



# The Aiki Dojo

道の為、世の為、人の為、合気道

2

## Harmony

by David Ito

*The way of harmony is the true single path of Aikido.*

4

## Creating More Good Aikido

by Ken Watanabe

*What is good is simple and Aikido is very simple.*

7

## Mastery

by Rev. Kensho Furuya

*Follow wisdom to find wisdom.*

元日を天地和合のはじめかな

Ganjitsu wo tenchi Wago no hajime kana

New Year's Day: The beginning of the harmony of Heaven and Earth.

- Shiki



*Yoshida Hiroshi, Sunrise From Fuji (1928)*

# Happy New Year



## The Single Path of Harmony

by David Ito Aikido Chief Instructor

It is often thought that the world revolves solely around money, but the fact of the matter is that the true currency of the world is based upon harmony. Harmony means being able to be in accord with not only one's friends, family or neighbors, but also in harmony with nature or all that surrounds us.

Prior to 1873, Japan followed the lunar calendar which is based upon the phases of the moon. With the lunar calendar, January 1st was usually where we find the first of February today and New Year's Day signified the end of winter or the beginning of spring.

The winters in Japan are especially harsh and, being an agriculturally-based society, the Japanese people as a culture relied on the bounty of their yearly harvest to survive winter. In order to be ready for the harshness of winter, one had to be diligent and prepare well in advance. In order to be prepared, agriculturally-based societies relied on the help and assistance of neighbors during harvest time which could only work if farmers were in harmony with nature and other people.

As we were planning 2019, I decided to put up a fan that 2nd Doshu gave to Furuya Sensei a few years before he passed away. 2nd Doshu brushed the calligraphy 合氣道一路 or *Aikido ichiro* which Sensei translated as "Aikido Single Path."

As I researched the word *ichiro*, I came upon the Japanese *ko-towaza* or proverb, *ichiro junpu* (一路順風). *Ichiro junpu* means, "everything goes well when we follow the wind." Reading this, I remembered one of Sensei's New Year's Day posts and thought that this proverb was apropos for the New Year. Sensei once wrote:

The Sun has no "will" to rise each day but it naturally appears to come up in the morning without fail. Many things in our lives happen naturally without will or intent if we can allow such things to happen. We are so concerned about imposing our will

or power over everything! Not only in Aikido against our partners but in every aspect of our lives and even against nature itself.

The proverb *ichiro junpu* is in reference to a boat which makes it to its destination smoothly as long as it goes with the wind. For a boat or something floating to go with the flow of the wind means that it is in harmony with the natural order of things. Just as the sun rises, the boat that follows the wind has no will but still makes it to its destination with ease.

As human beings, our lives have a similar nature as the sun and we achieve our purpose when we allow ourselves to "follow the wind." Having no will or just allowing the river to take us doesn't mean that we become nihilists or apathetic. Having no will means to harmonize or not struggle with not only the nature of our lives, but also with other people and our environment.

Each of us has a different life purpose, but that life purpose still means that we need to know the direction or in this case which way the wind is blowing. When we know which way the wind is blowing then it is easy to get on board and go with the flow and thus everything goes well.

As the year came to an end, I was thinking to myself, "what do I want the dojo to be?" or "where do I want the dojo to go?" At one point, I was dusting the tokonoma and happened to look up at the kanji *shusei* (静習) that hangs over the *shomen* and the words caught my eye. *Shusei* means, "Practice Serenity." I remembered telling someone that, "Aikido training was about harmony or learning how to be calm in the eye of the storm." Later, I was talking to my Shodo Sensei and I asked him about the concept of *sei* or "quietude, peace or calmness." As we talked about it, I was trying to explain the concept of "calm in the eye of the storm" and I looked up the kanji for *sei*, I came across the expression *seitodo* (静と動).



*Seitodo* means “calmness and motion” and at that point I realized what and where I wanted to go, not only as an Aikidoist, but what direction I wanted the dojo to go as well.

We all have the tendency or potentiality to do both great harm or great good. However, the latter takes more inner strength and development to manifest. Anger, hatred, or using physical force to hurt others doesn't take any training. The harder path is to confront one's inner demons so as to create an inner peace so that one can be the proponent of great good.

