

Nichiren Shu News

Published by the Head Office of Nichiren Shu Buddhism & NOPPA

No. 220

June 1, 2017

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PRAYING FOR THE REBIRTH OF TOHOKU

By Rev. Chihei Ichikawa, Myoanji Temple, Tokyo. Translated by Sandra Seki.

Before the Great East Japan Earthquake struck on March 11, 2011, no one dreamed that the aftermath could have been so devastating. At a magnitude of 9.0, the earthquake was the fourth largest in recorded history. Three faults along 200 kilometers of seabed were dislocated, causing the earth's axis to shift 17 centimeters. The peninsula near the epicenter shifted seven meters, and the land has fallen one meter.

Worse than the earthquake was the tsunami that followed one hour later. Coastal towns in northeastern Japan were engulfed by a gigantic seawater wall that towered 40 meters and rushed five kilometers inland. The tsunami took the precious lives of close to 20,000 people: men, women, babies, children, youths, and the elderly. Livestock and many household pets also perished.

For the past six years, I have been visiting Ishinomaki City in Miyagi Prefecture once a month, helping to counsel the many evacuees who have lost their homes and loved ones. Even though I have been there more than 70 times, I discover a new situation with each visit. With the loss of close to 20,000 lives, there is also the



The tsunami created a wall of destruction, sweeping up everything in its path.

suffering and pain of the hundreds of thousands of surviving relatives and friends who must reconstruct their lives after the disaster. Some mothers break down in tears and blame themselves for not holding onto their children when the wave tore them apart. Some grandparents hug the gravestones of their beloved grandchildren and cry out asking why fate took away the little ones instead of the old. Some children still

remember the pleas from their parents to run to higher ground while they were being swept away by the wave. Though six years have passed, the sorrow, pain and loss still linger everywhere.

Just imagine if your loved ones suddenly disappeared in front of your eyes, and there was nothing you could do to help them! This is still the situation in the Tohoku area. Though roads, bridges, buildings and homes

are slowly being rebuilt, the loss in the people's hearts will never be repaired.

I would like to ask the readers a favor. With the Tokyo Olympics approaching in 2020, and Nichiren Shonin's 800th birthday coming the following year, you may have a chance to visit Japan. The popular tourist spots like Kyoto, Nara and Tokyo may come first on your list. However, if you can find some time to visit the Tohoku area, please come and see the reality of the situation. Nothing the media shows can explain or relate the true story. The more visitors come to Tohoku, the more active the area will become. Meeting and talking with the victims will definitely bring us closer to them, and I think this will help the whole area become 'reborn.'



Kadenowaki Elementary School was destroyed by the tsunami and fire that followed.



The Kadenowakicho area in Ishinomaki was devastated by the tsunami, as seen on April 20, 2011.



The same area on April 20, 2017. Progress has been made clearing debris, but rebuilding lives takes time.

SIX YEARS SINCE THE GREAT EAST JAPAN EARTHQUAKE AND TSUNAMI

Six years have passed since the Great East Japan Earthquake and Tsunami. On March 11, Nichiren Shu temples of all areas in Japan, including the disaster areas of the Tohoku Region, prayed with Odaimoku for the repose



of the victims of the disaster. Rev. Yoken Kito, head priest of Renjoji Temple of Otsuchi Town in Iwate Prefecture, where 164 supporters and devotees had fallen victim to the earthquake and tsunami, observed the seventh memorial service for those who had passed away. About 120 members participated.

A woman who attended the service for her lost parents said through her tears, "I try to think positively but, in reality it is difficult... Since the disaster, I have always thought 'How I wish it had not been for the earthquake!' I hope that eventually I will be able to find some good about that day."

Good progress is being made in the rebuilding of Otsuchi Town, but the



reconstruction work has been difficult. Rev. Kito explained, "Some who have lost children have no energy to build a new house, while others gave up because of economic reasons. It will take a long time to rebuild their livelihoods. There is no doubt that the earthquake left deep scars for many people. At times, it seems there is no end. I hope they will find their own way to treasure each day."

