

Nichiren Shu News

Published by the Head Office of Nichiren Shu Buddhism & NOPPA

No. 235

December 1, 2019

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JODO-E AND OUR LITTLE BODHI TREE

By Rev. Ryuoh Faulconer

Prince Siddhartha, after years of practicing various austerities, sat beneath a Bodhi tree for 49 days. On December 8th, he attained Enlightenment and became the Buddha. We refer to that day as Jodo-e.

This special day is celebrated by many Buddhists around the world. In America, Jodo-e is not familiar to most people, but December is filled with many celebrations that Americans know, like Christmas and Hanukkah.

Back when I was a layperson, many years ago, I remember going to the temple in late November, where I met with the priest who would later become my master.

He was getting ready for Jodo-e, the Buddha's Enlightenment Day. He had found a bush which had died. He gave the bush a new purpose by putting it into a Christmas tree stand. The branches were bare, but they had a nice shape. It was about three or four feet tall and wide. He put a simple, white cloth around the base to cover the stand and then started tying heart-shaped leaves, which he had cut out from paper, onto the tree. It soon became our little Bodhi tree. Presents for the kids in the Sangha

were placed under the tree. The priest was competing with Christmas, also in December. The Americans would still celebrate Christmas, but the addition of Jodo-e adds more wonder to the holiday season and helps to spread Buddhism to new people.

I carried this tradition with me to New England when I became the minister here in 2007. I had a hard time finding

a bush, so I made a tree out of wire and paper mache, beneath it we placed a statue of the historical Buddha touching the earth. The Bodhi Tree had leaves made by the Sangha, both wishes and prayers were written upon them. Glitter was used to decorate the leaves, and they would sparkle in the candlelight.

About four years ago, we moved our temple, and most of our temple items

went into storage. The space we were using for temple activities was much smaller and didn't have enough space to set up decorations, so our services became less ornate than they had been in the past.

This year, we officially opened our temple in a wonderful new space on October 12. We decorated for the Oeshiki service, had a beautiful service along with a member taking vows and officially becoming part of our Sangha. Many people from the other offices and stores in our building came over and visited the temple space.

We are very excited about our new space, and we are already planning for decorating for December. We will put up lights in blue, red, yellow, and green—the colors of the four directions. And we will again make a Bodhi Tree with leaves made by our Sangha with wishes and prayers for the future. We will place the historical Buddha under our tree and have a service to commemorate this sacred day in Buddhism. If you find yourself in New England, please stop by and visit us. Our website is www.kosen-ji.org. Our Sangha wishes everyone a happy Jodo-e.



Enjoying Our New Space: We're all looking forward to the return of our little Bodhi Tree tradition.

EUROPEAN RETREAT AT RENKOJI TEMPLE: "PRACTICE OUR FAITH WITH JOY, DETERMINATION AND DEVOTION"

By Rev. Shoryo Tarabini

Every year, we have strived to hold an annual retreat to fully immerse ourselves in study and practice in order to deepen our faith in Nichiren Shu Buddhism. Following an Italian pilgrimage in July, we began preparing to host numerous other believers from Europe. Since so many people expressed their desire to come to this year's retreat, which lasted for three days from September 27-29, we decided to also hold the Oeshiki Ceremony two weeks earlier than usual so that more people could have the opportunity to attend. For more than a month, members came to the temple every week to clean and prepare the temple so we could welcome the priests and members of Nichiren Shu from all over the world to Renkoji Temple.

This year, we were fortunate to be able to have with us Rev. Kobun Sasaki from the International Missionary Department of Nichiren Shu in Tokyo and Rev. Yodo Okuda from Nagoya.

Rev. Okuda was previously an overseas missionary in Brazil. Many people came from all over Italy, Holland, Mexico, and Portugal this year. Each day saw an increase in the number of participants, with nearly 50 people participating by the last day. The retreat was conducted in English, Italian, Spanish, and Portuguese. Centered around the concluding Oeshiki Ceremony, the entire course was concentrated primarily on the life and teachings of Our Founder, Nichiren Daishonin. The theme of this year's retreat was to "practice our faith with joy, determination and devotion."

