

Hello, everyone! Hope this finds all of you continuing to stay safe and doing well.

As we start the month of July, we decided to keep the Center closed and maintain the activities as is, while monitoring the situation.

We will be entering the fourth month since we closed the Center, but I would like to ensure safety by taking slow and careful measures to reopen the Center.

We continuously pray with heartfelt condolences for those who have passed away due to the Coronavirus that their spirits may rest in peace, while we also pray for the speedy recovery of those who are presently receiving treatments in the hospitals.

And let us never forget our gratitude to everyone in the healthcare industry and the essential workers who are supporting our daily lives.

We have now been leading self-restraining stay at home lives for over three months. Perhaps you have learned much, good or bad, through this unprecedented experience.

For myself, my daily life has completely changed, with a sense of quietude flowing into my life.

Whether willing or not, we cannot look away and are forced to confront ourselves every day.

When the whole world was temporary at a standstill, that the air cleaned up with clear blue skies returning to the cities all over the world, was truly an ironic phenomena.

In Buddhism, there is the term “shikan (止観<sup>しかん</sup>),” which means to stand still and observe things carefully and thoroughly. I feel, whether we like it or not, the messages to be learned from this period are being revealed to people.

The Chinese character of the word “busy” in Japanese, “isogashii (忙しい)” is a combination of “the heart” and “to lose” and thus has the meaning of “to lose one’s heart” or “to lose sight of one’s heart.”

Perhaps you are experiencing this: we may be reluctant, but we cannot deny realizing and thinking about facing our own selves. Who am I? What do I want to do? What should I be doing?

We may start thinking about questions that rarely occurred to us in our daily lives until now.

In his commentary on the word “conversation,” the Catholic Cardinal Arinze said, there are “the conversations between people,” but “the heart to heart conversations within our own selves,” “our conversations with nature,” “our conversations with” the invisible “God and the buddhas” are very important.

At present, we cannot have meetings with direct people-to-people contact to enjoy conversations, shake hands or give hugs. We can communicate through cellphones, Line app, or internets, but those pose limits to truly understanding the other person through our five senses.

However, religious people (people of faith) have been cherishing conversations with beings we cannot see with our eyes nor be in direct contact with them.

With that, we have been cultivating within our hearts, the feeling of gratitude and the awareness that we are caused to live thanks to the support of the Eternal Buddha and others.

Therefore, to say we have the patent to connect with others through heartfelt conversations transcending the limitations of devices such as the cellphones and Line app, I think, is not an exaggeration. The heart to pray for others, the heart to sympathize, heart for empathy • to understand others. These are matters we have been endeavoring to master.

It is said that when the world after coronavirus arrives in the course of time, our lives will not return to the previous state. Telecommuting and avoidance of overcrowded gatherings will advance.

When guidelines such as social distancing, which promote keeping distance between people-to-people, become everyday routine, how to reduce the “distance of the hearts and minds between people” is a task we must tackle.

Perhaps now, more than ever, we should be strengthening the frequency and wavelength for thinking of others.

Let us all spend this particular time we have been given, now, with care.

Gassho

Rev. Yoshitaka Hatakeyama