Sensei used to say that, “our inner state is reflected in how we do Aikido” and with this we can then see how *seitodo* succinctly describes Aikido. Aikido training is the journey to cultivate inner calmness which is impermeable to the people or circumstances of the outside, but this inner serenity also permeates and has an impact on creating harmony on the outside regardless of the circumstances. When this happens, we can truly become the calm in the eye of the storm.

We might think that money makes the world go around, but harmony is the only true way to not only survive but live as well. None of us survives on our own – we need kindness and generosity in order to survive – we need harmony. 2nd Doshu's calligraphy Aikido *ichiro* means to follow the single path of living in harmony because harmony is the true natural currency of life and harmony is the action of what it means for a person to truly be a human being.



Shusei – *practice serenity*

I don't know about other dojos, but *seitodo* is what I want the focus of this dojo to be. I believe that *sei* or this idea of serenity is the highest goal of all martial arts and that calmness or peace is the *ichiro* of all human beings. *Seitodo* is the wind which makes everything in life go well and is the path towards creating harmony and thus *seitodo* is the true way of Aikido.

I wish everyone a health and happy 2019•



*Nidai Doshu meinichi: The dojo observes the passing of 2nd Doshu, Kisshomaru Ueshiba.*



# Creating More Good Aikido

by **Ken Watanabe** *aido* Chief Instructor

I remember when I began practicing Aikido, I was out of shape, stiff, and lanky. Practice was hard and I was tired after just the warm-up. The only thing I told myself is that I wasn't going to quit. Other than that, I didn't have any goals in particular except to try to catch on to the technique as best as I could. I don't think I possessed any talent for something physical like a martial art, much less Aikido. Yet there I was, all of a sudden forgetting which foot was my left foot and which was my right foot.

I was also not particularly ambitious. I might have imagined myself defeating a bunch of attackers. But realistically, that was just a fantasy. If I had any talent at all, it was that I could remember my teacher's corrections, and even if I didn't have the skill to execute it, it still gave me a goal in my training.

Of course, through regular practice, anyone can do good Aikido. Even someone as untalented as I was! Of course, I would like to be encouraging, but as a teacher, I am sorry to say that I alone cannot make anyone good.

They say the teacher-student relationship is like both parties firing an arrow toward each other and trying to make them hit in midair. This is the level of concentration, cooperation, sensitivity and resolve that is needed. That is how teachers of old described the level of difficulty within the teacher-student relationship. The teacher's orientation must be flawless because they are the compass pointing

the way for the students. However, it is up to the student to then follow that instruction and to follow it well.

We chose to practice Aikido, a very sophisticated martial art. In Aikido, even the basics are difficult. Yet, to get skillful in Aikido, all one has to do is simply practice Aikido diligently to the best of their ability.

What I love about Aikido, and what I hope to share, is how simple it is, yet in its simplicity, it is very profound. At once, flowing, yet at the same time it requires so much precision. Outside of practice, it's very easy to get caught up in our own stuff and thinking things like, "I'm not good enough," "that person is too strong," "I'm never going to understand these techniques" and so on, but in Aikido there is no time to think or get caught up in one's mental gymnastics.

The great thing about something like Aikido is that it requires so much mental, physical, and spiritual energy that we cannot help but forget one's self. We forget all of our problems we are having off the mat and out in the world. There is only the technique and our partner who is trying to attack us, along with the six other things we have to worry about in order to do the technique effectively. In a way, while we are practicing Aikido, it really is one of the best places to be.



*Mochitsuki at Zenshuji: The Furuya Foundation donated new kine mallets to pound the mochi rice and the dojo donated the muscle to pound the mochi into cakes.*



It's said that in *zazen*, or sitting Zen meditation, practitioners imitate the posture of the Buddha when he reached enlightenment. In *zazen*, when a person imitates the Buddha, they become the Buddha. Likewise in Aikido, when we do the best Aikido that we can with the best spirit and energy we can muster, we become closer to O'Sensei. When we imitate the founder of Aikido, we become him.

Last year, everyone trained very hard and I would very much like everyone to continue practicing good Aikido. I think this may be the most important thing we can do. By doing good Aikido, we can create a stronger dojo that would inspire others to join our training. By doing good Aikido, we can truly understand O'Sensei's teachings of peace and harmony instead of just parroting quotes from a book.

