

This time expressing sympathy

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As before, days of anxiety caused by the coronavirus are continuing and on April 7 the government declared a state of emergency. I am sure that during this period of anxiety, all of the Domon members and all of those who enjoy chanoyu are doing their best to keep their area safe.

At the Omotesenke Iemoto, functions such as *keiko* (practice), *chakai* (tea gatherings) and *kencha* (tea offerings at shrines or temples), as well as scheduled training courses at all of the branches, have been cancelled or postponed.

It is precisely at times like when the world is full of suffering and negativity, that a bowl of tea soothes our spirits and our exchanges with others at practices and tea gatherings encourage and support us. However, things cannot go as we would like them to when there is anxiety about the virus spreading.

It is now the pleasant season during which we would normally be enjoying tea amid the refreshing and fragrant breezes of spring, beginning with the cherry blossom viewing tea gathering at Nijo Castle, so it is very regrettable that the present restrictions are in place.

However, the most important thing at this time is for everyone to be aware of what they are doing in order to stop the spread of the virus. This is unavoidable from the viewpoint of our social responsibility.

For the past few months we have been asked to refrain from non-essential, non-urgent activities and all kinds of cultural functions and sports events have been cancelled one after the other. Actually, culture, art and sport could be classified as non-essential, non-urgent activities. If they did not exist it would not necessarily stop society from functioning.

However, it is precisely such activities that add color to our lives and enrich our daily routine. Moreover, they sometimes keep our spirits up, and we feel this anew when we are faced with a situation like the present one.

I wish to express my sincere respect for all those who are doing their best every day to prevent the spread of the coronavirus. It is said that the present severe conditions will continue for some time, but each of us needs to lead our daily life with our personal responsibility to do what is necessary to get over this crisis always in our minds. I am hoping that when the day dawns on the eradication of the virus I will again be able to share the pleasure of *chanoyu* with many of you. Then, when that time arrives, I would like to resume a daily life that includes 'tea', with a feeling of thankfulness greater than I have felt before, for the fact of being able to drink a bowl of tea as part of a completely ordinary daily life.

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