

What have we already received?
By Reverend Kazunori Takahashi

In November, we will be observing the Eitaikyo service. Also, the Thanksgiving Day is now approaching. I think this season is a good time for us to think about gratitude. In your daily life, when do you have feelings of gratitude? I think different things cause us to have such feelings. For example, when somebody is kind to us, or when someone gives us a gift, we express our gratitude and say "Thank you." It is very significant to have that feeling. However, even when we don't have such incidents, there are many other things that we can appreciate.

I would like to share such a story with you. Once upon a time in Japan, there was a very unique person. His name was Yoichibe. He had a unique habit of saying "Thank you, thank you. I'm grateful (*Arigatai, arigatai*)", everyday and all day long. When he got up in the morning, he said, "I'm grateful." When he saw his wife, his mother, and his children, he said, "I'm grateful." Then, someone asked, "Why do you always say "I'm grateful" when you get up?" Yoichibe replied, "I'm grateful that I could wake up this morning and that I could see the faces of my family today. How grateful I am!"

One day, a stranger visited Yoichibe. When he arrived, Yoichibe said "Thank you, thank you, I'm grateful." At that time, his family asked, "Why did you say thank you? We don't know why he is visiting us." Yoichibe replied, "I'm also not sure why he came. But I'm glad that we have a visitor."

Occasionally, Yoichibe was even grateful for bad incidents. One rainy day, he was walking outside and unfortunately, he stumbled and fell on the wet pavement. He hurt his leg. After that, somehow he said, "Oh, I'm grateful." At that time, his friends said, "Why did you say I'm grateful? You injured your leg. It's bleeding. Are you OK?" Yoichibe said, "I'm grateful. I didn't break my leg. I'm glad that it wasn't more serious." Thus, he always found something for which to be grateful.

What do you think about this story? It is said that some people found Yoichibe somewhat strange but it is admirable that he lived his life with such gratitude.

Buddhism teaches us that it is important to be aware of what others have already given us. In the case of Yoichibe, he was delighted that he could wake up in the morning and see the faces of his family, and the people he meets. I think there are many other things we may take for granted. We can see various things with our eyes. We can hear with our ears. There is sun, water, air, all of which is essential for our lives. We tend to overlook such things. However, isn't it wonderful that we receive them? I think that as we become more aware of all that we receive, we cannot help but be grateful for everything.

Shinran Shonin said: **My eyes being hindered by blind passions, I cannot perceive the light that grasps me; Yet the great compassion, without tiring, illumines me always.**

(Hymns of the Pure Land Masters: *Collected works of Shinran*, p. 385)

We live our daily life, receiving various things. The great thing is that Amida Buddha is always working for us. Actually it is difficult for us to notice it. However, through listening to the truth, we would be aware of it. In the Shinran Shonin's passage, he talked about Amida Buddha's great compassion which is hard to notice but always working for us.

As we have different events in this season, let us think about what we have received and what others have given us. It certainly gives us a great feeling of gratitude. Namo Amida Butsu.