

## Coming to terms with Buddhism

### “I am sorry”

~the 3rd magical word~

We introduced two magical words before: “Good morning” in the January issue, and “Thank you” in the March issue. We have one more word which should be valued in our relationships!! The word is “I am sorry.”

What do you do when you feel you have done something wrong to someone in your daily life? Will you be stubborn and never admit your fault or prepare some perfect excuses? Even if you could make it through the situation, you will not be able to improve the relationship between other people, instead you might make it worse. When this happens, I think it is very important to admit our fault and say “I am sorry” with courage.

I understand that you may feel tempted to say “I am not the one to blame!!” or “the situation is bad!!” However, there is a word in Buddhism, “Right Speech,” that is part of the Eightfold Path; of eight ways guiding us human beings to the right way of living. “Right Speech” is the teaching to never speak badly of other people nor lie to others and always use right words. “I am sorry” is a type of the “Right Speech,” and it links to respect for others. If we could admit our faults humbly, “I am sorry” will arise automatically in our mind. We just need to say the words.

There is no doubt to be able to become happier if we can say “I am sorry” unreservedly rather than trying to make all sorts of excuses or being opinionated. “Good morning,” “Thank you,” and “I am sorry;” surely we require courage when saying these three words. But if we could say these words wholeheartedly, there will no fear in any relationship that we will have.

Now, we would like to review these three words again:

“Good morning” “Thank you” “I am sorry”

These are magical words that make our relationships so much more wonderful.



## Hana-Matsuri

### ~the International Buddha's Birthday Celebration~

About 2500 years ago, Shakyamuni Buddha was born as a prince in Lumbini, India, surrounded by many flowers and received in great celebration by humans and animals. When he was born, sweet Dharma rain fell down and purified his body. Then he stood up, walked seven steps and exclaimed, “I alone am honored, in heaven and on earth.” It means that “All creatures on earth are great and have equally precious lives. I will go to tell this to all people.”

Following the ceremony of the “Buddha's Birthday Celebration” held at the Great Sacred Hall on April 8, the “International Buddha's Birthday Celebration” was held at the Former Headquarters of Rissho Kosei-kai on April 12. About 300 people from 14 countries gathered and celebrated Buddha's birthday together.



# Learning and Growing Up Together

President of Rissho Kosei-kai Nichiko Niwano

## The Role of Adults

Last year, one of the projects initiated to mark Rissho Kosei-kai's seventieth anniversary was one titled Youth Development. We have decided to continue it this year as one of our organization's guiding principles. In every age, helping young people to develop well and fully is a task that must be undertaken responsibly by adults.

In particular, the early childhood years serve as an important period for building a foundation that lasts throughout the person's lifetime. We therefore have an important role to play in seeing that small children cultivate their individuality and self-reliance.

Currently, much serious thought is being given to the problem of Japan's declining birthrate and becoming a society with large numbers of elderly citizens and too few children. One issue that has come to the fore as a result of the declining birthrate is the excessive concern about every aspect of child rearing by young parents, especially mothers. In many cases, these parents do too much for the child, interfering so much they take away the opportunity for the child to think or act on his or her own.

When a mother tries to instruct her child on every little thing, she is nipping in the bud the child's spontaneity. Some specialists in child development suggest that such an upbringing is one reason for the increasing number of children who become self-centered and easily lose their temper for little apparent reason.

In past days, families usually had several children, often more, so that parents were very busy back then and could not pay a great deal of special attention to each child. Children played freely by themselves, helped their brothers and sisters around the house, did as much as they could for themselves, and tried not to be an extra burden on their parents.

I think that as long as parents take a firm hand in their most essential duties, they should encourage their child's independence. It is important for parents to be grateful for their lives as human beings, to gladly give thanks for the blessings so far received, and as far as possible appear happy and smiling before their offspring.

Children are very observant of adults. When growing children see their parents bowing their heads before the gods and the Buddha, they themselves come to revere gods and the Buddha. When children see adults who are grateful for being



sustained in living, they begin to realize the preciousness of their own lives. When growing children see that their parents do not lose their tempers or complain about life, and keep a happy smiling face, they learn what attitude they should have toward life and think, "I want grow up to be like that."