At 2:46 p.m., the exact time the earthquake occurred in 2011, everyone prayed with palms together towards the sea.

That evening, about 2,500 lanterns bearing the names of all the victims were floated on the rivers to the sea to pray for their repose.

—From the Nichiren Shu Shimibun.

Translated by Sensho Komukai.



FOOTPRINTS OF NICHIREN SHONIN (6)

From the Nichiren Shu Shimbun. Translated and Compiled by Rev. Sensho Komukai.

In this last installment of our pilgrimage to the main temples of Nichiren Shu, we visit the temple built where Nichiren Shonin passed away. We also visit two other temples founded by his followers to continue the practice of the Wonderful Dharma.

HONDOJI TEMPLE: Hondoji Temple was originally founded in 1269, when a governor of Hiraga province named Kageyama Tosanokami, a great devotee of Nichiren Shonin, raised a Hokke-do, a hall for chanting the Lotus Sutra, in the Kogane area around Matsudo City in Chiba Prefecture. Soon afterwards, the temple was badly damaged by heavy winds and rain. In 1277, Lord Soya Kyoshin, who had a deep faith in the Lotus Sutra, made a generous contribution for the reconstruction of the temple. In 1309, a daughter of Lord Kyoshin donated the land of Hiragarakugo to establish the Hondoji Temple of today.

The name Hondoji comes from Nichiren Shonin's wish: "The Original Buddha will reside in this land." *Hon* means true or real, and *do* refers to land. Hondoji Temple is commonly known as Ajisai-dera, Hydrangea Temple. Here we enjoy seeing beautiful flowers of each season; cherry blossoms in early April, irises in early June, hydrangeas toward the end of June, and autumnal leaves in late November.



Hondoji is famous for its flowers throughout the year.

HONGYOJI TEMPLE: This is the sacred place where our Founder Nichiren Shonin passed away. The residence of lay devotee Ikegami Munenaka previously stood at the site of the temple, located to the west of Ikegami Honmonji Temple. Leaving Minobusan where Nichiren Shonin resided for nine years, he arrived at Munenaka's residence on September 18, 1282. With his condition worsening, he kept to his bed. Then on September 25, he lectured to his disciples and devotees on his own treatise, *Rissho Ankoku Ron, Spreading Peace throughout the Country by Establishing the True Dharma*. On October 8, he chose the Six Senior Disciples, divided up his mementos among them two days later, and on October 11 appointed Nichizo Shonin to spread the teachings of the Lotus Sutra in the imperial capital, Kyoto.



Hongyoji Temple was built at the site where our Founder passed away.

As his last moments drew near, he asked a disciple to hang the Great Mandala next to him and set up the standing statue of the Buddha that he had kept with him since he was exiled to Izu. Around 8:00 in the morning on October 13, as his disciples and devotees were reciting the Lotus Sutra, the life of Nichiren Shonin ended at the age of 61.

The pillar against which he leaned while delivering his last lecture on the *Rissho Ankoku Ron* is enshrined at Hongyoji Temple.



Nichiren Shonin leaned against this pillar the last time he addressed his disciples.

MYOHOJI TEMPLE: From around 1615 to 1624, Nichikei Shonin converted the temple from Shingon Shu to Nichiren Shu to pray for the repose of his mother's soul. Our Founder's statue carved in wood by one of the Six Senior Disciples, Nichiro Shonin, is installed in the Founder's Hall of the temple. In May of 1261, when Nichiren Shonin was taken from Yuigahama Beach near Kamakura to his exile in Izu, Nichiro's grief was so great that he carved a statue of Nichiren Shonin out of driftwood that was emitting wondrous light on the beach. He prayed day and night for his master's safety and early return. Three years later, Nichiro's heartfelt wish came true as Nichiren Shonin returned home safely. That year, Nichiren's age was 42, a year called *Yakudoshi*, a year of bad luck in a man's life. People believed in those days that Nichiren Shonin in *Yakudoshi* was freed from the great danger thanks to the wooden statue. Since then the statue has been known and respected for expelling evils.



