

Shoyo Sensei's Dharma Message

The Power of Gratitude - 3

In the last few issues of the Golden Chain, I have been writing about the new scientific field of "Science of Gratitude." Some neuroscientists, psychologists, and psychiatrists are sharing with us some interesting data of their studies of being grateful and thankful.

Gratitude is one of the most important practices for Jodo Shinshu followers. Indeed, Gratitude is the first action that the Buddha did after he became a Buddha: After he was enlightened under the Bodhi Tree, he stood up from his seat under the Bodhi Tree and walked backwards from the tree so that he could see the tree from the top to the bottom by his one sight. Then, he looked at the tree for seven days. Gazing at the tree, he thanked the tree with full appreciation for seven days without blinking his eyes. Thus, he blessed the tree which protected him during the day-time and the night-time. His appreciation to the tree signifies his humility and respect to the tree. In this sense, he could be referred to as the first ecologist in history. He is said to have recommended to plant a tree every five years!

We all know that when we are grateful to something, we feel happy and joyous. Gratitude and happiness go hand-in-hand and are inseparable. We also know that when we feel grateful, we become more compassionate to others, too.

Our Dharma School children clearly teach this:

Emi:

I am grateful to go to Church and Dharma School. It makes me feel good and makes me wonder if everybody else in the world is just as grateful as I am.

Natalie:

I'm thankful for many such things as being able to walk and run because other kids in the hospital can't do some things that we can do. Kids like me are very fortunate because we get to play, read, go to school and think. I am thankful for many things and I wish that everybody could do all the things that we can do.

Gratitude makes our eyes open to a broader world with further gratitude and we become more compassionate. This is the way it is: Ni Jen Ho Ni or Dharmata.

**Na Man Da Bu,
Shaku Shoyo**