## Learning from Children

Adults, whether they are parents or not, always assume that they act as teachers to children. It is important, however, never to forget the importance of being able to learn from children. Children's words and actions are a mirror that reflects their parents. Of course, no parents are perfect human beings. In order to fulfill our role as affectionate, responsible parents, it is important to understand that we are able to learn from and "grow up" together with our children.

We may desire to learn from holy men and women of the past but these men and women often teach us to learn from young children. The Bible carries many references to children. A famous example is the words of Jesus in the New Testament: "Truly, I say to you, unless you turn and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven."(Mark 10:15) I think this passage is telling us the importance of accepting the teaching with innocent purity and the open mind of a small child.

The Zen master Bankei (1622-93) penned this poem: "How sad that the newborn child / Gradually gains knowledge / And grows distant from the Buddha." Just as the poem warns us, we must be diligent in our practice, not allowing ourselves to become tempted by the kind of worldly knowledge that leads us to become antagonistic and stubborn, but keeping our minds as open and flexible as those of innocent children.



## President-designate Kosho Niwano

President Nichiko Niwano's oldest daughter, Rev. Kosho Niwano was born in Tokyo. After graduating with a degree in Law from Gakushuin University, she studied at Gakurin Seminary, the training institution for Rissho Kosei-kai leaders. Presently, as she studies the Lotus Sutra, she continues to act as President-designate, making speeches for participants in the main ceremonies of Rissho Kosei-kai, and handling activities for interfaith cooperation at home and abroad. Married to Rev. Munehiro Niwano. Mother of one son and three daughters.



he will soon recover" or "He looks a little better today, don't you think?"

Thinking about the love they showed warmed my spirit, and I began to feel really happy.

If I had only been concerning myself about what I may have been doing wrong or what else I could do to help make my son get better, I would probably not have noticed the affection being offered by everyone in the family, and I would never have experienced the happiness that I felt then.

The founder always said, "Happiness is never achieved by running around looking for it; it is something you discover and become aware of in the here and now."

Instead of denying the existence of a problem or becoming obsessed with trying to solve it, learning to find the joy that exists in a situation as it is opens for us the true way to salvation. In fact, if you are able to find the joy in things the way they are, you can actually feel happy to encounter a problem. In other words, just by acquiring this way of looking at things your life will evolve in a rich and meaningful way that corresponds to it.

I felt the words of the founder coming back to me: "Everything happens the way the Buddha intends." If we truly believe this, if we are sure of it from the bottom of our hearts, the degree of happiness we can find in life will become immense. When we discover the working of the Buddha in every phenomenon, even worry and distress can be transformed into merit for us all.

In my case, as the days went by I suddenly realized that my son's eczema had finally subsided to the point where it did not really bother him any more.

**"In most cases, the usual, uneventful state of affairs is one of merit. People with true faith are the ones who can sense this."**

**(Niwano Nikkyo Howa Senshu [Selected Sermons of Nikkyo Niwano], special volume, p. 119)**

When we recover from an illness, or maintain good health, we are enjoying great merit. It is in the here and now, however, in our present situation that our true riches lie.

# My journey to experience the World of Faith

Ms. Rie Sumada, Rishso Kosei-kai Hawaii

This spiritual experience was delivered as part of the ceremony of 50th Anniversary of Rishso Kosei-kai Hawaii at the Dharma Center of Hawaii, on 22 March, 2009. We will present this in a series of 2 installments.



Congratulations to the 50th Anniversary of Rishso Kosei Kai Hawaii. On this celebrated day, I am honored to have been given the opportunity to share my experience with fellow Sangha and the distinguished guests of honor.

My name is Rie Sumada. I am a member of Rishso Kosei Kai, Kona Chapter. I was born and raised in Japan and 28 years ago, I got married to a Japanese American from Hawaii and moved here. I now live in the town of Hilo on the Big Island of Hawaii. One and a half years ago, in the fall of 2007, my husband said that he had something to tell me. Little I knew that what he revealed next would change my and my children's lives forever. My husband said that for the last ten years, he had been repeatedly unfaithful to me. He said that he did it because of his desire to be in love and that he was no longer in love with me. He then asked me for a divorce in order to be with his current girlfriend, who was also seeking a divorce from her husband. I was completely shocked. The notion that the man whom I trusted and respected for as long as 27 years had been unfaithful to me for such

a long time was simply devastating. In panic, I begged him to give our marriage another chance, even for the sake of our children, but he coldly stated that his happiness was more important than anything else. With those words, the life as I had known and worked so hard for had crumbled down completely underneath my feet.

