

Living the Lotus

Buddhism in Everyday Life

New Year's Issue

New Year Guidance

Moving Forward While Respecting Our History and Traditions

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As we approach the centennial of our founding, we should all devote our full efforts, together as one, to the nurturing of our children and young people

I wish you a happy new year.

Let us make this another new year in which we greet every day with renewed dedication and refreshed practice.

The *kanji* character 新 *shin* (new) in the phrase *shin-nen* 新年 (new year) consists of a combination of three simpler character components—辛 *shin* (hardship or effort), 木 *ki* (tree), and 斤 *kin* (axe). This character expresses the idea that if a tree is loved

and cultivated with effort and harvested, it can be put to a new use.

Applying this to our own world, it also means learning from and respecting the history and traditions of our ancestors, using them creatively in ways that are appropriate for our current times, and putting our efforts into building something new.

For this one year I would like us to go forward together and reflect deeply on the important meaning that is imbued in the character 新 *shin* (new).

To this end, I offer my “Guidelines for 2026” as follows.

Last year Japan marked what was referred to as “Showa 100,” the one hundredth anniversary of the beginning of Japan’s Showa era, a critical period in Japanese history that lasted until 1989. Our own organization, founded in 1938, the thirteenth year of Showa, will celebrate its own centennial in 2038, twelve years from now.

Taking this important anniversary to heart, let us once again commit ourselves, through our faith, to unfailingly guide our young children and adolescents, who will bear the next generation, to walk the right path in order to develop their humanity. We must put our family relationships in order. We must also move forward to achieve a splendid country by continuing its best traditions. I hope that together we will continue to dedicate ourselves energetically to these goals.

On the occasion of the eightieth anniversary of the founding of our organization in 2018, looking ahead



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to its upcoming one hundredth anniversary I said that the primary goal into which we should invest our strength is the important duty of raising human beings.

The topic of highest priority for our organization as well as for society, is how to guide our children and young people, who carry the future, along the right path for humanity (the bodhisattva path) and promote the development of their humanity.

As you know, the fundamental policy of our organization is “*seika*” (putting family relationships in order). This is because the family is the fundamental place for the development of humanity.

When parents live their lives centered on the Buddhist altar in their households, and always use cheerful, gentle, and warm words and actions, it has a positive effect on developing their children’s humanity.

Most important among all of this is to actively involve their children and young people, which is to say, to educate them in the home.

Shichi-go-san, literally seven-five-three, is a traditional Japanese rite of passage and festival day for three- and seven-year-old girls, and five-year-old boys, but it also represents the time when the childhood ages of seven, five, and three were considered the years essential for education in the family prior to heading to school.

At the age from around ten years to thirteen or fourteen years old is when the brain is at its purest and most sensitive. Eyesight is at its best between the ages of nine and ten, the years when the remark is often made, “that child’s eyes are so sharp they can burn a hole in what they’re looking at.” The imagination, the power of association, and memory are at their most vigorous at eleven and twelve, and by fifteen or sixteen young people have become remarkable human beings.

When the education at home is insufficient during these important years and left to the schools, we cannot hope for our youths to develop properly. It’s not an exaggeration to say that the various social issues that affect children and young people ultimately come down to the responsibility, awareness, and actions of the parents.

Someone once said, “politics and economics both exist only for the education of children and young people.” In other words, the adults must create a

society that is suitable for the healthy development of its young people.



President Nichiko Niwano seating before the altar of the First Training Hall

On December 28, 1948, the first training hall of Rissho kosei-kai was built, and until the completion of the Great Sacred Hall in 1964, the organization’s headquarters was placed in that building. At the occasion celebrating the thirtieth anniversary of the Great Sacred Hall in 1994, its name was changed to “Birthplace of Rissho Kosei-kai, the First Training Hall.” Even so, members call the site where the first training hall is located Rissho Kosei-kai’s old headquarters with the feeling of cherishing. It is a spiritual home for them. After the Great East Japan Earthquake in 2011, its building underwent seismic strengthening. At that time, a copy of gohonzon (the object of devotion), a calligraphic paper mandala inscribed by the Founder Nikkyo Niwano, was installed at the altar of the first training hall, with the wish to let members realize their seniors’ devout heart for religious practice. The calligraphic paper mandala gohonzon was invoked in the early times of Rissho Kosei-kai, but again invoked in 1963 at Eijuden, a room on the seventh floor of the Great Sacred Hall, before its completion.

It is extremely important that the younger generation take pride in their country. This is because when our youth cherish and respect their country, their own development will also naturally progress.

