

Nichiren Shu News

Published by the Head Office of Nichiren Shu Buddhism & NOPPA

No. 231

April 1, 2019

1

Members of Nichiren Shu Sri Lanka Take Their Wedding Vows

Text and Photographs by Jan Louy

On December 14, 2018, over 200 guests gathered at the beautiful Sea Gate Hotel in Kalutara, Sri Lanka to celebrate the marriage of Kalpani Apsara and Sanujaya Gamage. Many guests traveled from different parts of the world to attend the seaside celebration. The ceremony was the first Nichiren Shu wedding to be celebrated in Sri Lanka.

Kalpani and Sanu originally met in 2014 while attending the deep-rooted Perahera ceremony at the local temple. Nothing in Sri Lanka is more resplendent than this religious and social celebration that is held once a year. Kalpani was in attendance with her father, Gemunu Ranasooru, who is Chairman of the Nichiren Shu Buddhist Association of Sri Lanka (in Colombo). On that day, she met a young man named Sanujaya Gamage. Sanu practiced Theravada Buddhism. They spoke briefly, but she initially did not respond. Ironically, their paths would cross again. Kalpani worked in a hospital, and Sanu worked at an electronics company. Not living far from each other, they both met at the same bus stop each morning to go to work. The relationship blossomed and deepened from there.

Nichiren Shu Buddhism is central to Kalpani's life. She invited Sanu to join her family and other Nichiren Shu members for chanting on Sundays. Accepting her



San San Kudo: Traditional Japanese wedding ceremony's ritual exchange of sake cups.

invitation, he began chanting with her and learning more about Nichiren Shu. Sanu soon respected the way she chanted and eventually became very active in charity work and various activities of the temple. His love for Kalpani and the temple was evident when he made the decision to convert to Nichiren Shu Buddhism. Today, he is director of the youth members.

After two years of a deepening relationship, not only personally but also spiritually, the young couple arranged a meeting to introduce their parents. It was that special day in 2016 that Sanu asked for Kalpani's hand in marriage.

It had always been the dream of Kalpani to have a Nichiren Shu wedding. Since the age of 17, she has treasured several photos of her eventual dream-wedding day. These long-cherished photos became a reality when both a Nichiren Shu ceremony and a traditional Sri Lankan wedding were performed.

Many Nichiren Shu priests were invited to the celebration. Sri Lanka has no resident priest and relies on the rotation of many priests throughout Southeast

Asia to conduct services. The first of the two separate ceremonies conducted was the Nichiren Shu Buddhist ceremony. A beautifully decorated Buddhist altar was constructed outdoors, with the Buddha shining radiantly and a small Gohonzon. The traditional Buddhist wedding ceremony was officiated by Rev. Ervinna Myoufu with Revs. Keiji Oshima, Kangyo Noda, Kenin Ito, and Myokei Caine-Barrett sub-officiating. Recitation of the *Jiga-ge* and the announcement to the Buddha were followed by the bestowal of *juzu* beads. The words of the marriage vow to the Buddha, *Chikai no Kotoba*, were said, and the traditional exchange of sake cups or *San San Kudo*, followed. The ceremony concluded with a prayer, the Four Vows and chanting the *Odaimoku*.

After a brief reception, the traditional Sri Lankan Sinhala-Buddhist wedding ceremony began. Both Sanu and Kalpani proceeded to the *Poruwa*, a beautifully decorated wooden platform representing the house and new life that the couple will share. They were escorted to the

sound of the conch shell, many Kandyan dancers and drummers, accompanied by their family members. Many Nichiren Shu followers enjoyed observing the unique Sri Lankan wedding ceremony, which has been handed down from generation to generation.

After both ceremonies concluded, the wedding party and guests enjoyed a beautiful luncheon reception with music and dancing.

