



Rissho Kosei-kai of New York

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

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



November 2023 Newsletter

Hello, everyone. How are you doing?

As I walk outside, I can feel the cool breeze gently caressing my cheeks, and at last experiencing the signs of deepening into autumn. We now have only two months left this year.

Although it is not completely over, it has been a year in which the onslaught of COVID has finally begun to subside and people's lives are gradually returning to the way life used to be.

Looking around the world, Russia's invasion of Ukraine has had a significant impact on the global economy and energy issues, with no end in sight. Additionally, in the Middle East, conflict between Israel and Hamas is causing many civilian sufferings and casualties in both countries, with displaced Palestinians in the Gaza Strip forced to seek refuge. The situation is very serious. We earnestly pray that this chaotic situation will end as soon as possible.

Since 2020, when COVID was just beginning to become a global pandemic, I have been sharing monthly messages with all of you for nearly four years. However, I must inform you that this will be my final message because my tenure as the minister of the New York Center will end on November 30th of this year, and I will retire from the organization.

Reflecting on my journey, I started working for Rissho Kosei-kai in 1972 and have been serving in the organization for over 51 years. I would like to thank everyone for the tremendous support I have received throughout the years. After graduating from the university, I studied Buddhism at Gakurin Seminary. Subsequently, I worked in various roles at the Fumon Cultural Center, the External Affairs Department, Public Relations Department, International Affairs Department. These roles provided me with numerous experiences, such as engaging in religious dialogue and cooperation both in Japan and internationally, as well as participating in the development assistance activities through the Donate One Meal Peace Fund. Later, in my roles as the head of the International Affairs Department, Deputy Secretary-General of the WCRP Japan Committee, also Secretary-General of the WCRP Japan Committee, and Secretary-General of the ACRP, I had opportunities to meet with religious leaders throughout Japan and around the world and found that my contacts with such people who have deep religious beliefs helped deepen my own faith.

Furthermore, I undertook the significant role as the minister of two Centers in Japan and twice as the minister of the New York Center. Through dissemination activities, I learned about Shakyamuni Buddha, Founder Nikkyo Niwano, and President Nichiko Niwano's views on faith, and I was able to embrace, as much as possible, those teachings that enrich lives. That has been a great treasure for my own life.

I am deeply grateful for every day that I was able to feel I am caused to live by the Buddha and in my daily life, learn the teachings of the Buddha and share the joys and the challenges with many members of the Sangha.

Shakyamuni Buddha, after his renunciation, endured six years of intense austerities and ultimately achieved supreme perfect awakening, a state previously unattained by any human. In the analogy of a great river, he successfully crossed from this shore (here) to the other shore (there).

However, despite reaching the other shore, Shakyamuni Buddha did not remain there but returned to this shore. With compassion, he extended a helping hand to those who were suffering and filled with anxiety and continuously sought ways to guide them to the peaceful other shore.

The story teaches us something deeply significant about Mahayana Buddhism.

Rather than simply achieving personal enlightenment, crossing to the other shore, to be content spending peaceful time alone, it emphasizes returning to this shore for the sake of those who have not yet crossed, encouraging collective efforts so that all people can cross over to reach the other shore.

A Buddhist scholar said that it was under the Bodhi tree that Shakyamuni Buddha attained enlightenment, and through his relentless dedication to liberation of people for over the course of forty years, he completed his supreme perfect awakening.

Once, as a staff member of the External Relations Department, I was giving a tour of our Headquarters to a religious leader. He asked me, "How many people to date within Rissho Kosei-kai have attained enlightenment and buddhahood?" I was taken aback, not knowing how to respond. Since then, I have continuously pondered this question. However, today, I can clearly answer that question.

Buddhism is often said to be the teaching to attain buddhahood (perfection of oneself). However, in Mahayana Buddhism, it is not simply about attaining enlightenment, reaching the other shore, and concluding there. It teaches the importance of liberating those who have not yet crossed over and those who are drowning, by assisting everyone to encourage one another and collectively strive in their efforts toward reaching the other shore.

The mission we members of Rissho Kosei-kai aspire to, despite not having attained perfect awakening nor achieved perfecting ourselves, is to follow in the footsteps of Shakyamuni Buddha, who dedicated himself to the liberation of others. We may not be 100% like him, but we are on the same path, aren't we?

Bodhisattvas are often described as those who, despite having attained enlightenment, deliberately remain on this shore, continuously extending compassionate assistance to others.

I think this highlights the importance of the bodhisattva path as lay Buddhists.

Practicing the teachings of the Lotus Sutra means having unwavering faith not to neglect this mission, regardless of where we are, and to continue walking on the Eternal Path of the Bodhisattva Way.

I am grateful for having served as your Minister of the New York Center twice and for the training we have undertaken together. I extend my heartfelt wishes for your continued well-being and dedication.

Thank you very much.



Gassho

Rev. Tomokazu
Hatakeyama

Minister RKNY