



# Rissho Kosei-kai of New York

320 East 39<sup>th</sup> Street, New York, NY 10016 TEL: (212) 867-5677

E-mail address: koseiny@aol.com, Website : <http://rk-ny.org>



## August 2023 Newsletter

Hello, everyone! How are you doing?

As we enter the month of August, I imagine some of you may be making plans for an enjoyable summer vacation

Although concerns about COVID 19 are gradually fading, this summer has been marked by numerous wildfires in Canada that, due to the air currents, caused plumes of smoke to spread across the eastern United States as well as many states in the Midwest. And in New York, we had several consecutive days of haze that hung like a dense fog, sometimes turning the sky orange like a sunset, causing alarms, and issuing of warnings to stay indoors. No one could have imagined that we would have to wear masks again after finally taking them off, but because of the health hazards caused by such air pollution, it seems that this situation will likely continue throughout this summer.

This month, following on my July message, I would like to look back on my life during COVID 19, the three years which had been very different from my life until then, and share some of what I noticed at that time.

Regarding how to spend the time when we would often stay indoors and refrain from going out, President Nichiko Niwano repeatedly said, "Let us consider this time as an especially good opportunity to deepen our introspection"

The dictionary says "introspection" means to reflect on one's own thoughts and actions.

My first thought was, we are always taught to "put others first," so what does it mean to deeply think about oneself?

I questioned: What is the difference between thinking about others and thinking about oneself?

Through delving into this question, I learned a lot.

Buddhism is a teaching that aims for self-perfection, but to cultivate and perfect oneself does not mean self-centered; it is the cultivating and perfecting of the self that includes consideration for people other than oneself. It refers to a state of being in which all things are seen as one, rather than thinking in terms of relative separation between oneself and others

To cultivate one's own mind, one must nurture a mind that values others as well; in other words, I think it means to become more expansive.

In the Lotus Sutra, Chapter 10 "Teachers of the Dharma," "The Three Rules of the Abode, the Robe, and the Seat of the Tathagata" are taught to prepare one's mindset for teaching this Dharma to others. It describes the importance of three attitudes: the great compassionate heart for all living beings, the flexible and forbearing mind, and to realize "the emptiness of all things."

Among the three above, it is difficult to understand the meaning of "realizing the emptiness of all things," but President Niwano explains this simply so we can easily understand. The meaning of

"seeing the emptiness of all things" is to see with a mind of oneness that makes no distinction between self and others, that all life is equally caused to live by the Buddha. If we do not have this awareness, we will inevitably make distinctions between oneself and others.

From the general point of view (worldly wisdom), it is a way of clearly seeing things as different; in modern science, the focus is on exploring things through analysis (segmentation and classification). Another way, the Buddhist way of seeing things is called the "Buddha wisdom," which is taught as the viewpoint that perceives both the differences and equality in things.

Simply put, it is a way of looking at the differences between you and me in terms of human relationships, while at the same time seeing the commonality of life as we are both caused to live by the Buddha. When we look at things from a near-sighted perspective, we inevitably become analytical and our individual differences become clear, but when we, with a slight distance, look at things from a broader perspective, we can see the oneness of lives that is being caused to live together in a world that is larger than our individual differences.

So, what is the meaning and purpose of President Niwano's words, "deepening one's introspection"?

My understanding is that it is "to encounter one's true self."

It is natural for one to feel discontent, dissatisfied, and to complain, but I think this is about finding the heart and mind to trust, love, and have empathy for others that exist deeper within oneself.

We are taught that "awakening to one's true self" is the attainment of Buddhahood, (to perfect oneself), but this can also be said to be the realization of the buddha nature within oneself. Buddha-nature means we already possess the same nature as the Buddha, and that nature is the heart and mind of "compassion, mercy, joy, and non-attachment" which is the oneness of self and the others. This is repeatedly taught through parables in the Lotus Sutra.

In "The Sutra of the Method of Contemplating the Bodhisattva Universal Sage," there is a passage that means: We must always practice acts of compassion, be mindful of the buddha nature of others, and discard the way of thinking that divides us due to our self-centeredness.

As the opportunities to encounter with people increase, I hope that you will cherish those encounters with these thoughts in mind, and actively engage with others. When you do so, I think your daily life will be filled with joy for both yourself and others.

Let us not succumb to the heat and let us firmly devote ourselves to this month as well.



Gassho

Rev. Tomokazu  
Hatakeyama

Minister RKNY