Following the wedding festivities, on Sunday, December 16, the Nichiren Shu Buddhist Association of Sri Lanka celebrated its five-year anniversary. All of the wedding guests from other Nichiren Shu temples in Southeast Asia remained to celebrate the special milestone. Sri Lanka's Nichiren Shu Buddhist community has rapidly grown in its short history and now proudly has over 140 members who are actively practicing. A special ceremonial banana tree decorated with coconut leaves was constructed to hold small oil lamps. The individual lamps were lit in special recognition of each person that assisted in bringing Nichiren Shu Buddhism to Sri Lanka. It also held lamps to acknowledge each temple chairman throughout Southeast Asia. The special ceremony was officiated by Rev. Ervinna Myoufu. An anniversary cake was cut, and all of the attendees enjoyed refreshments.



Reading their Nichiren Shu vows and the bestowing of the *juzu* beads.



Tying the little fingers of the newlyweds together in the traditional Sri Lankan ceremony.



The newlyweds with Revs. Kenin Ito, Myokei Caine-Barrett, Kangyo Noda, Keiji Oshima, and Ervinna Myoufu.



Rev. Noda lighting the first of the oil lamps on the ceremonial banana tree.



Nichiren Shu members from Southeast Asia came to celebrate this special wedding.

GREAT FIGURES WHO HAD FAITH IN NICHIREN SHU (5)

THE STORY OF NIZO AND THE ORIGIN OF THE BODAITEI STAIRS

By Rev. Sensho Komukai

Sado Island, in Northwestern Japan, is where Nichiren Shonin was exiled from 1271 until 1274. There are many local tales of how the uneducated islanders came to him, to learn the great teachings of the Lotus Sutra from our Founder, Nichiren Shonin, and many of the people from Sado Island became his ardent followers. There was a fisherman called Nizo whose mother was one of these devoted followers. She wished to visit Mt. Minobu. Finally, Nizo took her with him, across the sea and mountains, all

the way to Mt. Minobu. His old mother was very glad, and Nizo felt happy.

Later, she died peacefully on Sado Island. Nizo, however, never forgot her words while they were in Minobu. Finding the upward slopes toward the temple and our Founder's tomb unexpectedly steep, she said, "With a flight of stone steps, it would be of great help to anyone paying a visit to the temple." Nizo made up his mind to realize his mother's wish. Several years later, he saved an ample sum of money through his hard work as a fisherman. He left for Mt. Minobu to make a donation

to build the stone steps. He stayed at the town of Kajikazawa, a river landing along the route, before arriving at Mt. Minobu. The town had changed greatly from the time when Nizo had first visited with his mother. There was no crowd in the streets. The whole town looked gloomy without much activity. When asked the reason, the landlord of an inn answered, "There is a severe famine over the whole area. Many are found having starved to death each day. No one can even afford to clear the dead bodies."

Hearing about the miserable situation, Nizo said to himself, "The people of this town have been suffering from a famine. If I ignore this situation, no one will survive. Money can be saved up if I work hard again, but starvation demands a speedy solution. Helping the starving people out of hunger must be given priority over the construction of stone steps. The Lotus Sutra is the teaching to save people from suffering. Nichiren Shonin will agree with me." He gave all the money he had to the townspeople of Kajikazawa and turned back to Sado Island.

Nizo worked harder than ever, going fishing from early morning and returning home late at night. One day, while out in his boat, he caught the sight of a luminous object at the top of a mountain. He found an outcropping of gold. This was the first discovery of a gold mine on Sado Island. Later, the island became famous throughout Japan for its gold mines.

As he was granted an enormous amount as a reward from the lord of the manor, Nizo immediately headed for Mt. Minobu. Along the way, he arrived in the town of Kajikazawa and stayed at



Historic Mines: Nizo's discovery of gold on Sado Island would help fund the Bodaitei Stairs.

the same inn as before. The innkeeper stared him in the face asking, "Excuse my abrupt question, but aren't you the person who gave all your money to help us from starvation?" Nizo was not seeking gratitude in return for his earlier generosity, but he could not hide the truth. He nodded in assent with a smile. Immediately, the innkeeper rushed out screaming with joy, "Here comes the living Buddha for us! This is the man who saved the town of Kajikazawa from famine!" The townspeople gathered at the inn, one after another in tears, expressing their gratitude to him.

