

Nichiren Shu News

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The Oeshiki Memorial Service of Nichiren Shonin



Nichiren Shonin's Funeral Procession (From Nichiren Shonin Chugasan, preserved at Honkokuji Temple, Kyoto)



Nichiro Shonin (A) on the far left and Nissho Shonin (B) on the far right, carrying Nichiren Shonin's coffin

Minobusan in accordance to his written will. His disciples left Ikegami with his ashes on the 19th, and arrived at Minobusan on the 23rd, Nichiren Shonin's ashes were interred on the 26th of the tenth month. (There is another account that says the party left on the 21st, arrived at Minobu on the 25th, and the burial was on the 100th memorial day).

"Nichiren Shonin Chugasan" is an illustrated biography of Nichiren Shonin that was drawn in the Muromachi Period and is preserved at Honkokuji Temple in Kyoto. It minutely depicts Nichiren Shonin's funeral. In the depiction, we can see that; Nichiro is in the front row and Nissho is in the back row of the funeral procession. Then eight priests follow one another, and many disciples and lay believers join in the procession. These were the leading disciples and lay believers of Nichiren Shonin. Toki Jonin (Nichijo, 1216-1299) is holding the desk of the sutra containing Nichiren Shonin's articles. Ota Jomyo (1222-1283) is holding the desk of the Buddhist text. Shijo Kingo (1229-1296) and Ikegami Munenaka (his detail isn't clear) hold the flags and Daigaku Saburo (?-1286) holds the lantern for the funeral ceremony.

By Rev. Gyokai Sekido, Ph.D.

In 1282, Nichiren Shonin's health began to fail. The severe conditions of the cold winter were difficult for him. Worrying about his ill health, his disciples sent medicine to him. Accepting their advice, Nichiren Shonin decided to go to a hot spring in Hitachi (present Ibaraki Prefecture) to recuperate. He left Minobusan on the eighth day of the ninth month, arriving at the residence of Ikegami Munenaka of Ikegami in Musashi Province (present Tokyo) on the 18th day the same month. By the

time he arrived, his condition was too serious for him to continue his trip. On the 25th of the same month, he gave the last lecture on the "Rissho-ankokuron" to disciples and lay believers who gathered from far and wide to hear him. Feeling that his days were numbered, Nichiren Shonin named the Six Senior Disciples as his successors on the eighth day of the tenth month. He asked the very young Kyoichimaro (Nichizo) to come to his sickbed and dispatched him for propagation in Kyoto. At 8:00 a.m. on the 13th day,

he passed into Nirvana surrounded by voices proclaiming the Odaimoku in the temple where a Mandala Honzon was enshrined. His turbulent life of 61-years ended.

Nissho (1221-1323) and Nichiro (1245-1320), who were two of the Six Senior Disciples of Nichiren, placed his body in a coffin on the 14th day of the tenth month at 8 p.m. He was cremated at about midnight of the same day at Ikegami. The memorial stupa of the cremation is still preserved there today. His ashes were sent carefully to



Mando Lantern



Followers Parading at Minobusan



Life-sized figure of Nichiren Shonin at Ikegami



Followers gathered in front of Ikegami Honmonji Temple main hall

Oeshiki Today

By Sandra Seki

Every year during the months of October and November, temples throughout Japan and overseas hold a special service called "Oeshiki." in memory of our Founder, Nichiren Shonin. In the early morning of

October 13, 1282, Nichiren Shonin passed away at the residence of Lord Ikegami in present day Tokyo.

To commemorate his passing, every October 12, the night before his memorial day, huge crowds flock to Ikegami Honmonji Temple. Ministers and followers bringing their temple's pagoda-style lanterns called mando, parade the path leading to the main temple. The mandos are beautifully illuminated

and decorated with pink and white paper flowers. Some of the lanterns are like floats in a parade carrying life-sized figures of Nichiren Shonin. More than 100 mandos come from all over Tokyo and even from neighboring prefectures. The night air is filled with the chant of the Odaimoku and the rhythmical beat of the uchiwa drums and bells, while youths and children hoist and twirl the matoi, a

traditional Japanese fireman's standard. Hundreds and thousands of people gather to see or participate in this event. Even though it may look and sound like a festival, it is actually a memorial event dedicated to our Founder.

