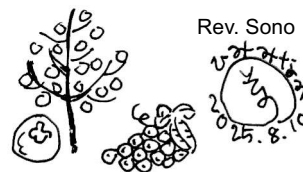


PREPARING FOR THE AUTUMN OF LIFE



Rev. Sono

THINGS THAT LEAVE ARE LEAVING AND AGAIN FILLING MY MIND

Our lifetimes are often likened to the four seasons.

Era of the hundred-year life Images of autumn & winter

The ancient Indian concept of the four periods of existence

Spring is a period of growth, summer is a period of activity, autumn is a period of harvesting, and winter is a period of living tranquilly.

I think we can assume that spring refers to the period up to age twenty-five, summer from twenty-five until age fifty, autumn from fifty until age seventy-five, and winter from then on.

are hardly energetic and full of vitality, and I think many people associate those seasons with cold, lonely impressions, like dead leaves falling from trees and shivering from wind and snow.

divides our lifetimes into four parts to match the four seasons, the stage of retiring to the forest, corresponding to autumn, is actually considered to be life's golden period—a time without being troubled by various entanglements and obligations, when one can prepare for a fulfilling and enjoyable final stage of life (the stage of wandering freely).

Haiku by Ryuta Iida

Indeed Autumn is a time in life

However, in the course of living our lives,

In the same way

“Things that leave are leaving,
/ And again filling [my mind]— / The skies of autumn,”

when we are gradually liberated from things that, up to that point, we had found troublesome, and

we turn toward winter with a clear mind and a heart full of things that are satisfying and hopeful.

we sometimes regret that we did not do things differently, and

such thoughts tend to bubble up in our minds. However, I think that these regrets and reflections can certainly become “fruits” that help us face winter.

Persimmons and chestnuts, which are harvested in the fall, do not become nourishment if we dislike their astringency or thorns, but if we accept them as bountiful blessings and take the time to carefully prepare them, we can enjoy their deliciousness.

We can say that “harvesting” bitter feelings and turning them into spiritual nourishment and energy for the winter is a great “fruit” only attainable in that season.

WINTER IS A TIME OF LEARNING

Confucius's book *The Analects*

President Niwano

These aspirations

“At age fifty, I knew what heaven commanded of me; at sixty, my ears could listen obediently; and at seventy, I could follow my heart's desire without overstepping the bounds of propriety.”

I am an octogenarian, but my practice and learning are still far from complete, and there are many things I do not know or understand, so therefore, I honestly think that I should continue to learn as much as possible.

are akin to the instincts that all human beings possess.

Moreover, if you have the desire to learn, you can encounter many new things no matter how old you are, and that joy and inspiration will give you the energy to live as well as something to enjoy in the winter of your life.

In a conversation Founder Niwano (77yrs old) had with Seibo Kitamura, sculptor of the Nagasaki Peace Statue, who was 100yrs old said, >

Founder Niwano added

Kitamura replied

And described his daily habit of writing in calligraphy

the secret to a long and healthy life is, “Don't get angry. Don't let things get to you or bother you.”

“And don't lie,”

“If you don't lie, your mind is pure and your health is good,”

“Pure mind, long life.”

YOUR TAKEAWAY

Striving to deepen one's learning, and being unpretentious and honest—this attitude is sure to serve as an example for younger generations. But I would like to return to the topic of deepening our learning in another issue of this magazine.