

CUAC INDABA message

The Right Reverend Dr Renta Nishihara (Rikkyo University)

Over the last year and a half, we've all been in an extraordinary situation the like of which we've never experienced before. The global pandemic of novel coronavirus infection has restricted contact and interaction between people. That has had the effect of reaffirming to us the importance of connection between people. I believe this has been a time for all of us to look closely and think deeply about just how irreplaceable is the work of being together with others and reflecting on one's own way forward.

In this context, Rikkyo University has been building a new campus life through a process of trial and error, as we search for ways to avoid interrupting our students' studies. As we assign the highest priority to health, in its physical, emotional, and social aspects, we have been investigating new possibilities for online learning, even as we reaffirm the significance of face-to-face classes. We will also support all our students as they pursue diverse forms of study in line with their ambitions, and elevate their own bright and outstanding strengths as far as they wish to. As we face this terrible pandemic, I want all of our students to build their lives with our University as a new center for value creation.

The history of Rikkyo University dates back to 1874, when Bishop Channing Moore Williams, a missionary from the American Episcopal Church, founded Rikkyo School in Tsukiji. So Rikkyo University has 147 years of history. Not many people know this, but Rikkyo University is one of the oldest modern universities in Japan, and we have the network of the Anglican Communion, member institution of CUAC. There are no other universities in Japan with this kind of global network.

The simplest expression of the characteristic approach of the Anglican Church is that it does not adhere to papal absolutism, or to the scriptural fundamentalism seen in some Protestant churches. In short, it rejects absolutism and fundamentalism of all kinds. We are all travelers in a constant search for truth, carrying humanity's heritage of knowledge with us.

*"Pro Deo et Patria"*. These words express with spirit with which Rikkyo University was founded. *"Pro Deo et Patria"* is Latin. *Pro* means "for", *Deo* is "God", *et* is "and", and *Patria* means "nation or mother country". So, a direct English translation of *"Pro Deo et Patria"* would be "For God and country". However, *Deo* also includes the sense of "universal truth", while *Patria* includes "our neighbor, society, and world". Therefore, the inherent meaning of *"Pro Deo et Patria"* is to search for universal truth (*Pro Deo*) and to work for this world, for society, and for one's neighbor (*Pro Patria*). The nurturing of people who will search for universal truth and work for our world and society is the true mission of Rikkyo University, and our founding motto, *"Pro Deo et Patria"* always reminds us of that.

*"Pro Patria"*, means becoming a person who will give compassionate service to their neighbor, to society, and to the world; one who can value the human dignity of every individual and sensitively empathize with the pain of others. This university must also contribute to attaining the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which set the realization of a world where we "Leave No One Behind" as one of the targets, and to movements to value human dignity in a society under the spreading of novel coronavirus infection. The word "dignity" is derived from "*Dignitas*" in Latin, which has the original meaning of "having value in its existence". The existence of all living

things has value, and that value must never be harmed. That has been the principle for Rikkyo University since its foundation.

I'd like to introduce an essay which will give us all an idea of the essential nature of that principle. This essay was printed in the "Henshu Techo" (Editor's Notebook)" column of the Yomiuri Shimbun newspaper, dated October 29th, 2000.

"Tsuyoshi Saito started refusing to go to school when he was in the first year of junior high school. He was serious, and criticized himself harshly for any little slip. He tried to take his own life in the spring when he was 20 years old. He poured gasoline over himself. His father, who had been watching over his behavior on the advice of a psychiatrist, embraced his son at that moment. Covered in gasoline himself, he cried out. "Tsuyoshi, light the fire". Embracing, the two cried out and continued weeping. "For my father, am I so irreplaceable that he would die together with me? At that moment, for the first time in his life, Tsuyoshi truly felt that his life had value. Tsuyoshi later told the story to this psychiatrist, Hajime Morishita".

That was the essay. In addition to running a medical clinic in Himeji, Morishita also got actively involved with school-refusing children. He made a free-school and a boarding high school for them, and was awarded the Yoshikawa Eiji Prize for Literature. This is what we can learn from Morishita. "Tsuyoshi saw his father who loves him more than his life. At that moment, Tsuyoshi knew that he was loved, and at the same time, he learned to love others with all his souls".

All the faculty and staff of Rikkyo University will value each and every one of our students as an irreplaceable being. In turn, we want all of them to become people who will connect with others, with the same kind of love, and respect their dignity unconditionally. These words "Pro Deo et Patria" are also inscribed on the Rikkyo University student's identification card that will be given to all of them. While they are studying at this University, I want them all to value these words as their proof, mission and pride of being a student of Rikkyo University.

At the inauguration of President Biden in January this year, the 22-years old Black female poet Amanda Gorman read her poem which included these words:

"For there is always light, if only we're brave enough to see it. If only we're brave enough to be it".

Gorman had a speech impediment. But she says she never saw that as a weakness. She kept on practicing for that day. On the great stage on the Capitol Hill, speaking with rich expression and freely in control down to the tips of her fingers, she sparkled majestically.

Even in front of our students, for sure there is always light. They too are called to have the bravery to be the light. I hope that they will find that light. And then, become the light, and shine.

Thank you very much.