A funny law of the universe is that by practicing good Aikido it creates more good Aikido. At New Year's, Aikido training doesn't need an annual resolution because if we are already practicing, we are already making it happen for ourselves. If we are not practicing, all we need to do is start practicing and all will come into fruition. Please continue to your best because your best begets more good and everyone benefits. •



*Congratulations to James Takata and Heather Brown who recently got engaged!*



# Right Doing

by Santiago Garcia Almaraz *Chief Instructor, Aikido Kodokai*

As every New Year begins, “new beginnings” are on everyone’s minds. For me, it is always challenging to talk about new beginnings or starting over. I find it challenging because new beginnings are typically about actions but most people just emphasize the role that our minds play in change. In my opinion it is better “put into practice what we think.”

Sometimes, the modern world we live in can be noisily-filled emptiness or just mindless chatter of feel-good thoughts. We are bombarded with wonderful inspirational phrases, positive thoughts, and emotional words that we read on social networks or hanging on walls compelling us to buy. These words of wisdom become our false “mantras” that we think we are living by but rarely put into practice.

Success is a function of doing something over and over which in Aikido we call “practice.” Putting something into practice was something I learned as a student of Furuya Sensei many years ago. He taught me that life is a journey and that means that one must constantly and consistently put into practice not only the words that we say we live by but also the right actions.

My point of view as a student of Aikido is that our growth as students and as teachers is contingent upon our practice. If we do not put into practice attending classes, putting on our *gis* and bowing onto the mat, it will be very difficult to evolve in this art.

Growth is contingent upon practice and if we do not practice then it will be difficult for us to grow and likewise improve our Aikido. Aikido, and life for that matter, is an experiential act – we must actually “do it” in order to truly appreciate it, understand it or grow from it. We cannot expect to gain experience by just reading books or watching hundreds of videos on YouTube. I am not advocating that reading books or watching videos is something negative but what I am saying is that those things can only complement our practice and cannot replace it. Those things are entertaining, but they are modes of studying, not methods of practice. They can be used, but cannot replace the actual experience.

Each year it is a challenge to improve, to do more, to go a little further, but these are the necessary steps towards personal growth as an Aikidoka or as a person. Success comes from putting into practice the necessary steps or actions constantly and consistently no matter the goal.

I believe that as a teacher, one of the most important values we can have is to lead by example. In my case, my purpose is to be a good example by having a positive attitude, being respectful of others, and most of all working hard to improve my abilities as an Aikido student and teacher.

I wish everyone a Happy New Year. •



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## Mas-

by Reverend Kensho Furuya

The only proof that we have mastered Aikido or, at least, have begun to understand its principles, is the degree to which we have incorporated it into our lives. This has nothing to do with rank, skill, strength or prestige.

Even if we master the whole world or the universe, we are still no better than the minds it took to invent the weapons to accomplish this. We can never understand peace through power. Power only creates the desire for more power. We can only know true peace by understanding what is sacred in this world. But we have forgotten this great truth. We have forgotten what is sacred in this world, haven't we? Without the ability to "see" or appreciate what is sacred and holy in this world, we can never grasp one iota of peace. By seeing what is sacred and holy brings us closer to the divine, and this, at the same time, is the source of the peace we desperately need in order to continue to survive.

The only thing we can expect for the future is further confirmation of old values and truths. Rather than trying to define truth with words or measure it with a ruler, it is better to pursue mastering it. It may not be within our power or grasp to understand this truth, so this is why we should simply throw ourselves into our practice.

It is a fact that we do not learn as we used to. As a good friend and master teacher once said, "nowadays, everything is done for them so they just do this and that and that's it!" Modern technology has made it easier to learn anything in this world today but, in the process, we have eliminated the main essence of learning in the first place – the struggle to grow and transform one's self and the power one achieves through this struggle. Now, we are only going through the motions like playing a game. How long will we continue to try to fool ourselves like this? This is an important question we must all ask ourselves today!

There is a tremendous, but desperate struggle to emerge from the cocoon to become a beautiful butterfly. However, if we as teachers try to help out by removing the outer layers of this cocoon, the insect will die because it will not have the power to live. Most people

today have had the cocoon removed for them without realizing that the cocoon creates power – the power comes from the struggle to survive and is the power that is used to live in this world.

