



【Living mindfully while cherishing each passing moment】

Starting the Year 2017 with a renewed mind and heart, I received the Guidelines for Members' Practice of Faith in 2017 from President Niwano and would like to focus this year on living with "gratitude." I started this year with the resolution to express and practice "gratitude." Time certainly passes quickly. February is already upon us. Everyone, what is your vision for this year?



In this newsletter, I would like to share with you the First Guidance of 2017 (*Goshinkyō*) we received from President Niwano at the Great Sacred Hall.

President Niwano's two calligraphy for the New Year were displayed on the stage.

They were 『燈明 (Toh-myoh)』 which means "Light" and 『真因 (Shin-in)』 which means "True Cause."

『燈明』 he had continuously used for 10 years so he did not explain.

Regarding 『真因』 he said, please always remember this: "In Buddhism, understanding the cause of the Truth is the path to attainment of awareness." I would like for all of us to consider this while we devote ourselves in our practice."

Then he said, this is quite a spectacular story, but "according to the field of astronomy, the sun is a most mediocre thing that exists in the universe, considered a commonplace star, and the earth is also a fairly ordinary thing within the galaxy, not something that occurred due to any special miracle. The astronomer's theory is that the sun and the earth are both just run-of-the-mill objects in space."

"Furthermore, while the earth is just a nook in the universe, it is also the center of the universe, and also at the edge of the universe." "And we are told that the inherent characteristic in the world of nature that surrounds us seems to be that the whole is contained within the parts, or on the contrary, the parts are within the whole."

"In the teachings of the Buddha, the Law of Causation, we are also taught that within us human beings, the whole universe is reflected, and within the universe the elements that makes us human, are reflected."

"Besides water, they say, the element that gives us our life form is mostly carbon. Where did that come from? Carbon, which is created through the process of nuclear fusion reaction in the universe, is the source of all living forms.

With the birth of the universe, numerous carbon molecules were born. The carbon that gives human beings life is the same as the carbon in the universe. The universe was born, then human beings were born. The universe and our lives are one life."

"The universe is truly a mystery. Yet, it is because of human beings, who are born in the universe, have brains that we can say there is a universe, and its research can advance. In that case, we can say, because human beings were born, and perceive the universe, the universe exists.

When we think as such, human existence becomes increasingly mysterious."

After that, the President said, "We only have this time, now." To live is to face the fact that now is all we have. We cannot actually see "time." We can feel the time that runs past now, in this moment. What is time? We cannot see time, but we can freely use it now, in this moment. This is evidence that we are actually living.

Then lastly, he referred back to his calligraphy "True Cause." If the universe exists because we human beings were born, then from the viewpoint of "True Cause," we could say we human be



ings created the universe. With such a relationship, even with our faith, we are all first generation. Our faith is not something that liberates us because our parents practiced and passed it down to us. Each and every one of us is liberated through our own self-awareness. He concluded the guidance by saying, the fundamental cause for all is each and every individual.

I personally experienced the following penetrate deeply into my heart and mind: President's spectacular story about the universe which led to the fact that Truth • Dharma permeates the universe, and the fact, as he always teaches us, that all living beings are caused to live by the same great life force as one life. Moreover, with True Cause, the President said understanding the true cause is the path to attainment of awareness. This means when each person becomes aware that he or she is the true cause, that person will become liberated. We are all first-generation.

The Lotus Sutra is the teaching of self-awareness, and as such, I would like to embrace the Dharma as my own.

In his New Year's Guidance, the President said, "Human beings live not in the future or in the past, but now, in this moment. We should know that what is in front of us at this moment is more important than anything else, and it must be carefully and properly engaged." And also in his First Guidance of 2017 (*Goshinkyo*), he further said, "We cannot actually see time," but it is important to live valuing each moment.

Rissho Kosei-kai's teaching is based on The Lotus Sutra, which teaches that all human beings can become a Buddha and our practice is "to revere the buddha nature in ourselves and in others."