The Soshido, Founder's Hall, at Myohoji Temple.

Buddhism Q&A (5)

By Rev. Gyokai Sekido, Ph.D.

What is the Mokusho?

The *Mokusho* is a wooden drum used in Nichiren Shu. It is used to keep the tempo when chanting the sutra and the Odaimoku. Generally, it has a round shape, but some are square. The inside of the *Mokusho* is hollowed to create a pleasant sound when struck with a wooden stick.

The *Mokusho* was first introduced during the Meiji Period, 1868-1912. It is said that the origin of the *Mokusho* was when a master hit a piece of cut bamboo with a folded fan to keep the rhythm while chanting the sutras. Later the wooden *Mokusho* was created, and its use spread widely in the temples around Minobusan Kuonji Temple, and eventually spread throughout all Nichiren Shu temples in Japan. Before

the *Mokusho* was created, the *Mokugyo*, or wooden fish, was used. It is another type of wooden drum used in Buddhist temples along with the *Mokusho*. The *Mokugyo* was carved in the shape of a long fish. This shape has an interesting origin. It was said that a priest should be encouraged to practice hard by looking at the shape of a fish which was believed never to close its eyes in sleep.

The *Mokugyo* creates a soft sound. The *Mokusho*, on the other hand, creates a light and lively tone. *Mokusho* was preferred to be used in Nichiren Shu because it helped to keep the rhythm of reading the Lotus Sutra clearly and quickly. It is used widely in the Kito prayer service because it can be struck with quick strokes.

We welcome readers' questions about Buddhism and Nichiren Shonin. Please send us your questions by e-mail to editor-nichirensnunews@nichiren.or.jp or contact us through your local temple.



Keeping the Beat: The light and lively tone of the Mokusho wooden drum plays an important role in services.

REVEREND KANNO PREACHES (47)

"Anyone who reads this sutra Will be free from grief, sorrow, disease or pain

—The Lotus Sutra, Chapter XIV, Peaceful Practices



Merits

When reading this phrase, you may think, "If I believe in the Lotus Sutra and practice in accordance with the sutra, I will not suffer from any mental or physical distress."

This is true. You will not experience anxiety or pain, and you will not fall ill. More plainly, if you believe in the Lotus Sutra, you will not experience agony in this world.

This understanding is, however, only half true.

The Buddha knows our physical and mental agony. In this phrase, he tells us, "believe in the Lotus Sutra and practice it, then you will be freed from your agony."

Our incurable disease, our death, is another important theme in this phrase. By tackling this difficult problem, the Buddha tells us that the solution will unfold through the practice of the Lotus Sutra and Odaimoku.

The Buddha tells us to accept these problems. However, he is not telling us to resign passively to our fate. When you believe in the sutra and practice it, you will realize that your presence in this world is a presence in the eternal world of the Buddha, continuing to exist in the past, present, and future. When you accept your problems through this way of faith and practice, you will realize the salvation of the Lotus Sutra.

Rev. Nissho Kanno, Bishop of Ikegami Honmonji Temple, Tokyo

STUDY TOUR 2017 IN NEPAL

By Rev. Taitoku Miura, Nichiren Shu Missionary Department. Translated by Rev. Sensho Komukai.

In February, the 13th Nichiren Shu Study Tour was held in Nepal. Five participants from Japan joined the tour, ranging in age from 20 to 28. In previous years, the study tour has been held in Laos, India, Sri Lanka, Cambodia, Thailand and Nepal. Its overall goal is to find and train people who can take the lead in supporting Nichiren Shu international propagation and exchange activities through a movement of international cooperation.