When they realized that the money Nizo had given them was to be used for building stone steps on Mt. Minobu, they offered their volunteer labor to construct the steps. When the construction work began, the people of Kajikazawa came together at Mt. Minobu to work to build the stone steps. Other visitors who saw the construction work in progress, joined them or contributed money to help the construction. The stairs were completed ahead of schedule in 1632.

The Bodaitei Stairs, or Stairs to Enlightenment, start from the Sanmon (main gate) and have 287 steep steps leading towards the main hall of Kuonji Temple.

REVEREND KANNO PREACHES (56)

"I hope all the people, clergy as well as laity, ignore the (momentary) mundane and plant the seedling of merit for aeons to come."

—Nichiren Shonin,
Shugo Kokka-ron (Thesis on
Protecting the Nation)



Seedling of Merit

"I ask all the people living in the world, both lay people and priests who are practicing to seek enlightenment, take a rest from mundane matters and listen to me, no, not to me, but listen to and turn your attention to the teachings of the Buddha, who has prophesied the present state of affairs, and what is taught in the Lotus Sutra. By doing so, I hope that all people will plant the seed of Buddhahood in themselves to attain the great peace of mind not only in this world but the next."

More than 700 years ago, Nichiren Shonin spoke these words to a group of young samurai warriors in Kamakura, and they still have meaning in our time. I wish to offer these words of our Founder to the people all over the world involved in strife, to the people of our country who have become too assertive, forgetting the value of coexistence, to the Japanese government calling for enforcement of armaments more loudly than ever these days, and to all the organizations of the world.

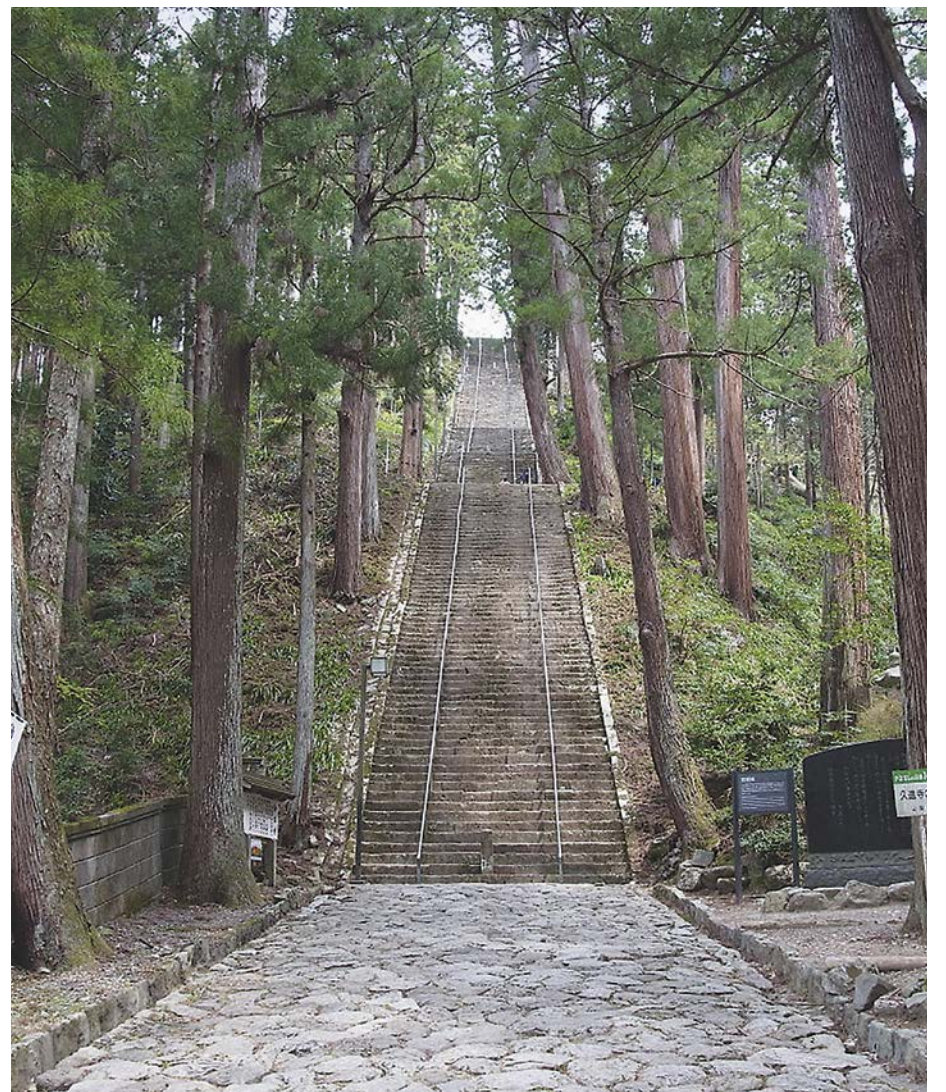
Two thousand five hundred years ago, Shakyamuni Buddha proclaimed, "The people of all four castes are equal," meaning that every person is equal, and is equally eligible for happiness. Nichiren Shonin advocated, "Establish righteousness and bring peace to the country to realize happiness for all people."

