

## Let's Begin Building the Foundation of a "New Civilization"

By Masanobu Taniguchi, President

Seicho-No-Ie members worldwide, Happy New Year.

I am very grateful to God for being able to greet this New Year in good health with all of you. Thank you very much.

This is the year that will begin the "Three-Year Plan to Build the Foundation of a 'New Civilization.'" A "New Civilization" is the way of living in which human happiness and the growth of nature are compatible. It refers to the whole of faith, philosophy, science and technology, politics, and economy which supports that way of life and constitutes the power to spread it. We are not going to be starting from scratch. In the course of thousands of years of history, we humans have already brought to being numerous achievements that correspond to this in various parts throughout the world. However, these achievements were not adopted in the "old civilization" immediately before us which is based on human-centered values; and even if parts were adopted, due to government policies prioritizing economic development, they have been cast aside. We are trying to lay the foundation for a "new civilization" by joining them together, reinforcing, putting life into them to make it a systemic whole, and by implementing them from where we can, prepare the foundation of a "new civilization."

As activities to do that, we have proposed three practice items. First is a "no-meat, low-carbon dietary life," the second, a "resource-saving, low-carbon way of life," and the third is "nature-respecting, low-carbon expressive activities." These three items have already been put into practice in several regions beginning last year. However, it is my hope that, by putting them into practice with joy more forcefully, extensively, and as proof of our "ethical way of life" as people of faith, certainly share the Seicho-No-Ie teachings with those around us.

The major characteristic of the world last year was the rise of populism. Not only in Japan, but in Europe and the United States also, there were

major changes that, on one hand, refuse to accept the politico-economic foundations that have ruled the modern age until today, but without appropriate measures. Although this movement teaches of the downsides of excessive globalization, it points to a dangerous direction. This movement is advocating ruling by the masses rather than by the elite, nationalism rather than globalism, protectionism rather than free trade, the rejection rather than acceptance of immigrants, and arms expansion rather than arms reduction. There is no denying that these are the “cries” of many people who oppose the rapid changes in society. If, however, we were to practice these “cries” as is, it is clear that we will shift toward a “world of conflict” in which each country insists on its own interests.

I believe the “spread of the feeling of inequality” in society is one of the major causes of this cry. It’s only natural that, in a society where only the elite few enjoy benefits and the majority cannot receive the benefits of society and feel also psychologically left behind, the willingness of those people to contribute to that society will be lost. In their eyes, the ideals of democracy seem only to be “cosmetic slogans.” That’s why we have people who rebel against those values, advocate extreme measures and trigger extreme actions.

To rephrase this religiously, in society today, God’s virtues of “wisdom,” “love,” and “life” are extremely unevenly expressed. Therefore, we must more powerfully develop activities that express the will of God evenly throughout society. To do this, we must stop destroying nature more than we already have. We must not forget that God’s will permeates nature. Let’s bid good-bye to the “old civilization” that presumes that taking from nature is the realization of wealth. And let us build a “new civilization” that realizes happiness for human beings through the nurturing of nature. That is the only way to prevent this global society from falling into being a “world of conflict” and put it back on the way to peace.

Ladies and Gentlemen, thank you very much in advance for your support and cooperation again this year.