The main purpose for this year's tour was to support reconstruction activities for the Nepal earthquake that struck on April 25, 2015. Our destination was the remote Patole Village, close to the epicenter of the earthquake, where we could learn how reconstruction was progressing and help with continuing recovery work.

The day after we arrived, we went to Khokana Village, a suburb of

Kathmandu. There we found numerous collapsed buildings and a village where many people were still living in temporary housing. Some new buildings made of reinforced concrete were under construction. We were relieved to find the elementary school that we visited last year was newly rebuilt.

On the third day, we began our journey to Patole Village. It took five hours on an unpaved mountain road. When we visited there last year, most of the houses were destroyed. This time we found the debris cleared, and many houses newly built. Those were designed to withstand another earthquake.

The next day, we held a memorial service in a temple in the village. We placed one thousand folded paper cranes on the altar as we prayed for the victims of the earthquake and quick recovery for the survivors. We then went to the elementary school to help build a new

schoolhouse. Our main work was to remove an iron plate and the temporary structure that had been holding up the ceiling while the concrete for the walls was setting. With helmets and gloves for protection, we carefully removed more than 100 supports, each about 10 feet in length. It took two days to complete the work.

Afterwards, we visited the children of the elementary school to play soccer, make *origami*, folded paper figures, throw a frisbee around and fly a kite. At a dinner party, village people performed a welcoming dance with music and invited us to enjoy dancing with them. We cooked curry and rice for them. After tasting the popular food from Japan, they said, "mitho cha" (which means very tasty) and smiled.

Although there was a language barrier, we tried to interact actively, because we wanted to communicate



well with the village people. Through the study tour, we seemed to get great motivation for growth. Some of us tried to establish communication nonverbally while others made sincere efforts to learn the native language. Spending a week in a place so far removed from our everyday lives in Japan in a country with such different language and culture has benefited all of us. We will always remember this most precious time and experience in Nepal.

—This article was previously published in *Shuho Magazine*.



WHY I BECAME A SHAMI

By Shami Kanmyo Sidin Ong

For 11 years, I served as a youth leader of Nichiren Shoshu Indonesia. In 2002, I was introduced to the teachings of Nichiren Shonin through Alexandar Ang from Penang, Malaysia. Nichiren Shonin's teachings provided answers to every question in my heart about the Lotus Sutra, so I began following Nichiren Shu.

In early 2003, my friends and I established the Myohosan Rengeji Temple of Jakarta, Indonesia. It was dedicated on April 28, 2003. From that moment, the desire appeared in

my heart to become a Nichiren Shu priest so I could further explore and propagate the teachings of the Lotus Sutra in Indonesia.

Over time, the desire to become a priest became stronger, and I remembered my promise to Shakyamuni Buddha. My family, especially my wife and my children, were very supportive about my wish, and I was very grateful for their encouragement.

In the beginning of 2015, I expressed my desire to become a priest to Rev. Kangyo Noda, whom I have known for almost eight years. An incredible excitement followed later when Rev.

Noda accepted me as his disciple. My Tokudo Ceremony was held on July 8, 2016 at Rev. Noda's Temple, Honkoji, in Wakayama Prefecture Japan.

I continued my training and participated in the Docho Ceremony at Seichoji Temple in Chiba Prefecture on April 4, 2017.

The journey is still very long, and of course I have many things to learn, including the Japanese language. May Shakyamuni Buddha and All the Buddhas always guide me along this journey. Once again, thank you to my master, Rev. Kangyo Noda, for his guidance. Gassho.



Shami Kanmyo with his supportive family.

EPISTLES OF NICHIREN

The Reality of All Things Analyzed into Ten Nyoze

Bishop Senchu Murano, Head Priest, Myochoji Temple, Kamakura

EDITOR'S NOTE: This article is the second in a series of translations and explanations of the Lotus Sutra and Nichiren's writings made by Bishop Senchu Murano. It has been published before in Nichiren Shu News, but we are printing it again now for our newer readers.