Interpreting this advocacy, Kenji Miyazawa (1895-1933), the poet and renowned author, and a devout believer of the teachings of Nichiren Shonin said, "Happiness of individuals can be achieved only when the whole world becomes happy."

Learning from these lessons, I would like to say: Slow down your walking pace, and synchronize your state of mind with the movement of the cosmos. Then you will be enveloped in the Buddha's light of compassion and will be able to listen to the Buddha's voice.

April is a time of new beginnings. Before you start, I suggest that you sit down and breathe deeply. Calm your mind, and give yourself time to reflect. Inquire deeply into your life, and ponder the teachings of the Buddha.

Honorable Rev. Nissho Kanno, Archbishop of Nichiren Shu,
Chief Abbot of Ikegami Honmonji Temple, Tokyo



The Bodaitei Stairs, or Stairs to Enlightenment, have 287 steps leading up to the main hall of Kuonji Temple

RISSHO ANKOKU-RON

Treatise on Spreading Peace Throughout the Country by Establishing the True Dharma

By Rev. Kanshu Naito

Earthquakes, drought, famine, and epidemics occurred frequently from 1257 to 1260, and countless numbers of people were killed and injured by natural disasters. Masses of people died or suffered from hunger. It was a kind of living hell. There seemed to be no end to their torments.

Nichiren Shonin thought that the disasters occurred because the True Dharma had almost disappeared. The Lotus Sutra should have been spread, but this had not been done, so heaven and earth punished the people. He had a strong apprehension that there was no way to save them because of the political disorder at the time. Everyone was uneasy, anxious about why such tragic disasters were occurring one after another. In order to save the suffering people, Nichiren Shonin had to answer their questions as a practitioner of the reality-oriented Lotus Sutra.

Nichiren Shonin went to the library at Jissoji Temple in Iwamoto and pored over the Buddhist scriptures. He wanted to know what was written about historical facts, causes of natural disasters, and theoretical reviews of social disorders in order to find the best countermeasures



Nichiren Shonin presenting the *Rissho Ankoku-ron* to Regent Tokiyori Hojo.

COURTESY OF MINOBUSAN KUNUJI TEMPLE

including the Sun Goddess Amaterasu and the Great Bodhisattva Hachiman, had lost their power to protect Japan. The deities returned to the heavens and no longer paid attention to the land. Taking advantage of these circumstances, demons invaded Japan causing the misfortunes.

Nichiren Shonin continued to discuss the present social situation and insisted that the world was filled with evil teachings. He cited the *Golden Splendor Sutra*, the *Sutra of Great Assembly*, the *Sutra of the Benevolent King*, and the *Medicine-Master Sutra* as proof. He asserted that it was Honen, the teacher of Pure Land Buddhism, who was the slanderer of the True Dharma. He cited Honen's *Collection of Passages on the Nembutsu* to show that the evil teaching was the exclusive Nembutsu practice (chanting the name of Amitabha Buddha) of Honen's Pure Land Buddhism. Because the exclusive Nembutsu practice had spread all over Japan, the power of the Lotus Sutra, the True Dharma, was lost. Therefore, the buddhas and protective deities could no longer protect Japan.