Although the Honmonji Oeshiki draws the largest crowd, mando parades take place at Minobusan, Horinouchi Myohoji, Zoushigaya Homyoji, and other temples throughout Japan.

Shobo: Nichiren Shonin's Thoughts on The Lotus Sutra

Chapter VII: "The Parable of a Magic City" and A Reply to Lord Ueno

By Rev. Hoyu Maruyama
Senpukuji Temple, Yokosuka

May the merits we have accumulated by this offering Be distributed among all living beings, And may we and all other living beings Attain the enlightenment of the Buddha! (Chapter 7 of the Lotus Sutra: "The Parable of a Magic City")

The phrases above are quoted from Chapter 7 of the Lotus Sutra; "The Parable of a Magic City." In this chapter the Brahman-Heavenly-Kings in the worlds of the ten quarters begged Great-Universal-Wisdom-Excellence Tathagata, who became enlightened under the Bodhi-tree, to expound the Dharma so that the Buddha could save all living beings from suffering. The phrases are so famous that many Buddhist sects as well as Nichiren Shu, still use them when reading invocation during formal ceremonies. The Brahman-Heavenly-Kings, offering their palaces to Great-Universal-Wisdom-Excellence Tathagata, asked the Buddha to accept these gifts out of His compassion, and to expound the Dharma to them. We can understand their great vow to mean: "Once you, the Tathagata, expound the Dharma, we will listen to it earnestly and keep it. Then we will accumulate the merits by this offering. By distributing the merits among all living beings, all of us can

attain the enlightenment of the Buddha." I beseech you. It is time for all my disciples to make a firm resolution. ... In any case, as humans, death remains unavoidable. The pain and sadness experienced by a natural death is no different from that brought on by sickness or war. Hence, since the outcome is unchangeable, it is imperative that we entrust our lives to the Lotus Sutra. Think of it as returning a drop of dew to the ocean or burying a speck of dust in the earth. The third fascicle of the Lotus Sutra (Chapter 7, "The Parable of a Magic City") claims: "May the merits we have accumulated by this offering/ Be distributed among all living beings./ And may we and all other living beings/ Attain the enlightenment of the Buddha together." (A Reply to Lord Ueno-Ueno-dono Gohenji)

The original manuscript of this letter, consisting of five pages, is kept at Taiseikiji Temple near Mt. Fuji. As a basic rule of letter writing at that time, only the day and month are marked ("on the sixth of the eleventh month") but not the year. There is a postscript which says, "the letter is written in appreciation of the effort that you have made regarding the Atsuwara Persecution." It is thought that Nichiren Shonin sent this letter from Minobusan to Nanjo (Ueno) Tokimitsu, an estate steward in the Ueno District near Mt. Fuji in Shizuoka Prefecture. Nanjo was a strong supporter of Nichiren Shonin.

The Atsuwara Persecution, occurred in the second year of Koan era (1279), which places the letter between then and Nichiren Shonin's death in 1282. The sentences quoted above are found in the last part of the letter. He urged his followers to resolve themselves and to have strong faith in the Lotus Sutra. (Tr. S. Komukai)

(to be continued)



Last Part of Ueno-dono Gohenji



Brahman- Heavenly- King



Tomb of Nanjo Tokimitsu

Rissho University 140th Anniversary International Symposium

By Prof. Hirohisa Toda
Faculty of Buddhist Studies, Rissho University

This year Rissho University will mark its 140th anniversary since becoming a modern education institution in 1872. One of the main events to be held for this anniversary is an International Symposium.

This symposium aims to promote Rissho University's 140th anniversary both domestically and internationally. It also aims to recognise the role and significance of the university among modern society.

For this purpose, we will hold a panel discussion with faculty members of the Edwin O. Reischauer Institute of Japanese Studies. Harvard is one of the premier institutes in the United States regarding Japanese Studies and an academic partner of Rissho

University. Also participating in the panel will be faculty members of the Institute for Area Studies at Leiden University, and the faculty members of Rissho University.

