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March 2024 Newsletter

Hello Everyone!

I hope that you are well.

Amazingly, it is already March, and Spring is here!

With the welcoming of March and the advent of Spring, it offers us each a profound opportunity to reconnect with our natural world, reminding us of the cycles of life, transition, and renewal.

I really think that this reconnection when reflected upon through the footsteps of Founder Nikkyo Niwano, can give us a greater appreciation for the beauty and miracle of life that the Buddha and our practice is helping to reveal to us.

Also, when we think of Spring as being a chance for our renewal and awakening, it becomes a wonderful opportunity for us to practice together, with a deepening understanding of Itai Doshin (Many in Body One in Spirit).

Nevertheless, it seems like life is often challenging us with many seemingly small and serious obstacles to our happiness, and as a result, we can sometimes feel as though we cannot make it through the day.

However, I think that if we are willing to try and apply the principles as we discuss in Hoza, and in our meetings centered on the Lotus Sutra, with a mind of Itai Doshin, we can lead lives that are happy, joyful, and rewarding.

Excitingly, when we take this approach of sincerely making Itai Doshin as “our baseline” vow, Spring becomes more than a mere change in the season, but rather Spring gives us a chance to put into daily practice our deepest held hopes, wishes and dreams.

In this way whatever we hold dear in terms of our important wishes, hopes and vows act to open our hearts so that we can express loving-kindness (love) for each person and every encounter that we have in our lives.

Nice sounding words, right. But the key question is how do we do this?

Well, President Nichiko Niwano specifically addressed the “how” in his guidance in March of 2022 when addressing our happiness from the vantage point of encounters and donation when he stated that:

When you help other people who are having a hard time or going through something difficult, you are definitely helping yourself and making yourself happy. And this is what all people of faith understand well and why they gladly make donations, with heartfelt joy.

Here the President Niwano is addressing encounters through donations, and while his statement here could apply to monetary donations, the President is not really referring to that here but rather the President is referring to donation through the encounters of presence.

That is, by showing up to others and various circumstances with a mind of hope and joy and with a deep sense that we are one with all things, Itai Doshin, then situations that can seem difficult

can seemingly instantly change and if we are attentive then the hand of the Buddha can reveal himself. So thinking on it for a moment, by coming to encounters with a mind centered on reaching out to others with kindness, as opposed to teaching others alone, we can build a sense of unity with them .

Further, keeping with the theme of Spring, if we are imaginative, we can look at ourselves as being a kind of like flower, which is beginning to bloom with the change of season. That being like a flower, everyone and everything we interact with, we have the opportunity to leave them with a powerful and long lasting fragrance of hope, kindness or even love. And most importantly this fragrance can remain with them long after our encounters with them have faded from their memory.

It is for this reason why the understanding and practice of Itai Doshin in our Centers and Zoom gatherings is so important, because it gives us a chance to practice at the Dojo one with another to reveal our very best selves, our wonderful fragrances and yes, of course, our joyous Buddha Nature.

When looked at from this angle our interactions with others in the Center and in Hoza (the “Dojo”) are our preparation for our interactions with others in the outer world.

Indeed, recently I had the opportunity to put this practice to the test when I visited the Watt Samakki-Dhammikaram Buddhist Temple in Brooklyn which is led by Cambodian Venerable Sun Rithy. Unfortunately I met Venerable Rithy once again under very unfortunate circumstances.

Indeed, the Cambodian Watt Buddhist Temple had just the day before, several men break into their temple with guns and knives, roughed up the monks and stole money, and luckily no one was killed.

When I visited the temple, that next day after the break-in to show Venerable Rithy and the Cambodian Buddhist community support on behalf of Rissho Kosei Kai. I had the opportunity to sit down with Venerable Rithy and we talked for a long, long time.

I only intended to stay for ten minutes, however I was there for a while because the Venerable wanted to share the Dharma with me. He needed to be able to talk to someone who understood his concerns for his fellow monks and of course the lay practitioners who support the temple. When I finally left, the Venerable thanked Rissho Kosei Kai and kept saying that is “important that you came.”

As I arrived home, I realized that the message from the Buddha to me was clear, that the most significant thing that happened in being with the Venerable, this encounter, was that I was able to physically show up for this monk who is truly determined to maintain his sincere faith in the Buddha.

After the experience I was left thinking that just by cherishing the encounter by listening and caring, while following the guidance of President Niwano is not only powerful but healing as well.

Well enough for now and don’t forget we are following Founder Nikkyo Niwano’s compassionate guidance, we are a Peace Center!

Thank you so very much for your time!

Wishing you the very best always

Gassho

Rev. James Hiroshi Lynch

Minister RKNY