My husband's betrayal hit me so hard that it had affected the deep notion of WHO I WAS and WHAT MY LIFE WAS. I was also afraid that I would lose everything in my life. In desperation, I called Rev. Hosoyama for guidance. I hoped that he would give me practical solutions to resolve my problem, but instead, Rev. Hosoyama spoke of something that would change my view of the world. He said that all the phenomena in this world, including our hardships, were the manifestation of the Eternal Buddha's compassion. "Yes", I said. I had heard that expression many times before, but it didn't make me feel any better. He then asked me if I truly believed in that. Obviously, I was not at ease with what was happening to me, nor could I accept it as a blessing. Rather, I looked at the situation as something as a catastrophe and wanted it to be fixed. Then Rev. Hosoyama used a metaphor to explain further. He said, "There lays a gulch just in

front of the world of Faith. That gulch looks narrow enough to cross, but for many of us, it is very, very difficult to actually take a leap and jump over it. As long as we are on this side of the gulch, the pain of suffering continues. Rie-san, it's time for you to have that unconditional faith in the Buddha and believe that what is happening is his best possible arrangement for you. You are at the edge of the gulch - why not take a leap? When you are in the land of Faith, everything will be alright."

True to Reverend's words, I didn't have the unconditional faith in the Buddha. As a daughter of a long time devoted member of Rishso Kosei Kai, I had a lonely childhood as my mother was always away from home, helping fellow members. As I became a parent myself, I didn't want my children to experience the same, so I was always reluctant to commit myself fully in the practice. Rev. Hosoyama's guidance helped me to see that my practice was superficial. "What have I been doing all these years?" I asked myself. I suddenly realized how much I had drifted away from the true path. I was so ashamed. As I repented myself in reciting the Lotus Sutra, I also realized that because of my mother, I could meet the Dharma so difficult to encounter, and because of my mother, I could meet Founder Niwano's teachings. Right away, I

telephoned my mother in Japan and thanked her for the first time, for her selfless practice and for passing the Dharma light to me. I vowed to her that I would carry this inheritance and walk the Bodhisattva way for the rest of my life. She was very pleased.

In the meanwhile at home, my trial was continuing. For the next four months until my husband moved out of our house, he became verbally abusive, and almost every night accused me of the failure of our marriage. Following Rev. Hosoyama's guidance, I took it as my practice of the "Patience" in the Six Paramitas. It was so hard that I soon couldn't eat or sleep. In those dark days, reciting the Lotus Sutra was my only salvation. The passages that I have heard and read many times before began to resonate in me differently. I felt as if I had met the Dharma for the first time. At around this time, I invited my friend, and she became a member of Rishso Kosei Kai. She and I began driving 250 miles to attend the Kona Dharma Center every Sunday. My 16 year-old son, David, had been walking through the difficult path with courage and character and gave me the strength to go on. He and I have become closer since. It was clear that he, too, was well -placed in the hands of the Buddha.

(Continued)

## The Civilization of Gratitude and Humility

Just because something is in abundance doesn't necessarily mean that it's good.

Even if there were all sorts of delicacies lined up, if we were to stuff our faces with everything, it would be not be very delicious at all. For example, for even just a soup and salad, by thinking of the effort of the person who made it and gratitude for nature that provided it, nothing can appear to be tastier.

When we see a plane flying high in the sky, we think of its movement as only the result of the jet engine propellers and the pilot's handling. However, if we look closely, we would see that there are a lot of things at work to support the plane's flight. Going down the list, there are people in ground control, people who built

## The Teaching of Founder Nikkyo Niwano

the aircraft, people who dug the oil for its fuel, people who refined that oil. There are also people who excavate the titanium that is essential for the manufacturing of the engine; and all of these raw materials are made from the blessing of nature... If even just one of these elements is missing, the plane would not be able to fly. From the earth and above the earth as well, these elements all come together to allow the aircraft to fly into the open sky.

In the name of civilization, by living with awareness of the gratitude of even the blessings we can't see before us, we can value the truly abundant wealth of our lives.