The theme will be based on Japan's politics, economics, environment, culture, and religion regarding "how they are" and "how they should be." In-depth debates will be held to understand the current situation, issues, their causes, and future prospects of Japan. To fulfil the mission of "Respect the Validity" charged to Rissho University, we will be considering sincerely, the way Japan should be, and will offer information domestically and internationally about Japan's "past to present" and "present to future."

October 13, 2012 (Sat)

10:00-12:00	"Considering Japan Now - Politics, Economics, Environment, International Relations"
1:00- 3:00	"Considering Japan Now - People, Culture, Religion, Living"
3:30- 4:00	Buddhist Memorial Services for Oeshiki and 140th Anniversary
4:30- 6:00	Japanese Music Concert "Considering Japan Now - Mercy and Light" (Appreciating Japan)

Rev. Kanno Preaches (20)



"Those who obtained various merits and virtues by almsgiving or by observing precepts...have already attained the enlightenment of the Buddha."
(Lotus Sutra, Chapter II: Expedients)

Breathing

Breathing is a Buddhist practice. It maintains oneself, spiritually and physically. Firstly, you let out a thin and long breath, wishing to "breathe out all the evil spirits building up in your body."

When you finish breathing all out, you inhale as much as you exhale. You exhale from the mouth and inhale from the nose. Your mind will become quiet and peaceful by repeating the breathing.

"Firstly you let out," "When you do not let out, nothing can be let in," "You let in as much as you let out." These statements can be applied in our entire life.

To obtain "merits and virtues," we need to conduct good deeds for the sake of others. First comes "to serve others." After serving others, "we will obtain as much as we let out."

A proverb says, "One must sow before one must reap," emphasizing, "practice first." The Lotus Sutra stresses the importance of "sowing virtues and merits."

(Rev. Nisso Kanno, head priest of Kaichoji Temple, Shizuoka Prefecture)

Nichiren Shonin's Admonitions

Does the Pure Land Path Lead to Incessant Suffering?

By Rev. Ryuei McCormick

This article will examine Nichiren Shonin's admonition, "Pure Land Buddhism is a way leading to the Hell of Incessant Suffering." Such a confrontational statement is offensive to vast numbers of Buddhists in East Asian traditions whose practice is chanting the name of Amitabha Buddha, so it is important to understand exactly what Nichiren Shonin meant by this.

Pure Land Buddhism is based on three sutras known collectively as the Triple Pure Land Sutras: the Sutra of the Buddha of Infinite Life (Muryoju-kyo), the Sutra of Meditation on the Buddha of Infinite Life, and the Pure Land Sutra. The Sutra of the Buddha of Infinite Life tells the story of Bodhisattva Dharma Treasury who made 48 vows to create the best possible pure land in the western region of the universe wherein beings could attain awakening. In fulfilling his vows, he became the Buddha known as Amitabha (Infinite Light) or Amitayus (Infinite Life). His 18th vow in particular inspired the Pure Land tradition and is known as the Original Vow. This vow declares that anyone who thinks of him even ten



Rev.
Ryuei McCormick

times will be born in his Pure Land after death. Thinking of Amitabha Buddha eventually became equated with chanting his name. In Japanese this chant, or nembutsu takes the form of "Namu Amida Butsu." According to Mahayana Buddhist teachings there are many pure lands, but Amitabha Buddha and his Western Pure Land became the most popular. Pure Land Buddhism rapidly developed as a major branch of East Asian Buddhism.

Honen (1133-1212) was the founder of the Japanese Pure Land School. He asserted that everyone should simply chant Namu Amida Butsu, single-mindedly at all times, and that this was the practice that accorded with the Original Vow of the Bodhisattva Dharma Treasury. Honen's major work, the Collection of Passages on the Nembutsu and the Original Vow (Senchaku Hongan Nembutsu Shu), written in 1198, insisted that the exclusive practice of nembutsu was only the correct form of

Buddhism for the people of the present age who no longer had the capacity to succeed at any other Buddhist practice.

