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February 2021 Newsletter

Hello everyone!

One month has already passed since the New Year 2021 started.



Reflecting back, it has been one year since the coronavirus infectious disease spread throughout the world. To this day, over two million people worldwide have passed away due to the coronavirus pandemic. A city with population of two million people would be considered a big city. Furthermore, at present, the spread has continued with a second wave, and then a third wave. Some new powerful variant of the virus has also been discovered in various regions. In response, the vaccines were finally developed at the end of last year and the distribution started, little by little.

In the past year, numerous people had passed away. We pray that their precious spirit rest in peace. Furthermore, we pray for the speedy recovery, as soon as possible, for those who are presently under medical treatment in the hospitals or recuperating at home.

And we would like to express our heartfelt gratitude to everyone in the healthcare industry devotedly working day and night through stress and fatigue, without much sleep or rest. And we must not forget our gratitude to the public and essential workers who continuously support our overall life as we are forced to restrain ourselves in each of our homes.

In the New Year edition of the Kosei newspaper, there were several learned people who suggested how we might accept and regard the facts during these unprecedented experiences. I would like to introduce them to you.

They were suggestions by a university professor, a philosopher, an economic analyst, and a literary and arts journalist on “With Coronavirus Times.”

The themes were: “Surviving the coronavirus crisis”; “The expansion of the coronavirus infectious disease is a warning for capitalism”; “Changes in civilization due to the coronavirus infectious disease crisis...where and how the society and politics should be directed?”; “Things highlighted by the coronavirus: the civilization until now and hereafter”; “With coronavirus and literature.”

All the contents were very intriguing. In this message, I will not be able to introduce every point that was presented, but I would like to summarize below, parts I thought were important.

There was a suggestion that through this coronavirus crisis, it is necessary for people to reconsider the state of the world of the past to the present.

When capitalism caused agricultural communities to become impoverished and concentration on large cities developed, this led to expansion of infectious viruses as well as to destruction of the global environment. Together with the evolution of capitalism, an increase of energy consumption are tied to global warming and abnormal weather.

Furthermore, there is also a widening disparity for the total assets of up to the 26th highest ranking world millionaires is said to be the same amount as the assets of 3.8 billion people of the global population.

The suggestion was that we now need to part ways with capitalism which cannot exist without a continuous expansion of profit, and give priority to life and nature.

In a separate suggestion, it was stated that the traditional thinking of people in Japan until the Edo Period perceived the society as established with the overlapping of “the relationship between nature and human beings,” “the relationships among the living humankind,” and “the relationship between the living person and the deceased.”

In present day society, the living humankind’s logic rules the society. Nature became a faraway phenomenon, and death became uneasy and fearful. The living humankind’s desire freely took control that caused and continues to cause havoc in the world.

In that sense, we need to call into question “what basically is society?”

Economy is a tool for maintaining the society and the true objective is to better maintain the society.

Another recommendation had this conclusion.

Although the situation requires of us to be prepared for this world crisis to continue, if, through this coronavirus crisis, the human race radically change our “rudders,” the whole world could possibly advance towards true happiness and prosperity.

In the President’s first sermon of the year, President Niwano announced this year’s “first calligraphies of the year” as “燈明 (To-Myo)” which means “light” and “省心 (Sei-shin)” which means “to reflect and to eliminate”.

The Chinese characters “燈明” are the characters found in the teaching of “Make yourself the light, Make the Dharma your light.” [自燈明 (Ji-To-Myo) • 法燈明 (Ho-To-Myo)].

President Niwano is asking us to be the “light,” in accordance with the Dharma (the teachings), so we can share hope and happiness to as many people as possible.

With “省心,” the President is asking us to always be willing to reflect upon ourselves and by discarding anything that is useless and unnecessary, realize the importance of focusing on the more essential things.

President Niwano chose these two words for us to be mindful of their significance throughout this year.

Having encountered this coronavirus crisis, let us take the aforementioned suggestions into account as we look at ourselves introspectively and squarely face the period in which we now live.

Gassho

Rev. Tomokazu Hatakeyama

Minister of RKNY