The reality of all things, *Shoho Jisso*, is analyzed into ten suchnesses, or *nyoze*, in Chapter 2 of the Lotus Sutra. Tendai interpreted "all things," *shoho* or *sarvadharmas* in Sanskrit, as "living beings" when he explained the ten *nyoze* as follows:

- Nyoze-so:** All living beings are different from each other in appearance such as they are.
- Nyoze-sho:** All living beings are different from each other in nature such as they are.
- Nyoze-tai:** All living beings are different from each other in physique (entity) such as they are.
- Nyoze-riki:** All living beings are different from each other in power such as they are.

- Nyoze-sa:** All living beings are different from each other in action such as they are.
- Nyoze-in:** The present conditions of various living beings are the cause of their variety of future conditions as they are.
- Nyoze-en:** The present environments of various living beings are the cause of their variety of future environments as they are.
- Nyoze-ka:** All living beings are different from each other in their present conditions such as they are because

- their present conditions are the effects of past activities, which were different from each other.
- Nyoze-ho:** All living beings are different from each other in their rewards and retributions such as they are because their past activities in their past environments were different from each other.
- Nyoze-hommatsu-kukyo-to:** Notwithstanding all these differences, all living beings who are investigated here in regard to the first *nyoze* through the ninth and last *nyoze*, are equal to each other such as they are after all.

TEMPLE EVENTS

Singapore Daimokuji Temple Rev. Keiji Oshima

Eye-Opening Ceremony

An eye-opening ceremony for the new statue of Shakyamuni Buddha was held on April 16, 2017 at the Singapore Daimokuji Temple. The ceremony was conducted with the assistance of Revs. Yuon Ito, Ervinna Myofu and Kenin Ito.

The new statue was placed before the Mandala and behind the statue of Nichiren Shonin which we enshrined last year.



San Jose Myokakuji Betsuin Rev. Ryusho Matsuda

Memorial Services

Memorial services are often observed as merely a custom or an obligation.

Several times, families have requested that I shorten a service, because they did not understand what the sutra said, or because they had some other social event to attend afterwards. On hearing this, I would say "Yes, yes." But actually I would not shorten the service. As always, it would be longer than a regular service so the family could understand the significance of the memorial service.

Memorial services are held for the following reasons:

To remember and express our gratitude to the Buddha and the gift we have of life with the Odaimoku.

To gather members of the family, relatives and friends in memory of the deceased and to express gratitude and share memories of him or her.

To realize the importance of this world and of faith in Buddha every day of our lives. This is because human beings are apt to forget that we are mortal and that it is important to have a strong faith in this busy life.

Therefore, memorial services are not only for the sake of those who have departed but also for those who remain in this world. Having a nice memorial service by expressing our gratitude and thanks to the Buddha as well as to our ancestors will transfer the merits to our ancestors and all sentient beings, and we will come closer to Enlightenment.

Nichiren Mission of Hawaii Rev. Chishin Hirai

Beginners' Shibori Sessions

Our temple and its Fujinkai, women's association, are teaming with the well-known Asian & Pacific Craft Center, Temari, to bring beginners' workshops on how to create patterns on cloth with string and dye using Japanese *shibori* techniques and blue indigo dye. We are blessed to have a real professional, Ann Asakura of Temari, to conduct the workshops.

Nichiren Shonin mentions indigo dye in his letter, "Oto Gozen Goshō-soku," Letter to Lady Oto. He said that acquiring faith is like dyeing cloth with indigo. By repeatedly dyeing the cloth, the fabric develops a blueness far deeper than the original indigo plant. Likewise, if we repeatedly practice our faith, we

will deepen our faith far beyond what we started with and be filled with more vitality and blessings.