Nichiren Shonin offered definite opinions that the evil teaching must be prohibited to escape from the present natural disasters. The best way to do this was to stop almsgivings to the false Buddhist monks. "If you do not abandon the evil teaching and put faith in the True Dharma, there will be more catastrophic natural calamities," he warned.

He also predicted that there would surely be two more disasters mentioned in the four sutras he had cited: foreign invasions and civil wars. He strongly advised, "You should promptly discard your false faith and take up the true and sole teaching of the Lotus Sutra at once. Then this world of the unenlightened will all become the Buddha-land, and our bodies will be safe and hearts tranquil. Believe these words and revere them!" The traveler, representing Tokiyori Hojo, finally acknowledged what Nichiren Shonin said.

against the frequent natural disasters. He carefully read through the most important of the more than five thousand volumes in the library. He read the essence of them with a critical mind and also the transcriptions he had made of essential passages from the sutras he had studied at Mt. Hiei when he was a youth. With these resources, he began to write his original treatise, the *Rissho Ankoku-ron* (*Treatise on Spreading Peace Throughout the Country by Establishing the True Dharma*).

The *Rissho Ankoku-ron* was written in a flowing and elegant style using couplets called "four-six *Pianwen*" (literally, "parallel writing"). It was revised repeatedly in 1260.

The treatise was composed in the form of a dialogue between a Buddhist master and a traveler representing the government. Actually, the Buddhist master is Nichiren Shonin, and the traveler is meant to be Tokiyori Hojo,

the retired regent who still controlled the Kamakura shogunate.

The treatise begins with sorrowful and tragic scenes:

"In recent years, strange phenomena appear in the sky, natural calamities on earth, famines, and epidemics have occurred and spread over all the land of Japan. Oxen and horses lie dead at crossroads, and the streets are filled with skeletons. The majority of the population have perished, and everyone has been touched by grief."

Nichiren Shonin saw people rendered homeless and mourning the loss of family and relatives. People faced famines, too hungry to move and waiting for nothing but death. He wondered what they had done that they should have to die in such a merciless way? He concluded that the calamities had increased, because people had been misled by, and taken refuge in, an evil teaching, contrary to the True Dharma. As such, every Japanese deity,



Steps to the library where Buddhist scrolls are enshrined at Jissoji Temple in Shizuoka Prefecture.

Buddhism Q&A (13)

By Rev. Ryuei McCormick

Why Do We Chant the Hoben-pon and Jiga-ge?

In *Hokke Daimoku-sho*, Nichiren Shonin called reciting the entire sutra the "expanded practice," reciting Chapters 2 and 16 the "abbreviated" practice, and chanting the Odaimoku the "essential practice." In *Gassui Goshō*, he particularly recommended reciting Chapters 2 and 16 of the Lotus Sutra because, while every chapter is meritorious, the other chapters are the branches and leaves of those two. It is evident that, while the Odaimoku is our essential practice, reciting Chapters 2 and 16 was also emphasized by Nichiren Shonin. Let's look at what makes these two chapters particularly significant.



The passage from Chapter 2, "Skillful Means" (*Hoben-pon*), that is recited starts from the beginning of the chapter and ends with three repetitions of the so-called "ten suchnesses." In this part of the sutra, Shakyamuni Buddha begins to speak. This passage is the "brief opening of the three vehicles to reveal the One Vehicle," wherein he tells Shariputra that the wisdom of the Buddha goes beyond anything his disciples have heard or

understood. This is a preamble to the rest of Chapter 2, wherein the Buddha reveals that all his teachings are the One Vehicle leading to buddhahood. All who follow the three vehicles, or teachings, will be able to attain buddhahood.

The verse half of Chapter 16, "The Duration of the Life of the Tathagata" is called the "Jiga-ge" in Japanese. It is a verse summary of the first half of the chapter. In it, the Buddha speaks of how he attained buddhahood in the remotest (taken to mean "timeless" or "eternal") past and remains imperceptibly present, helping people attain Buddhahood. This means that the true nature of the Buddha's awakened life is ungraspable, unconditioned, timeless, placeless, and active in all times and places. The true nature of Shakyamuni Buddha's awakened life is also our own true nature. This buddha-nature speaks to us. It is our capacity for buddhahood, and it is everything about our life that draws

us to buddhahood. As the *Nirvana Sutra* describes, it is only the unconditioned buddha-nature that is pure, blissful, eternal, and our true selfless self. In the *Jiga-ge*, the Eternal Shakyamuni Buddha is the voice of the true nature of all phenomena.

