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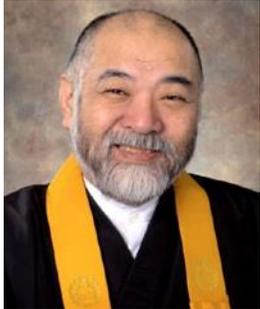
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“NO MATTER WHAT YOU’RE GOING THROUGH, THERE’S A LIGHT AT THE END OF THE TUNNEL”

REV. KAKEI NAKAGAWA, Rinban

REV. KAZ NAKATA



“Right View”

Right View is the first lesson of the ‘Eightfold Noble Path’ and one of the essential foundations of Buddhism. Major teachings such as Shin Buddhism, are contrary to blind faith. Right View is always accompanied by our critical attitude. In reading Buddhist literature, we are surprised at sentences

referring to “doubt” as the mother of “**True and Real Awakening**”.

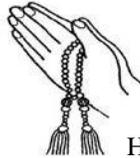
Famous Zen master Ikkyu, best friend of our Rennyō Shōnin, once said, “If a Bodhisattva is to have a fatal disease, it would be the absence of ‘doubt.’” The original Buddhist word “Vicikitsā” which corresponds to the English word “doubt” means “sincere wish to understand”. From this critical standpoint, Sākyamuni Buddha advised his disciples to test everything by logic and not to accept anything out of regard for their authors or sacred books. He did not make an exception of himself either.

Kalama Sūtra says; “This I have said to you, Kalama, but you may accept it, not because it is a report, not because it is a tradition, not because it is so said in the past, not because it is given from the scripture, not for the sake of discussion, not because it appears to be suitable but if you, yourselves understand that this is so meritorious and blameless, and when it is for benefit and happiness, then you may accept it.” Another Sūtra amplifies the above, saying, “As the wise test gold by burning, cutting and rubbing it (on a piece of touchstone), so are you to accept my words after examining them and not merely out of regard for me.” This Right Viewing with critical examination which is entirely alien to blind faith (that all other religion requires) has made Buddhism unique among all way-of-livings.

I am concerned about the mass-hysteria of the Pandemic caused by COVID-19 as well as any inaccurate information that is provided to us. Please refer to the following information from a credible England newspaper. And, please try to think logically with me, as Buddhists. #The Guardian’s recent report on Wed. 18, Mar. 2020;

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/mar/18/japanese-flu-drug-clearly-effective-in-treating-coronavirus-says-china>

Gassho, Reverend Kakei Nakagawa, Rinban
with special thanks to Dr. Hunter Arakawa for his compassion and courage



Shinran’s time and our time: we can learn from history

Hello, all Central California Sangha friends! How are you spending your time at home or somewhere else? I am writing this article after I watched our Governor’s announcement on the statewide “stay at home” order. I am very sorry that I cannot physically reach out to you to encourage and cheer you up during this difficult time. When I moved to CC last summer, I started providing Sunday Service on the Internet which is called “live streaming.” [https://twitter.com/fresno_nishi] Some of you may not know what live streaming is, so I’d like to explain what it is. When I conduct service at CC temple/church, I sometime record my chanting and Dharma talk. Providing it as a live show on the internet is called “live streaming”. Nowadays, most TVs are internet capable, so you can watch my live streaming on your TV.



The third weekend of March, we were unable to hold our regular Sunday service due to the current emergency condition. We decided to hold the service without having any attendees. On March 15, Rinban Nakagawa, Rev. Midori, and I chanted Shoshinge and I shared my Dharma Talk for the service. It was provided as live streaming and saved online. We will provide this “Streaming-only Sunday service” until the current condition is over.

In the live streaming video of March 15, I talked about Ignorance - one of the three poisons. It is widely known as a Shinran Shonin’s teaching, but we also can find it in an old Buddhist scripture, Nirvana sutra. Ignorance is one of the biggest factors to create a sense of fear. Ignorance does not mean “stupid.” Ignorance should be understood as an “unknown condition”. The sense of fear is a defensive / protective manner to deal with unknown conditions. It is a natural reaction of human beings. When we accelerate our sense of fear, we start panicking. Did you buy an extra toilet paper? If so, you should watch the streaming video.

To reduce our fear or prevent panic, what we should do? One of the solutions is to look back on our human history. Do you know what Malaria is? It is a mosquito-borne infectious disease. Less than 2,000 American people show symptoms of Malaria each year.

Rev. Kaz, continued

Do you think it is a lot? According to the CDC, there were 228 million patients, and 405,000 lives lost in 2018 due to Malaria. It is a lot, isn't it? Why does Malaria not scare us or make us panic, although over 400,000 people die every year? Because there are preventive and curative medicines for the disease.

It is used to be known as one of the worst diseases in ancient Japan. The name "Malaria" first appeared in the Japanese Code of Taiho which was enacted in 701. It became a cause of epidemic, many times in Japan. Shinran Shonin was ordained and started his monastic life in 1181. A devastating famine and epidemic occurred in the same year. A record of Hojoki states 42,300 citizens of Kyoto lost their lives. We don't know how he directly responded to or experienced the devastating circumstances. He shared his poem, when he requested Master Jien to conduct his ordination. He wrote "When we see cherry blossoms, we expect them to continue blooming tomorrow, although a storm may blow them away tonight." In this poem, he expressed his thought as "I want to live my life diligently in this present moment, because there is no guarantee whether I have tomorrow". I am sure that he was seeing or hearing of people dying from Malaria. Master Jien's brother, Kanezane Kujo was a big supporter of Shinran Shonin and his teacher, Honen Shonin. Some historic documents indicate that Kanezane's daughter, Princess Tamahi married to Shinran Shonin. Historians argue that Kanezane died from Malaria. In the 12th and 13th Centuries, there was no medication to cure Malaria. People knew what the symptoms were, but they did not know what kind of virus it was. In ancient time, rich patients hired shamans and let them pray and chant to cure their diseases. Kanezane was a high ranking noble. He might have hired them for his own longevity.

You may laugh at their reactions to Malaria or you may think they are stupid to hire shamans. If you were noble and lived in the 13th Century, you might also hire them. Who knows? While I am writing this article, thousands of researchers are working hard to find/create curative medicines to suppress the current pandemic situation. I have no knowledge or skill to create any medicines. I just sincerely thank all medical workers and researchers who tirelessly contribute their energy to save lives. Do you still feel fear or panic? Look at yourself. Your life is a gift from your ancestors who had survived through numbers of difficult situations such as war, pandemic, famine or disease, up until your generation. If Shinran Shonin would exist now, he would say "you are ok, do not worry", because he encountered famine and epidemic multiple times during 90 years of his life. Can you believe that the average age in the 13th Century in Japan was only in the 40s? Until his last breath, he did not lose his motivation for living. He focused on living his everyday life diligently. I am so fortunate to encounter Shinran Shonin and his teachings. He is a practical example on how to have a vital and positive living. Whenever you would like to chat with me, please call me. I am happy to talk to you. Please keep yourself, physically and mentally healthy. I hope to see you soon at Temple/Church or online! Gassho.