From "Kaisozuikan 3" (Kosei Publishing Co.) p.192-193  
Translated by Rissho Kosei-kai International

### \*\*\* Column \*\*\*

This year marks the 10th year since the inauguration of the Nerima Interreligious Forum. The activities of this forum are rather unique. Beginning with religious dialog, it extended to joint prayer, and the spreading of peace activities in the area. "9/11 A Prayer for Peace: A Charity Concert for Love and Hope" was also organized, from which proceeds benefited the construction of elementary schools for disadvantaged children in Afghanistan. The benefits of this assistance program are still on-going.

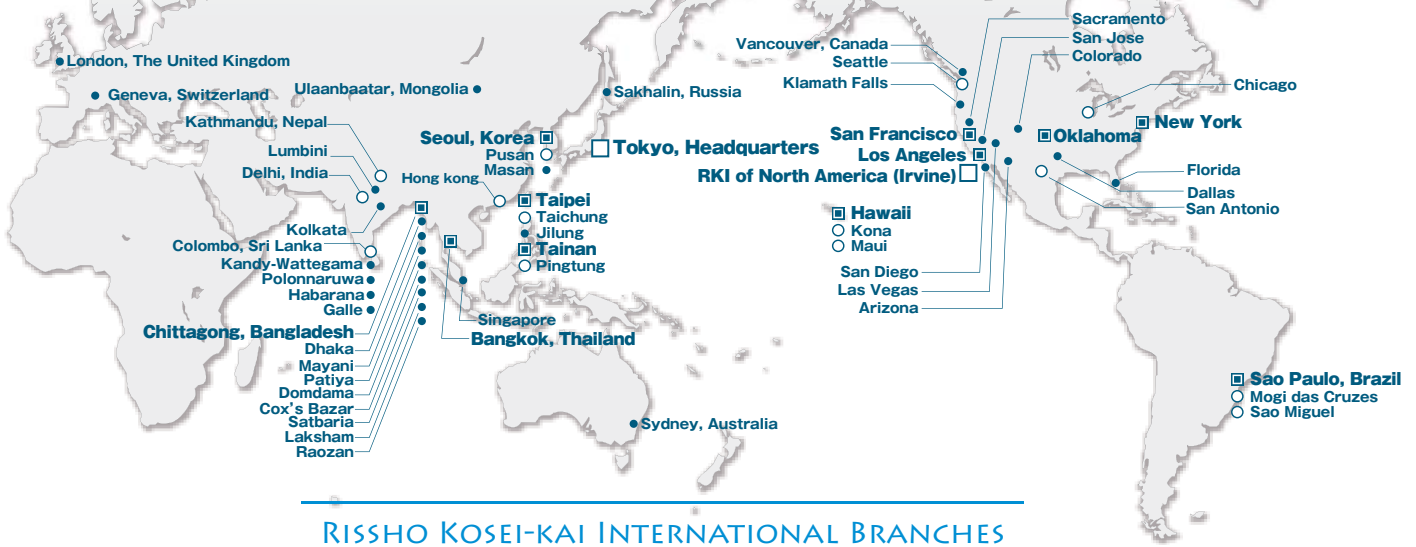
This year the Spanish translation of the Threefold Lotus Sutra was published by the Sigueme Publishing Company. The translator, Juan Masia, is one of the founding members of the Nerima Interreligious Forum.

Five times a year, the members gather at one of their respective temples or shrines for prayer and interreligious dialog. In April, the members gathered at Tanashi Shrine, where the Chief Priest Kaya offered the topic of discussion. Priest Kaya is not only a Shinto priest, but also an active psychiatrist. In modern Japan, there are many people who suffer from mental health disorders however Priest Kaya believes that if they are able to laugh, they will be alright. He pointed out that "Playing" is "Praying."

President Niwano gave us the guidance of being "Bright" and "Cheerful" at the beginning of the year. Because a cloud of darkness is presently looming over the world, we as RK members should take the stand to first become bright and cheerful ourselves. (Kotaro Suzuki)

## Rissho Kosei-kai

Rissho Kosei-kai is a lay Buddhist organization whose holy scripture is the Threefold Lotus Sutra. It was established by Founder Nikkyo Niwano and Co-founder Myoko Naganuma in 1938. This organization is composed of ordinary men and women who have faith in the Buddha and strive to enrich their spirituality by applying his teachings to their daily lives. At both the local community and international levels, we, under the guidance of the President Nichiko Niwano are very active in promoting peace and well-being through altruistic activities and cooperation with other organizations.



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