Chapters 2 and 16 are also integral for understanding the teaching of the three thousand realms in a single-thought moment (*ichinen-sanzen*), a key doctrine of Tiantai Buddhism that Nichiren Shonin highlighted in his own teachings. However, Nichiren Shonin taught that the true meaning of this doctrine was hidden in the depth of Chapter 16, and its actualization occurred in the chanting of the Odaimoku.

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.

TEMPLE EVENTS

Las Vegas Kannonji Temple

Rev. Shoda Kanai

Omamori (Amulets)

The monthly *omamori* (amulet) that we have is called *gushoreijin*, or “Born Together and Same Name.” When a person is born, two guardian spirits are also born at the same time. One is called ‘the date of your birth,’ and the other is ‘your given name.’ It is said in the Buddhist scriptures, that these spirits stay just above your shoulders. They are like a charm for protection if you honor them.

If you would like to subscribe, please contact the temple for more information. Prayers will be refreshed monthly with a new amulet. I will send you the requested amulets each month. Please contact the temple if you are interested or have any questions.

Omamori issued
by the Las Vegas
Kannonji Temple



Nichiren Mission of Hawaii

Rev. Shokai Kanai

Historical Mission and Ambition

It has been close to two months since I was assigned as the head minister of the Nichiren Mission of Hawaii last December. I felt a kind of culture shock, especially because of the difference in the weather and the workload as head minister. Las Vegas Kannonji Temple is still new compared to this Mission, which has a history of over 110 years!

The term ‘Mission’ sounds strange in the U.S. mainland, but almost all the Japanese temples in Hawaii are called Missions. The first Nichiren Shu Buddhist Temple was established in Kapapala on the Big Island of Hawaii in 1902 for Japanese immigrants who had come to Hawaii as sugar cane laborers. Later, the mission moved to Honolulu, Oahu Island.

During the 110-year history of the mission, there were only two Nichiren Shu ministers who were born in Hawaii and propagated here. However, each of those ministers died at a young age and had no successors.

My goal at this temple is to educate and raise Dharma teachers, lay-leaders, substitutes for Nichiren Shu priests, part-time and full-time ministers.



These Dharma teachers should be born in America, especially those born and raised in Hawaii. What I mean by part-time ministers are people who have steady jobs, so that they do not have to depend on pay from a temple or mission. Good candidates for this position are people who are retired or near retirement.

When I talk about a full-time minister, it may take five or six years and cost a lot of money for his or her education and travel expenses to Japan for repeated trips to Japan to complete *Shingyo Dojo*, to be recognized as a Nichiren Shu priest.

To fulfill our destiny, since we are born into this world, ambition and action are important. So let us strive on to fulfill our ambitions and take action immediately!

Honolulu Myohoji Mission

Rev. Josho Yamamura

Schedule Change in Services

From this month, the general Sunday services will be held twice a month. One service will feature a Buddhist *kito* blessing and the other will be a service of reverence for our ancestors. These will also include some study and Dharma messages. On the other Sundays, practices will be held from 10:00 a.m. including sutra-chanting and temple cleaning on the last Sunday of each month.

In addition to these, we will have a service featuring prayers to the guardian deity Kishimojin on the 18th of every month. Kishimojin is the goddess that protects believers of the Lotus Sutra and those who chant the Odaimoku. She is mentioned in Chapter 26 of the Lotus Sutra, where she pledges to Shakyamuni Buddha that she will protect all those who believe in the Lotus Sutra. On our altar, there are two statues of Kishimojin.

From now on, we will have a special day of prayers to the goddess so that she will protect our temple and Hawaii.



Homestay in Southeast Asia

By Shami Yotatsu Chiamulera

My trip began on October 30, a journey of more than 30 hours, leaving Brazil for Southeast Asia, specifically for Malaysia and Singapore.

