

### **A Humble Request for a Moment of Reflection**

Dallas, Orlando, Istanbul, Medina, Paris, Charleston, Oak Creek, San Bernardino and the list goes on and on. Each day, I start by watching the news for a few minutes to see what has happened in the world since I went to bed the previous night. Needless to say, we have many problems and issues which plague us. While mass killings, whether motivated by anger, greed, hatred, racism, self-centeredness, discrimination or any other reason (cause), is only one form of violence (effect) which troubles our world the recent increase in such incidents is a source of concern. It seems no place is safe or immune not even places deemed sacred and holy by many around the world.

As we watch the news on TV, listen to the radio, read the paper or glance at posts on social media, we see so much suffering and needless, in my opinion, killing happening around the globe. But, what can we, what can I do? In my humble view, a first step is to consistently remind ourselves (the whole world) of the value of equality, harmony, non-violence, humility, mutual respect and preciousness of life. To be sure, we are not perfect human beings. We have negative thoughts which at times do surface in hurtful ways, but at the same time may we be guided and inspired by an All-Inclusive Wisdom and All-Embracing Compassion which encourages us to self-reflect and to try to respond to situations and circumstances in non-violent ways instead of reacting. In Buddhism, we would say let us be guided by the Dharma or Teachings.

As Buddhists, we are familiar with the sayings "Hatred is not overcome by hatred. Hatred is overcome by love," "Revenge can be overcome by only abandoning revenge." "The Wise seek neither victory nor defeat." "May all beings be happy and safe." Further in the Larger Sukhavativyuha Sutra, it says "All people of the world...should respect and love each other and should not hate and envy each other. They should share their possessions with each other, without being greedy, always speak gently, and live harmoniously without hurting each other." The Great Pure Land Master T'an-luan said, "Because they are the same in practicing the nembutsu...all within the four seas, no matter how distant, are brothers and sisters." Rennyo Shonin is known to have said, "Since we equally receive the benevolence of the Buddha (Amida), and equally have shinjin, all in the four oceans are brothers and sisters." In Buddhism, everyone and everything possess or has access to Buddha-nature, the potential to become enlightened, and thus one and all should be equally respected for that potential.

My request, on the next available occasion, be it the next Sunday Service, weekly or monthly service or any temple gathering, may I ask that we, as Jodo Shin Buddhists, please take a moment to reflect on the world including ourselves and the Dharma. As to an exact action, whether it be a Dharma Message by a minister, doing a selected reflective reading appropriate for the purpose, or simply the lightening of a candle in tribute to remember and honor those who died, are directly suffering from an incident and those who acted so courageously to help others, I leave that up to each temple and/or sangha. My last thought is I may not be able to change someone else, but with Amida Buddha's Light of Wisdom illuminating me (awakening me to my ignorance) and Amida Buddha's Light of Joy nurturing me (transforming my anger into joy), may I come to some realizations about myself and contribute to harmony and peace in the world in grateful response to Wisdom and Compassion. Namo Amida Butsu.

Sincerely in gassho, Eric Matsumoto, Bishop, July 9, 2016