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September 2025 Newsletter

Dear Beautiful Sangha,

I truly hope this message finds you well and happy.

Wow, somehow, we've reached that sacred turning point again. That is the time when the summer sun begins to yield. The trees begin to whisper. And once more, we are reminded: transition is a natural part of the path.

But even in change, there is a deeper call, not to chase, not to escape, but to return. This is the key of being a Rissho Kosei Kai member, that is, an individual, who understands that while, yes, there is change, true power is in returning home to the Buddha who helps us to reveal who we really are.

You Are Awake in a World That Forgets

So, in times like these when the world seems aflame with continuing international conflicts, when uncertainty rises at home and abroad, and divisiveness hardens, it's easy to ask, "**What can I do?**" But in truth, the deeper question is:

"What am I remembering?" Yes, for a Buddhist the question is: "What am I remembering?"

For as a Rissho Kosei Kai member:

You are awake in a world that forgets, not to condemn it, but to remember on behalf of all who cannot yet recall or see. This is why you are so precious!

Indeed, this is not a poetic metaphor. It is a sacred reality. You were not born to perform. You were born to remember. And to remember what you might ask?

To remember that you are a Vow Born individual, who is rooted in a choice of whether to be Karma Born or Vow Born. That is, whether to be simply reactive to the stimulus that leads and confronts you, or to live your life as revealed in the Lotus Sutra. This latter path, this choice, in any given situation or circumstance is to be truly Vow Born.

And when you live from the vow, your presence, your silence, your smile, all become offerings the world didn't even know it needed.

Ma (間) : The Sacred Pause that Holds the Dharma

I have been mentioning in the English speaking study sessions that there is a word in Japanese aesthetics and Buddhist teaching that speaks directly to this moment of choice: Ma (間) ; the sacred interval.

It is the precious space between sound and silence. The breath between thought and action. The pause, the choice, where presence becomes possible.

So:

You are remembering:

Before reaction—pause.

Before speech—presence.

Before movement—love.

This is the path of pause, then choice-as-practice.

Here, Ma is not nothingness. Rather, it is fullness ungrasped. It is where Structural Love begins to bloom, not as theory, but as felt experience.

As I've come to see by looking at Founder Niwano's life example:

Even if you do not fully understand the whole Sutra, if you recite, guide others, live in gratitude, and never forget the Dharma, then the Dharma will live within you.

This means even in our pause, even in our silence, the Dharma is moving.

You Are a Moving Oasis

And as I mentioned in June and now as summer winds down, I shared with you my practice of greeting the trees I meet as I walk down my street, not as a ritual, but as reverence. For me, this practice reminds me that the day ahead is not mine to conquer, but to meet.

Indeed, I share this not as a model, but as a hope, a hope, that each of us might leave our homes each day with even a little more joy, more curiosity, more reverence for what lies ahead.

Even when the path is uncertain. Especially then.

This simple moment of pause and choice then is not empty.

This is the essence of a Living Ma.

A breath before movement.

A bow before the world.

A subtle remembering that the vow, our vow, walks before us.

Here, every street corner, every conversation, every pause before a reply; these are not empty spaces. They are sacred intervals where Ma (間) becomes real.

The Lotus Sutra teaches that “we become the Buddha’s messengers through how we meet others.” Again, that includes the most ordinary encounters. Even waiting at a crosswalk can be a chance to re-enter the vow.

The Dharma is not delayed only until the temple is perfect, quiet or the world is calm. Rather it is here. It is now. Indeed, even as you read these words, the Dharma resonates within you.

So there is no need to fix yourself first. You do not need to be spiritually polished to be of benefit. The trees outside your door do not wait to be perfect before offering shade. Neither do you.

You are enough, just as you are, and the vow you carry was never yours alone. It is the Buddha’s vow, alive in your ordinary hands and feet.

Keep on Smiling

Yes, I say it again, and again, and I will keep saying it: **Keep on smiling.**

This simple act is more than a slogan. It is a vow, your vow made visible. Even amid difficulty, smiling is how we whisper, **“I will not give up on joy.”**

And most importantly, if you truly think about it, the first person to be impacted by your smile and your joy, is you!

Again as Founder Niwano guided: “If, at first, you only superficially adopt the ‘keep on smiling’ philosophy, that’s all right. Just keep in mind that you are smiling to become more flexible, and it will naturally sink into your spirit.” (Living the Lotus, President Niwano, May 2024)

So, smile, not for show, but instead to soften your heart and nourish those around you.

This month, the month of September, let your smile be your sacred response. Let your pause and choice be your Dharma Vow. Let your walking be your teaching. These are not lesser practices they are the Living Lotus Sutra made visible.

In October, we’ll go deeper into the unseen roots of practice:

That is: What it means to live from vow when no one is watching, not even you

But for now, just pause. Just smile. Just walk.

You are already radiating more than you realize.

With love, with trust, and with deep gratitude for your presence,

Gassho

Rev. James Hiroshi Lynch
Minister RKNY