Nichiren Buddhist Kannon Temple, Las Vegas Rev. Shokai Kanai

Kanai Wedding in Fukuoka

The Nichiren Buddhist Kannon Temple in Las Vegas would like to announce the marriage of Rev. Douglas Shoda Kanai to Ayano Hara from Fukuoka City, Japan. The couple was married at Tokueiji Temple in Fukuoka on March 11, 2017. Presently, Ayano is waiting for her visa to live in the United States. After she arrives, we will hold a welcoming party for the couple at the temple.



Interview with Shami Shojin Garrido Diaz

By Sandra Seki

In early April, Rev. Shoryo Tarabini brought a group of four Nichiren Shu followers on a pilgrimage to Japan. Among them was Shami Shojin Garrido Diaz, age 38, who came from Spain. He attended the Docho Ceremony at Seichoji Temple on April 4, to begin the process of becoming a Nichiren Shu priest.

What made you want to become a Nichiren Shu priest?

I had been exposed to Nichiren Shu since I was a child. My mother was a devoted follower of Nichiren Shoshu, and I had been raised chanting the Odaimoku. When I was around seven, my mother had a dream which prophesied that I would become a Nichiren Shu priest. I have been studying the Lotus Sutra and chanting the Odaimoku ever since then. Three years ago, I started training under the guidance of Rev. Shoryo Tarabini of Renkoji Temple, in Italy. I decided to receive Docho at Seichoji Temple which would be my first step towards becoming a Nichiren Shu priest.

How do you feel after completing the Docho Ceremony?

Through the events of those two days, April 3 and 4, my faith in Nichiren Shu changed greatly. I entered with one spirit and came out with a totally different spirit! While studying the Lotus Sutra, there were many pieces of the puzzle that didn't seem to come together. Now after receiving Docho, a clearer picture has begun to form. My focus on materialistic things has diminished and a new perspective of life has begun, a more spiritual one.



Shami Shojin receiving his Docho certificate.

What was your impression of this pilgrimage?

It was wonderful, filled with new experiences, seeing and meeting important people and places affiliated with Nichiren Shu. I was very fortunate to visit Seichoji Temple in Chiba Prefecture, where our Founder chanted the Odaimoku for the first time. I paid homage to Nichiren Shonin's gravesite at Minobusan. I had seen photos of Minobusan and Kuonji Temple but actually visiting these sacred places was an enlightening experience for me which I will cherish forever.

I also met Bishop Nissho Kanno of Ikegami Honmonji Temple who was very happy to meet Nichiren Shu followers from Europe. He told me he wants to send cherry tree saplings from Minobusan to Cereseto. Finally, we visited Rissho University where we met the Chairman of the Board, Rev. Ryokou Koga, and Head of the Buddhism Department, Rev. Eichu Terao. We saw the campus where Buddhism and Nichiren Shonin's teachings are being taught today.

What are your hopes for the future?

I would like to continue my studies of Nichiren Shonin's teachings and eventually spread the Dharma



Under the cherry blossoms at Jyokyoji Temple.

throughout the Hispanic world. I am living in Malaga, at the southern tip of Spain and receive guidance from Rev. Tarabini, but the distance is far. It may take years but in the future, I would like to attend the Shingyodojo at Minobusan and become a Nichiren Shu priest.

I would like to thank everyone for their kindness and hospitality. It made my experience so worthwhile. Gassho.

Calendar for June 2017–July 2017

JUNE 1 Changing of Our Founder's Robes, Founder's Hall, Minobusan

JUNE 15-17 Minobusan Kaibyaku-e, Commemoration Day of Nichiren Shonin Entering Minobusan (May 15, 1274)

JUNE 25 Nitcho Shonin Memorial Day

JULY 13-15 Obon (Western Calendar)

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Nichiren Shu News was founded by the Nichiren Shu Overseas Propagation Promotion Association (NOPPA), Bungyo Yoshida, *President*.

Funding is provided by NOPPA and the Head Office of Nichiren Shu, Junko Kobayashi, *Chief Administrator*.

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