Whether or not we can practice this in our daily lives is the key point of "living mindfully while cherishing each passing moment."

Every person has a sense of his or her own level. It is based on the knowledge and experience of one's practice up to this point. But perhaps our individual sense of ourselves is based on "the types we like or dislike." In other words, are we holding on to our self-centered private assessment of our level? Our private assessment tends to privilege our own viewpoint and at times, therefore, result in making ourselves suffer.

Let us learn to acquire the Buddha's viewpoint and "live mindfully while cherishing each passing moment."

Gassho
New York Center Minister
Etsuko Fujita

Reflections

In the January study session, I had an opportunity to give a lesson on Chapter 12, "Devadatta," from the Kyoten. It is the last chapter for self-awareness of your buddha nature, and talks about how even evil people and women can become buddhas. Shakyamuni revered Devadatta as a good friend, and said it is because of him that Shakyamuni could become enlightened.

At the present moment, I have some people whom I find very challenging. They are an elderly couple who live just above our new apartment. Our rooms needed some renovation work and agreements and co-operation from our neighbors were required to proceed. The couple is quite sensitive and tend to be negative, uncooperative, and very offensive. During the process of the renovation, they have sent us confrontational e-mails, shouted at our workers and my husband. In the past, they had blackmailed other residents of the apartment and threatened to sue them. Nobody in the apartment likes them at all. Actually, we are all nervous because we never know when the couple may explode and sue us.

Shakyamuni Buddha thoroughly revered the buddha nature of Devadatta who plotted to kill the Buddha. I understand it in my head, but it is still very difficult for me. I really hope that some day I will be able to feel that way from the bottom of my heart. For that, I will continue my practice, neither rushing nor dawdling, but in a steadfast and an ordinary manner.

Yasuko Vendley





1/1 New Year 's Day
Lecture on the President's
New Year Guidance
by Rev. Sugino



1/1 New Year Celebration with
traditional food after the Sutra
recitation .



1/15 Study Session
Lecture
Rev Fujita giving us ideas to
digest.



1/15 Sharing of faith
by Bryce



SCHEDULE FOR NEW YORK CHAPTER

February 2017

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
			1 1PM First Day of the Month Service President's Dharma Talk	2 9AM Sutra Recitation 10AM Guidance for Leaders	3 9AM Memorial Svc for Founder 10AM Pray for safe renovation 1PM Setsubun-e	4 Closed: Dharma Practices at home
5 1PM Sunday Svc President's Dharma Talk	6 9AM Sutra Recitation 10AM-5PM Steering Committee/ Missionary Meeting	7 9AM Sutra Recitation 10AM Hoza 2-4PM Chapter Leaders' Meeting	8 9AM Sutra Recitation 10AM Reach out day	9 9AM Sutra Recitation 10AM Monthly Memo- rial Service	10 9AM Memorial Service for Cofounder 10AM Hoza	11 Closed: Dharma Practices at home
12 1PM Nirvana Day Service	13 9AM Sutra Recitation 10AM L.S. Study For Japanese	14 9AM Sutra Recitation 10AM Hoza	15 9AM Nirvana Day 10AM Hoza	16 9AM Sutra Recitation 10AM Guidance for Leaders	17 9AM Sutra Recitation 10AM Hoza	18 Closed: Dharma Practices at home
19 1PM Sunday Svc Study Session	20 Closed President Day	21 9AM Sutra Recitation 10AM Hoza 2-4PM Chapter Leaders' Meeting 6:30 PM Women's Mtg	22 9AM Sutra Recitation 10AM Reach out day	23 9AM Sutra Recitation 10AM Guidance for Leaders	24 9AM Sutra Recitation 10AM Hoza	25 Closed: Online Seminar on Internet Ministry Mtg <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; display: inline-block;">Chicago</div>
26 Closed <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; display: inline-block;">Chicago</div> →	27 9AM Sutra Recitation	28 9AM Sutra Recitation 10AM Hoza				