Nichiren Shonin criticized Honen for lumping together all the sutras, teachings, and practices of Buddhism outside of the Triple Pure Land Sutras and recommending that they be "abandoned, closed, set aside, and cast away." Nichiren argued that it was wrong to reject the ultimate teaching of the Lotus Sutra in favor of the provisional teaching of the Triple Pure Land Sutras. Nichiren dismissed Honen's pessimism in regard to people's spiritual capacity. The Lotus Sutra is intended precisely for ordinary people in the Latter Age of the Dharma, who will gain incalculable merit as beginners who take faith in it. Nichiren Shonin encouraged all people to take faith in the Lotus Sutra and chant the Odaimoku, Namu Myoho Renge Kyo, to sow the seed of Buddhahood. Through the Odaimoku people will realize that the only true pure land is this world now, wherein Buddhahood is a universal possibility and, for those able to perceive it by faith, a present actuality.

In the Pure Land way, one must be reborn in a Pure Land to awaken to

the Wonderful Dharma. The Lotus Sutra directly expounds the fullness of the Wonderful Dharma, here and now, in the presence of the Eternal Buddha. Therefore it does not make sense to embrace the indirect way of meeting the Wonderful Dharma only after death while excluding the possibility of encountering the Wonderful Dharma here and now. And it does not make sense to claim that the Triple Pure Land Sutras should be used to turn people away from the expounding of the Wonderful Dharma in the Lotus Sutra. That would not be the intent of the Triple Pure Land Sutras.

Nichiren Shonin's point is that embracing the pessimism and otherworldliness of exclusive nembutsu practice is a misunderstanding of Mahayana teaching and a rejection of the Wonderful Dharma taught in the Lotus Sutra. Because this leads away from the Buddha Dharma, it is therefore a path leading to incessant suffering. That the Pure Land teachings should not be used to negate the direct expression of the Wonderful Dharma is a critique that I believe still holds up today.

(to be continued)

My Training as an Overseas Minister

By Rev. Ervinna Myoufu Nasib, Ph.D.

I am Ervinna Myoufu from Indonesia. Before I came to the Nichiren Mission of Hawaii, I was in Japan for seven years. I knew the Odaimoku from my mother who was a Nichiren Shoshu follower. She was a very active member in Nichiren Shoshu. When I was a child, she would often take me to the temple and I grew up in a Nichiren Buddhist family. However, my mother passed away at the age of 49 due to an illness.

When she was alive, she would tell me to always keep the faith in the Lotus Sutra and the Odaimoku. She said she had nothing to give me except this faith. After she passed away, I found Nichiren Shu where I was able to find the real teachings of Sakyamuni Buddha and Nichiren Shonin. I studied and strengthened my faith and then I decided to become a priest. I wanted to spread the real teachings of the Buddha in my country. Indonesia is a developing country so there are many things that we have to improve. There are too many criminals, poor people and people who are suffering. I want to spread the Odaimoku so my country could become better. I believe that if I put water in a cup of coffee, little by little even the coffee will become clear one day.

In the same way, if more people chanted the Odaimoku in Indonesia, the condition of the country will get better gradually. Also I think one of the most important things in propagation is the language. It would be easier for people to understand if we can explain the Dharma in their mother tongue. This is why I decided to become a priest and spread the Dharma in Indonesia.

I went to Japan to learn Japanese and Buddhism and train to become a priest. I also continued my studies in medicine at Juntendo University to get my Ph.D. I was lucky to meet my compassionate Master Rev. Shukai Oikawa, the Chief Priest of Myokakuji Temple in Kyoto and Joenji Temple in Shinjuku, Tokyo.

I began my training as a priest under him in 2009 and I completed Shingyo Dojo in 2011. I am very thankful to all the kind people I met while I was studying in Japan. Without their help I would not have been able to complete my studies in medicine and my training as a Nichiren Shu priest. I decided to learn more about overseas propagation before leaving for my mission in Indonesia. I had heard that Nichiren Shu had a long history of overseas propagation in Hawaii so I became interested in doing training there. I am very fortunate to have this op-

portunity and to be in the company of many sincere ministers and members.