For some reason, learning has to be a struggle – this does not mean that we have to suffer and die. This means that we must follow our quest or dream through to finding our power. This does not mean we are on our own, it means that we must follow wisdom in order to find wisdom.

Students need to pay more attention in class. They need to not just "see" with their eyes but see with energy. Students shouldn't just hear with their ears but hear with energy. Students shouldn't just do it with their bodies but do it with energy!

The worst situation is when students do not pay attention or when teachers talk too much or have to keep repeating themselves over and over and over again. This is not learning, this is a form of violence, this is chaos and anarchy.

We complain, ignore and resist when the teacher is teaching us; what are we going to do when the teacher stops teaching? This is not learning and we are not using our minds at all here, not at all!

Mastery is nothing more than truly learning how to learn. When we do that we have begun to understand Aikido and its principles. When we do that then we can incorporate these truths into our lives. When we do that, then we have achieved a mastery not only of Aikido, but of ourselves and over our lives.

There is an old saying: "do not fire until you see the whites of their eyes!" I like to say, "do not teach, until you see the fire in the eyes!" Ha! Please learn how to learn and continue to master your Aikido. •

**Editor's Note:** Sensei originally published this article, in slightly different form, to his *Daily Message* on December 25, 2002.

# UPCOMING EVENTS

## 行事

<b>January 1-4</b> Dojo Closed for New Year's	<b>February 23 (Saturday)</b> Dancing for the Dojo #5 Annual dojo fundraising event
<b>January 5 (Saturday)</b> 9:30 AM- Hatsu Geiko First practice of the year	<b>February 23 (Saturday)</b> Intensive Seminar
<b>January 5 (Saturday)</b> 11:00 AM- Kagami Biraki Dojo opening party	<b>March 4-11</b> Almaraz Sensei visits from Spain
<b>January 12 (Saturday)</b> 11:00 AM- Nidai Doshu meinichi Kisshomaru Ueshiba memorial service	<b>March 8-10</b> Furuya Sensei annual memorial service and seminar
<b>January 26 (Saturday)</b> Intensive Seminar	<b>March 30 (Saturday)</b> Black belt examinations
<b>February 2-4</b> Ito Sensei visits Kyoikuakibudo Aikikai in Havana, Cuba	<b>April 2019</b> Dojo trip to Japan

# Aikido Training Schedule

## 合気道 時間割

<b>Saturdays</b> 6:30-8:00 AM* 9:30-10:30 AM 10:45-11:45 AM	Intensive Advanced Class Regular Class	<b>Wednesdays</b> 6:30-7:30 AM 5:15-6:15 PM 6:30-7:30 PM	Morning Practice Fundamentals Regular Class
<b>Sundays</b> 9:00-10:00 AM 10:15-11:15 AM 11:30 AM-12:30 PM 12:45-1:45 PM	Children's Class Regular Class Fundamentals Open Practice	<b>Thursdays</b> 6:30-7:30 PM 7:45-8:45 PM	Regular Class Open Practice
<b>Mondays</b> 6:30-7:30 AM 6:30-7:30 PM	Morning Practice Regular Class	<b>Fridays</b> 6:30-7:30 AM 6:30-7:30 PM	Morning Practice Fundamentals
<b>Tuesdays</b> 6:30-7:30 PM	Advanced Class		

NOTE: Visitors are welcome to observe our Morning, Fundamentals, or Regular Classes.

\*Last Saturday of the month is Intensive Seminar. By Invitation only.

# Iaido Training Schedule

## 居合道 時間割

<b>Saturdays</b> 8:00-9:00 AM Regular Class	<b>Sundays</b> 7:45-8:45 AM Regular Class
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# The Aiki Dojo

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has been awarded Official Konin recognition by the Aikikai Foundation—Aikido World Headquarters.

We are committed to the study and practice of the teachings of the Founder of Aikido, Morihei Ueshiba and his legitimate successors, Kisshomaru Ueshiba and the present Doshu Moriteru Ueshiba.

We are a not-for-profit, traditional Aikido dojo dedicated to preserving the honored values and traditions of the arts of Aikido and Iaido. With your continued understanding and support, we hope that you will also dedicate yourself to your training and enjoy all the benefits that Aikido and Iaido have to offer.

### The Aikido Center of Los Angeles

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