Japan, in particular, is among the countries in the world that have the most history and tradition. Japan is blessed with an Emperor and an Imperial household that is unparalleled. On this basis Japanese people have become as one, building a rich spiritual culture beginning with the founding of the nation and continuing until the present.

In ancient times Japan was called “Yamato” [which was written in *kanji* characters meaning “great peace” or “great harmony”]. Embracing the spirit of “great peace” and “great harmony” has consistently been the national ideal.

In the first article of his Seventeen-Article Constitution, Prince Shotoku (574–622) states that “harmony is precious.”

As we continue our Japanese tradition of respect for peace and harmony, striving to build a better country is also extremely important from the perspective of “raising human beings.”

With the centennial of our founding, coming up in twelve years, as a goal, I would like our entire membership, with one mind and from their various perspectives, to put their full efforts into the raising of our children and young people.



Walking the bodhisattva way with gratitude and a sense of purpose—this is Shakyamuni’s greatest wish

Last year I celebrated my “*beiju*” (eighty-eighth birthday). Starting on March 20, our organization held a total of eight “celebration gatherings” at the Great Sacred Hall.

During the gatherings, every time I heard a member say, “I’m so glad I joined Kosei-kai!” I felt truly energized and deeply moved, thinking to myself, “We’ve all truly grown, one step at a time, haven’t we?” Above all, my heart was filled with emotion knowing that my Dharma families had gathered from all around the world to celebrate. I am very thankful to all of you.

Human beings grow old, without exception. That is the natural order of things. In spite of this, most people detest getting old and try to avoid it. But it is said that as long as one hates old age, one is still immature.

Old age is not simply a matter of growing older. It is a striving process through which we accumulate a wealth of experience, deepen our thoughts, and perfect our characters. As the teaching tells us, coming to find profound meaning and taking deep pride in that process is an essential nature of human beings.

Of course, there is no situation in which one can say, “this is now complete.” So we are always learning and continuing to practice our faith diligently to improve ourselves as human beings. The Japanese novelist and poet Kenji Miyazawa (1896–1933) wrote of this concept, “Eternal incompleteness—this is completion.” This means we must pursue the path of awakening throughout our lives without assuming too readily that we understand.

Looking back, I recall that I resisted the beliefs of Rissho Kosei-kai when I was young. But as I became more experienced and continued to learn, I came to clearly understand the spirit that Shakyamuni Buddha wished to convey to us. And in my old age I am experiencing the Buddha’s teaching as a tangible reality within my body and my mind.

There is a familiar verse in the Dhammapada, which would read in modern language: “It is difficult for a person to receive life; it is exceedingly rare for one who is destined to die to happen to be alive at this

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moment. Even if one receives life, encountering the true teachings during one's lifetime is extremely rare, and being born into this world, this Earth where buddhas abound, is also extremely rare."

I believe that the essence of the Buddha's teachings lies within these few words.

How wonderful, precious, and worthy of our gratitude our lives are. How rare it is to encounter the Buddha's teachings. To realize these things ourselves leads to discovering the most important purpose in life.

Rather than living in discontent and discord but instead being thankful for this life that we have been given and living it brightly— simply stated, I believe that this is what receiving the Buddha's teachings and living a life of faith is all about.

Of course, life is also accompanied by worries and suffering. But if you realize how many blessings you also have right at this moment, you will feel a determination to keep moving forward without giving up. You will find yourself being grateful, even for the things you had considered troubling up until now.

The teachings tell us moreover that we are all equipped with buddha nature in our minds, and that we have within ourselves the ability to recognize the Truth and the Dharma, as well as the ability to solve problems on our own.

That is why one should not think "I'm an imperfect person" or "I can't do that." Rather, as Buddhists, accepting and putting the teachings of Shakyamuni Buddha into practice is the starting point of the journey of a happy life.

I can move my arms and legs, breathe, speak, and eat. I did not create the air and water that are essential to my being alive; they are the blessings of Nature. Furthermore, I am supported by many people. In reality, the way to achieve the greatest happiness is simply to become a person who can be grateful for everything in their daily life.

I have been given a life as a human being and have been allowed to live, sustained by all things in heaven and earth. To live in gratitude, with a sense of purpose, and walk the bodhisattva way—as I approach the age of eighty-nine, I have come to understand from the bottom of my heart that this is Shakyamuni's greatest wish.

If we can all etch this deeply in our hearts and

minds, our lives can undoubtedly become truly meaningful.

Two years from now, Rissho Kosei-kai will celebrate the ninetieth year since its founding, and in twelve years (2038) it will celebrate its centennial.

It is my heartfelt wish that we continue moving forward, developing the humanity of our children and young people by putting our family relationships in order and building a peaceful nation that reflects each other's traditions.

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