rissho Kosei-kai members who truly realize the spirit of the Buddha's teaching.

The Covid-19 pandemic has continued into this year, and we may not be able to resume our prior faith activities. However, in the spirit of “This is indeed the place of the Way,” that here and now is the place where we seek and practice the Way, let us diligently devote ourselves, putting our families, which are society's smallest unit, in order, and continue our growth together with the generations that will carry the future.

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