During my six-month training in Hawaii, I want to learn many things from not only the ministers but also the members. I will do my best and hope that I can make a lot of wonderful memories with all of you. Thank you so much for welcoming me here. Namu Myoho Renge Kyo



Rev. Ervinna in front of Shumuin



Rev. Ervinna receiving certification from Rev. Kobun Sasaki

Calendar October – November 2012

October 1: Ceremony of changing the robes on the statue of Nichiren Shonin, Minobusan

October 10: Service in memory of the Founder's exile to Sado Island

October 11 - 13: Oeshiki

October 12: Minobusan and Ikegami Mando Parade

October 13: The 731th Memorial Service for Nichiren Shonin

October 26-28: Lay member's retreat at Renkoji Temple, Italy

November 2-4: Lay member's retreat at Hokekyoji Temple, Brazil

November 28: 13th Memorial Service for Ryuguji Temple at Nagpour, India

November 13: Memorial Service for Nichizo Shonin

By Rev. Keiryō Inoue

Temple Events

Portland Nichiren Buddhist Temple Wedding Ceremony

By Rev. Myosho Obata



Rev. Obata with the newlyweds

A wedding ceremony was held at Sauvie Island Farm on the evening of August 18. Sauvie Island is approximately 10 miles north of Portland, Oregon, and it is the largest island along the Columbia River. The altar for the ceremony was arranged under a hundred-year old oak tree surrounded by fields, and a Gohonzon was enshrined in the Buddhist altar. The bride and groom were Sarah Marielle Stivers and Brian Patrick Wood who are members of the temple. While more than a hundred invited guests were watching, the ceremony sincerely proceeded. After reciting the Lotus Sutra, a pair of Juzu was bestowed on each of them, and they made a vow to the Buddha:

On this wonderful day, in the presence of the Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha. Together, with our family and friends, we vow as a couple to take refuge in the Triple Gems and build a happy family together. May we learn to love each other with understanding and compassion, as we share our lives together. There will be moments of joys and sorrow. However, may

we learn to take it in stride, Namu-Myoho-Renge-Kyo.

The sipping of sake three times, san san kudo, was performed. Then, they exchanged their wedding rings, and they expressed their gratitude to the Buddha and our founder Nichiren Shonin by offering incense while chanting the Odaimoku, Namu Myoho Renge Kyo.

After the ceremony, the wedding reception was held in a public square on the farm, and they extended warm-hearted hospitality to their guests with plenty of delicious foods which were the freshest organic fruits and vegetables right from the field. Although their families, relatives, and friends had never attended a Buddhist wedding ceremony nor had they any knowledge about Buddhism, they said that they were deeply touched by the ceremony, especially, reciting the Sutra and the Odaimoku. I deeply appreciated that I had been able to take this happy occasion to the Buddha, and I thought that spreading Nichiren Shu Buddhism was my greatest pleasure.

Archbishop Receives Warm Welcome at the Hilo Mission

By Rev. Hosho Sugawara

We successfully completed the 110th anniversary of the Nichiren Missionary work in Hawaii with great success. We had the honor of receiving Archbishop Nisso Uchino of the Minobusan Kuonji Temple to lead the ceremonial visitation at

the Hilo Nichiren Mission and at the former temple in Kau Pahala on Saturday, June 30th. Over 60 followers and priests from Japan visited the Hilo Mission with him. Archbishop Uchino visited on behalf of the 5,000 Nichiren Shu temples in Japan.

The Archbishop and guests arrived at Hilo Airport at 9:08 a.m. and proceeded to the Hilo Nichiren Mission with a police car leading the group. He then conducted a short service of greeting and celebration of the 110th anniversary of Nichiren Buddhism in Hawaii at the altar of the main church building. The group then walked up to the Shichimen-deity's hut and held a short service. I have to mention that Rev. Kaishuku Mochizuki who conferred the statue of the Shichimen-deity in 1985 from Minobu, Japan was also present that day. Actually Archbishop Uchino also had visited Hilo and Kapapala at that time in 1985 when he was still a resident minister of Shimizu-bo in Minobu.

