

Rev. Hatakeyama message for June

Hello, everyone! Hope this finds all of you staying safe and doing well.

It has been over two months since we started following the self-restraining, staying at home orders due to the coronavirus pandemic. There seems to be some indication of having passed the peak. However, every day, the future is still unpredictable.

My heartfelt condolences to all the people who have been inflicted by this virus and lost their lives. Among the members of Rissho Kosei-kai in Japan, I have heard there were eight who had passed away.

I would also like to send my heartfelt gratitude to everyone in the healthcare profession who, heedless to their own danger, are grappling with this present situation, as well as to those in various governmental agencies and service industries who are supporting our daily lives, making it possible to live safely in our homes.

Until now, I had never experienced such self-retraining stay at home for this long. In fact, I find it very strange when I think that people from all over the world are going through this same experience. I wonder how this will be depicted in the history of the future ages; that I happened to be present during this time is indeed a reality.

Lately, I am getting accustomed to this way of life and feeling compelled by various thoughts. "Morning comes, then evening comes." I am astonished by how quickly the day by day passes by.

We all equally have 24 hours in a day.

Until now, these 24 hours would automatically go by without a conscious thought, but now I feel I am always aware about it. Until now, the time would be spent with my schedules set according to my encounters with others. Now, I feel I am totally responsible whether I give life to the time spent or kill it.

How meaningfully am I spending the 24 hours I am given?

Since accumulation of how they are spent in a month, in half a year, decreases the

availability of the days accordingly, rather than wondering what had happened during that time, I prefer to be able to think about each day as “I did that,” “I was able to accomplish this,” “I had such an awareness,” “that time was very valuable.”

During this period, weekly study sessions through Zoom are being held. I feel we are very fortunate to have this opportunity to study the Lotus Sutra. As I do the advance preparations for the sessions while listening to classical music, I do my reading, absorbed in my contemplation, with my wish to experience, even slightly, Shakyamuni Buddha’s heart and mind, and the Founder and the President’s faith. I am now learning so much more than I ever have in the past.

During the study sessions, I listen to everyone’s realizations and experiences, and at times, unexpected questions are asked. At every session, I actually feel, this is the true mutual learning process among the Sangha members.

Rev. Kyoichi Sugino in New York is holding the study sessions in English. Together with the English-speaking members, the weekly study of the “Lotus Sutra” and Hoza are progressing well.

Moreover, Rev. Masaki Matsubara who now lives in New York, has recently become RKINA’s advisor. Rev. Matsubara is a lecturer at Brown University and a Zen priest from a temple family in the Myoshinji denomination of the Rinzai School in Japan.

Last year, he was also a contributor to the special monthly feature series for the Kosei Newspaper. His grandfather is the renowned Rev. Taidoh Matsubara. I think there will be various opportunities for both English and Japanese lectures by him on Buddhism.

While in this self-restraining staying at home period, please seek to cultivate your heart and mind by aspiring to have many experiences and attaining many awareness you did not have before, and please use this precious time “calmly and peacefully” with care.

Gassho