On November 2, I visited the Klang Temple in Malaysia, where I was able to practice with the members and hear an interesting explanation about the five Buddhist precepts or training rules for laypeople (not to kill, steal, engage in sexual misconduct, lie, or consume intoxicants).



Visiting the Klang Temple in Malaysia gave me a new perspective on the five Buddhist precepts.



Visiting Daimokuji Temple in Singapore.

From November 3–8, I had the honor and privilege of being in Singapore, where the hospitable and friendly members of the Daimokuji Temple kindly welcomed me. On November 4, I attended a service celebrating the 14th anniversary of the foundation of the temple. On November 6, I had the opportunity to tell members a little about my experience as a Shami and about the history and culture of Brazil. Together with the members, I visited the city and the Buddha Tooth Relic Temple and Museum, a beautiful and important place.

On November 8, I went to Penang, Malaysia, where I was welcomed by the members of the Ichinenji Temple. I stayed

there until November 14. I finally began to understand why everyone had told us that Penang is the “food paradise.” I was able to experience the hospitality and kindness of the temple members and the meaning of the word “*semangat*,” which is “spirit.” On November 11, I attended an Oeshiki ceremony, in which many members were present. That day, we also had a little Portuguese class, which was funny and interesting.

During all these days, both in Malaysia and Singapore, I understood the reasons why our school of Buddhism is growing with so much strength and vitality in Southeast Asia. I was able to feel the sincerity and grandeur of the members’ faith and how devoted they are, united with the spirit of “many bodies with the same thought” and “*gotong-royong*,” Malay for “mutual cooperation,” for the



Visiting Ichinenji Temple in Penang, Malaysia.

prosperity of the temple. It was as if the temple were an extension of one’s own house and the Sangha an extension of one’s own family. This kind-hearted family adopted me as a son for a few days. As a good son, I hope to repay this, transmitting all the affection I received to the members in Brazil, South America, and other Latin speaking regions.

I would like to write the names of all the members in Malaysia and Singapore who received me so kindly, but I would certainly miss some of them, and that would not be fair. Even so, I want to thank them all from the bottom of my heart, with no exceptions. Every minute together was special, and I will never forget you.

I also want to thank my master, Rev. Yodo Okuda, who, together with the Shumuin, the Headquarters of Nichiren Shu, and the Homestay Program, allowed me to be part of this incredible experience. I also want to thank Rev. Yuon Ito of Penang Ichinenji Temple and Rev. Keiji Oshima of Singapore Daimokuji Temple for their help and guidance during those days. I will do my best to repay everything you have taught me!

Calendar for April 2019–May 2019

APR 8	Hanamatsuri (Buddha’s Birthday)
APR 15-18	Nakayama Hokekyoji Senbu-e (1,000 Recitations of the Lotus Sutra)
APR 27-29	Ikegami Honmonji Senbu-e (1,000 Recitations of the Lotus Sutra)
APR 28	767 Rikkyo Kaishu-e (767th Anniversary of the Founding of the Order)

MAY 12	759 Izu Honan-e (Ceremony commemorating the 759th Anniversary of the Izu Persecution)
MAY 19	Wesak Day in Southeast Asia (Buddha’s Birthday, Enlightenment, and Nirvana Observed)

Nichiren Shu News c/o The Head Office of Nichiren Shu, 1-32-15 Ikegami, Ota-ku, Tokyo 146-8544, Japan; Tel. +81-3-3751-7181, E-mail: editor-nichirensnunews@nichiren.or.jp
Nichiren Shu News was founded by the Nichiren Shu Overseas Propagation Promotion Association (NOPPA), Nichiyu Mochida, *President*.
 Funding is provided by NOPPA and the Head Office of Nichiren Shu, Hōsei Nakagawa, *Chief Administrator*.
Editorial Board Sandra Seki, *Editor*, Ryuei McCormick, *Assistant Editor*, Keiryu Shima, *Chief Advisor*, Hoyu Maruyama, Kanshu Naito, Shinkyō Warner, *Advisors*.
Art Director Alan Rowe