After the service at the Shichimen-deity's hut, the guests spent a short time in our church having a cup of tea in old tea-cups from the Kapapala times, buying the 110th special T-shirts as souvenirs for their families, or taking some photos in front of the mission. One of our members and a guest from Japan who also visited in 1985 were glad to see each other after such a long time. Rev. Chojo Ichikawa who is the grandson of Rev. Nunome, the second resident minister of the church in Kapapala was there as well. We were very happy to see that so many Nichiren ministers and believers had gathered at our small mission.

At around 11a.m., the group left the Hilo Mission to go to the former temple, the Wood Valley Temple in Kau Pahala, and conducted a dedication ceremony in front of the 100th monument of the Nichiren missionary work there.

Actually, this was the first time in 48 years that an Archbishop had visited Hilo on the Big Island of Hawaii. The former Archbishop, Nichijo Fujii, visited here in 1964. It is also the first time that the incumbent Archbishop visited the Hilo Nichiren Mission since the opening of the mission in 1965.

It was Archbishop Uchino's second visit to Kapapala. During his last visit, his group had just passed through the gate of the cemetery and heard a little about the cemetery from the guide. Archbishop Uchino was very sorry that he could not stop by the cemetery and had always been concerned about this. He was finally able to feel relieved

after visiting the cemetery and offering a prayer for the spirits of the deceased Japanese immigrants.

This was the most impressive and honorable moment in my life as a priest.

North Carolina Sangha

Rev. Ryusho Jeffus

Rev. Ryusho Jeffus has been invited on behalf of the U.S. Democratic National Convention Committee's Office of Public Engagement and the Faith Outreach Department to deliver the opening prayer on Thursday, September 6, 2012, during the Interfaith Morning Prayer Gathering of the 2012 Democratic National Convention.

Each day of the week-long convention includes an hour-long interfaith gathering at the Charlotte Convention Center. These gatherings will begin and end with a prayer led by a National or North Carolina faith leader. After each gathering will be a panel discussion, facilitated by Dr. Derrick Harkins of the DNC's Faith Outreach Department, on the day's theme of "Being Our Brothers' and Sisters' Keeper."

These gatherings provide an opportunity for people of faith to discuss issues and religious values.

Nichiren Shu Buddhist Temple of UK

By Rev. Kanto Tsukamoto

On August 25 and 26, we held a seminar at our temple in London. We invited Rev. Kanjin Cederman from Seattle, U.S.A., as a guest speaker. For this seminar we chose a topic which is difficult and sensitive but very important: "Death." We divided the lectures into two areas: "What is Death?" and "Salva-

tion of the Buddha." based on Nichiren Shu tradition. In the first lecture we discussed: "what happens after death," what Hell means in Buddhism, funeral ceremonies, memorial services of Nichiren Shu, and the meaning of each ceremony.

The second lecture covered: "where we will go after death?," departure to Hades, the pure-land of Nichiren Shu, the promise of Mt. Sacred Eagle, healing of grief, and how we should live the remainder of our lives.

We also discussed various life troubles, such as, suicide, and abortion. We read aloud works by Ryunosuke Akutagawa, a popular novelist in Japan whose works are based on Buddhist concepts.

We selected two of his stories: "Spider-thread" and "Toshi-shun." We copied the image of Bodhisattva "Jizo: ksiti-gharbha" who rescues suffering souls in hell. In closing, a very unique meditation session was conducted by Rev. Cederman: Meditation of Death

Renkoji, Italy

By Rev. Shoryo Tarabini

The Tokudo (entrance into Buddhist priesthood) ceremony for Gabriel De Luca Garoffe was held on August 31, at Renkoji Temple. Gabriel has been studying under Rev. Tarabini and is the leader of the Spain Sangha. Also participating in the ceremony were Rev. Eiyu Ishii, head of the Nichiren Shu International Propagation Committee and Rev. Shodo Ando, Gabriel's host while he was studying in Japan earlier this year.

At the ceremony Gabriel was presented with the Dharma name "Shobo." Rev. Tarabini, Gabriel, and the Revs. from Japan left for Spain the following day to hold the Second Anniversary of the Spain Sangha.



Shami Shobo hoisting his Dharma name (back row) Front row (L to R) Revs. Ishii, Tarabini and Ando

Nichiren Shu News

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