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## October 2025 Newsletter

*"I Am Not the Circumstance; I Am the Vow"*

Living the Lotus Sutra in a Time of Crisis

Dear Sangha Friends:

I hope that you are well.

As we enter the season of turning leaves and long evenings, we find ourselves once again at a threshold. You may remember that October, comes from the Latin octo, meaning "eight," and reminds us of prosperity, peace, and **deep harmony**. And if we think about it, in the Lotus Sutra's vision, this **deep harmony** is not the absence of challenge but the flowering of vow in the midst of it.

Indeed, in a world filled with conflict, division, and fear, it's easy to believe that the "problem" is out there. But Chapter 19 of the Lotus Sutra challenges that view. It tells us: the entire world is within you.

We get a hint of this in Chapter 19 when it states:

Within their own pure bodies. They alone will clearly perceive What others cannot see. Within their bodies will be manifested Every form and image Of all of the multitudes of living beings In the three-thousandfold world, Shinozaki, Michio; Ziporyn, Brook; Earhart, David. The Threefold Lotus Sutra: A Modern Translation for Contemporary Readers (p. 317). Kosei Publishing Co.. Kindle Edition.

So, when society wounds itself with violence, be it racial, political, or domestic, the Lotus Sutra practitioner is not helpless. For our body is not just flesh and bone. It is, when we practice, is the scroll of the Sutra itself. This means that when we respond to hatred with compassion, we are not merely being kind, we are transforming the karmic field of entanglement where we live.

And if we remember that: "To walk as a moving living oasis of hope and compassion is to heal the whole, even when the world forgets its true nature."

Tellingly, the Great Master Dōgen said, "Do not leave the monastery." But to me he wasn't speaking of buildings. Rather, Dogen meant the space of Buddha's vow that lives within us.

For, Risshō Kōsei Kai, we don't worship the Eternal Buddha as a distant being. For we carry the Eternal Buddha with us, as presence, as remembrance, and as a cleaning healing mirror. In this understanding, the altar is not just where we chant. It is the grocery store, the subway, and even in the moment of tension with a loved one.

So in this October, as we continue to reflect deeply on Ma, the sacred interval before manifestation. In a world driven by urgency and reaction, we must remember that our power resides in this Ma, the breath before action, the silence before sound. Therefore:

When you pause before judgment, that's Ma.

When you take a breath instead of shouting, that's Ma.

When you allow stillness to carry the vow instead of rushing to fix something, that's Ma.

This is what it means to become a moving oasis, and for you to carry this sacred spaciousness with you. And in this way, the Bodhisattva way, you nourish the world not by fixing it, but by becoming a vessel wide enough to hold it.

Think, we may not have chosen our conditions. But we can choose our response. This echoes the teaching we explored last October: “It’s up to you to decide.” Now, we deepen that understanding:

Even when I am weary, I vow to nourish.  
Even when the world erupts, I vow to walk as peace.  
Even when unseen, vow to love anyway.

This is not denial. It is the Dharma flowering in the middle of samsara.  
What I love about our community is, we don’t isolate ourselves from the world. We engage it, with compassion as our bridge and hope as our internal compass. Therefore, we don’t just measure by agreement, or even outcome. We trust the ripple. We trust the vow.

This autumn, President Niwano reminds us, in his guidance for this month, of the power reading, not just as Information, but as transformation:

President Nwano states:

“Make friends with saints and sages through reading.” Yoshida Shoin (quoted by President Niwano)  
(President Niwano’s Guidance October 2025)

Importantly, following the President, we don’t just read the Lotus Sutra, we let the Sutra transform us. And we don’t just study saints, we walk with them.

And as nights grow longer, and Winter creeps upon us, let your reading be a form of remembering. Read with your whole being. Let the words of the Buddha, the saints, the sages, become your breath and your heartbeat.

So, at the end of the day:  
You do not need to wait for the world to change.  
You are the change.  
You are the vow.

For, October is no longer just a season, it is our mirror. A mirror that:  
Reflects your vow.  
Holds your sacred pause (Ma).  
And reminds you:

**You are not the circumstance. You are your vow.**

Thank you so very much for your time and your boundless compassion to bring forth a better world!

Wishing you the very best always,

With gratitude,

Gasshō

Rev. James Hiroshi Lynch  
Minister RKNY

