

New Year's Greeting

“Immeasurable Light and Life.”

At the beginning of the new year, I would like to send you my greetings from Hongwanji in Kyoto.

Last year was truly a difficult year. At first I had hoped that from April, we could conduct an exciting and lively memorial for Shinran Shonin, one which is observed only once every fifty years. However, the March disaster changed everything. Although I believe that the agony of the disaster-affected people goes beyond anything we can imagine, this catastrophe has brought me to ponder everyday about what we should do, what we can do, and what the future holds. The nuclear power plant accident, in particular, has caused tremendous difficulties for not only the victims in that area, but has also hindered the enthusiasm of people engaged in relief and restoration activities, as well as plunging the future of not only Japan, but also the entire planet into uncertainty and apprehension.

At the same time, we are truly grateful for the monetary and material contributions for our relief efforts and condolences that the people throughout the world have been sending to Japan.

It is easy to grasp the meaning of the sentence “Everything is impermanent,” but extremely difficult to accept the truth which it expresses. Being aware of the working of Amida Tathagata's wisdom and compassion could enable you to take a step forward in accepting and realizing this stark truth.

Massive earthquakes and unsettling weather patterns that caused great famine had also taken place during Shinran Shonin's time. It is certain that the teaching clarified by Shinran Shonin, including *shinjin*, the heart entrusting to Other Power and our expression of gratitude as the Nembutsu, corresponds the experiences that he actually went through. In saying Namo Amida Butsu and following the path to the Pure Land where we can attain Buddhahood, we are able to find possibility of solving the issues lying deep in our minds, which cannot be resolved merely by our own attempts and efforts.

We saw a variety of aspects in the tsunami disaster, namely, some past experiences that were well-employed, while others were totally forgotten or ignored, and we were also faced with our excessive trust in scientific technology. How we should control our endless desire that we can never rid ourselves of as long as we are foolish beings and how we can make use of our limited wisdom and capability are issues that I have accepted as our assignment for the new year. Keeping in mind that all life is embraced in the Light of Amida Tathagata, together, let us walk forward.

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