

**Message on New Year's Day  
"Gratitude"**

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Happy New Year!

The New Year makes me feel as if I have opened the first page of a new blank notebook. I am excited about the new notebook that I am going to use. In the same way, I feel refreshed. How will I use my notebook from this point on? Maybe in the same way that I have used notebooks before, or maybe I will be able to use it in a totally different way. Before I start using my new notebook, I also want to review my old one as a reference and a reflection. In the Buddhist teaching, we should spend each day as a new day, each moment as a new moment, with a fresh mind. However, for us ordinary people, it is difficult to act as the Buddha taught. Nevertheless, we definitely try to live each moment. At least, New Year's day reminds us of the importance of being alive to each day, each moment as we celebrate the precious day with a fresh and clear mind.

For me, therefore, celebrating the New Year is like celebrating a new life, as well as the past life. It is amazing to me that I have been with the New York Buddhist Church now for ten years. I started to serve this temple on March 1, 1994. I have experienced many interesting things since my arrival. The first big task was fund-raising and the renovation of the NYBC Annex building. Then reorganizing temple activities, especially in the area of the Dharma. Something very new to me was being able to work together with other Buddhist groups as well as Interfaith groups. The September 11 incident brought me serious issues to consider. My last ten years were full of great experiences. Through various activities I have met so many wonderful people in different circles. I am still here at this temple surviving, in fact, enjoying my life, thanks to countless people who have supported me with understanding (or maybe misunderstanding) and patience. My deep gratitude goes to all my sangha friends and sangha family. ( I am not forgetting my family!)

I have encountered another wonderful poem by Misuzu Kaneko, whose poem I quoted in my Dharma Message in the last issue. The title is "A Lotus and a Chick."

Out of a muddy pond	A lotus flower blooms.
But, it is not the lotus	That makes it possible.
Out of an egg	A chick comes.
But, it is not the chick	That makes it possible
That is what I	Became aware of.
But, it is not I	Who made it possible, either.

All the causes and conditions contributed to make my life here for ten years sharing the Buddha-Dharma. So, thank you! Where am I going starting now? I don't know but I will find out as I use my new notebook. My refreshed mind on New Year's day is going back to zero. It is like an empty new notebook!

*Gee, I don't know why I am here  
Realizing inconceivable causes and conditions.  
Another New Year's day has come to me.  
Thank me, thank you, and thank all!  
Indeed, I am here in New York now.  
Thinking about many people I have met in ten years.  
Unrepeatable this day has come to me.  
Dharma me, dharma you, and dharma all!  
End the old notebook, and open the new one today and every day! (by Kenjitsu)*