

2019 New Year's Greetings

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Happy New Year, Everyone. I am very grateful to God for being able to greet the New Year, 2019, together with all of you in in good health and without incident. Thank you very much.

This year will be the final year of the “Three-Year Plan for Building the Foundation of a “New Civilization” we have been promoting for the last two years. In the “old civilization” thus far, human beings, in realizing their own happiness, have been unable to stop the destruction of nature, finally resulting in the rise of the sea level and climate change due to global warming. Humankind themselves which has been seeking happiness are nearing a dangerous condition. On the contrary, a “new civilization” is a way of life in which the prosperity of nature coincides with the prosperity and happiness of human beings. And it is the whole of faith, philosophy, science and technology, economy, and politics which supports and expands such a way of living.

I believe this sort of civilization begins with changing the way we human beings think about nature and changing our way of life. Therefore for the past two years, we have been working on the following “three practices” to change our values and lifestyle. They are:

- ① A no-meat, low-carbon dietary life
- ② A resource-saving, low carbon way of life
- ③ Nature-emphasis, low carbon expressive activities

Additionally, the following three activity-groups have been devised and started full-scale last year to expand these lifestyles more concretely and more systematically in everyday life:

- ① SNI Organic Vegetable Gardening Club
- ② SNI Bicycle Club
- ③ SNI Craft Club

There were very few people participating in these activities at the beginning of last year, but as of December 15th, there were 1, 138 in the Vegetable Gardening Club, 578 in the Bicycle Club, and 879 in the Craft Club and the content of their activities is improving day by day. However, as there are approximately 37,000 members in the Seicho-No-Ie organization now, there is no doubt that there will be even more people in the future who will participate in a change of lifestyle toward building this “new civilization.

Hearing this, there may be some among you who are wondering what the relationship is between religion and bike riding, or craft making and growing vegetables. Looking back on the history of Japan, however, it was a part of religious practice from long ago to train our spirit and body in the mountains and to make personal necessities manually, and we can remember how organic vegetarian cuisine began in Zen temples. In the traditions of Christianity also, it was natural to do farm work and make handicrafts in monasteries. The time when it was inseparable to use our brain and body to get food and daily necessities from nature that God creates, and feeling God’s blessings and the religious piety of being grateful to them continued for a long while.

However, as modernization advanced, nature has been thought of as an object to be used and exploited by science and technology. “God” and “Buddha” gradually became an abstract existence away from nature which has form and can be touched. Along with that, the thinking that it isn’t “God” but “science and technology” that gives us food and daily necessities spread, and, in doing so, feelings of gratitude toward nature were gradually lost. That is because it has been thought that science and technology are human creations and their functioning well is not “God’s blessing” but shows the degree of quality of human technology. We have forgotten that were it not for nature, neither science and technology nor the blessings from them would exist. In this way, owing to the fact of God and Buddha being replaced by faith in

science and technology and their development, the destruction of nature is progressing throughout the earth and climate change is taking place.

A few years ago, as a guideline for building a “new civilization,” I proposed that you target the realization of the following three items. They are:

- ① The appropriate control of desire
- ② The fair distribution of wealth
- ③ Maintaining international peace

Of these the closest in relation to a religious movement is the first item, “the appropriate control of desire.” The unfolding of a lifestyle through the aforementioned three clubs is to realize this “appropriate control of desire.”

Seicho-No-Ie does not deny “desire” as evil. It is necessary for maintaining the life of the physical body and the perpetuation of our descendants. However, we do not believe in releasing it wildly or think the more the better. We believe that it should be controlled appropriately according to the time and place. However, most of economics today replace desire with the word “demand” and think that evoking and spreading it will increase human happiness. We think that this is a major factor causing the destruction of nature the depletion of resources, and global warming.

In East Asian countries including Japan, this year, 2019 is the “Year of the Wild Boar.” It is thought that the wild boar is an ancestor of the pig. They have lived in Japan since the ancient Jomon period and were used as food. There is a proverb about the wild boar that is to effect of the following:

“The seventh generation of wild boars will eventually become pigs.”

So this means, “Even though it may look like it doesn’t change, everything grows or changes over the years.”

Humankind has long been trying to gain happiness through the destruction of nature. And, as a whole, did we not get a certain level of happiness? However, now with the world’s population having reached over seven billion

and currently about to reach over nine billion, the destruction of nature is related to the destruction of our lives. The outflow of mass refugees is not unrelated to our lifestyle. The expansion and pursuit of material wealth may have advanced our happiness in the past, but it has now become a cause of unhappiness. The wild boar has become a pig. Further destruction of this “earth’s” environment has now come to mean the same as leading humankind to destruction. I wholeheartedly agree with the opinion that a religious movement must save human beings. That is exactly why we must protect nature on this earth, the only place for human beings to live, from destruction.

I don’t think there can be anything more pleasing if that sort of essentially religious activity can be done by changing our everyday life, not through “penance” but through an “enjoyable activity” that feels the full benefits of nature. Ladies and Gentlemen, let us once again, through growing organic vegetables, the proactive use of bicycles, and by making a one-of-a-kind craft item, engage in the development and expansion of a way of life in which we human beings grow with nature even more joyfully. Thank you very much in advance for the things you will be doing again this year.