In his opening remarks, Rev. Sasaki began the retreat talking about the spirit of *Gassho* and deep respect for each other. After orientation, we began with a lecture by Rev. Okuda on the subject of *The Five Periods and Eight Teachings* (五時八教, *Goji Hakkyo*). In the afternoon, we held Taiko Practice, teaching everyone to beat the drum in the *Shinja Daiko* (Lay Believers' Drum) manner. The resulting rhythm and the

uniqueness of the *Shinja Daiko* soon had everyone chanting the *Odaimoku* with such joy and energy that no one wanted to stop. In fact, we chanted more than an hour beyond the originally allotted time. Since then, we have been beating the drum in the *Shinja Daiko* fashion at every service. Rev. Sasaki mentioned that it seemed as though we had all encountered something new, and the fresh spirit in the way we all chanted was truly invigorating.

Other lectures presented during these three days were: *Nichiren Daishonin's Major Disciples and Lay Believers*, *The Classification of the Buddha's Teachings* (教相判釈, *Kyoso Hanjaku*), and *The Persecutions of Nichiren Daishonin*. Furthermore, a full-length film that was translated simultaneously regarding the *Life of Nichiren Daishonin* was aired over the two days. During the retreat, we also observed Walking Meditation, *Shakyo* (literally "sutra copying," but in this case it was copying a passage from the *Rissho Ankoku Ron*) and *Shodaigo* with the chanting of the *Hiki Daimoku*. The second evening concluded with eating vegetarian pizza around a large campfire and ending with the launch of numerous floating lanterns on which everyone had written their prayers, the *Odaimoku*, and their personal wishes.

During the retreat, Rev. Sasaki met with Cereseto's mayor, Mr. Enzo Lavagno, to discuss the future of Renkoji Temple and Nichiren Shu in Italy, including our temple's application

to become formally recognized as an official religious structure in the town and region of Piemonte. He also visited the site where a statue of Nichiren Daishonin will stand at the town's entrance in the planned Peace Park of Cereseto.

The final day, Sunday, began in the morning with the consecration of a new *Odaimoku* Tower meticulously carved in stone over a period of four months by Dario Bic, one of Renkoji Temple's members from the alpine Aosta region. The retreat concluded with the Oeshiki Ceremony, a commemorative photo and a celebratory luncheon. Everyone continued for days to write on their Facebook and Whatsapp messages about the joy they felt in practicing Nichiren Shu Buddhism and expressing their gratitude for the wonderful opportunity to have encountered such great teachers. They all expressed their desire to share what they had learned with those who had not been able to attend and to continue with the same spirit in their personal daily practice and faith.



Many followers from around Europe joined in this retreat in Cereseto.



Mayor Enzo Lavagno in the center with Revs. Sasaki and Tarabini to his left and right.

GREAT FIGURES WHO HAD FAITH IN NICHIREN SHU (8)

JOKAN MANDAI (1675-1712) WHO HELPED INCREASE THE ITINERANT MEDICINE TRADE

By Rev. Sensho Komukai

In the New Year of the Edo Period in the late 17th century, a feudal lord (daimyo) had a severe stomachache in the Edo-jo Castle. He looked very pale. The pain was so excruciating that he burst out in a cold sweat all over his body. Unable to stand seeing him writhing in pain, Lord Masatoshi Maeda, daimyo of Toyama Domain, took out a medicine from his basket and gave it to him. Immediately, the daimyo in pain recovered. Other feudal lords from various provinces stared in wonder at how effective the medicine was. They all wanted to know the name of the medicine and pleaded with Lord Maeda to provide some medicine for them in preparation for a sudden illness. The medicine Lord Maeda gave was called han-gon-tan, literally meaning “a pill to bring one back to life” (*han*, to revive; *gon*, a soul or a spirit; and *tan*, a pill). Most of the daimyo earnestly requested someone from Toyama to come to their domains to sell the medicine.

The han-gon-tan medicine originated in Okayama Domain of Bizen Province. Jokan Mandai, the doctor of the domain, after traveling around the whole country, stayed in the castle town of Toyama. Lord Masatoshi Maeda, who happened to hear of the effective medicine, entreated Jokan to produce more han-gon-tan medicine. The medicine had been a wonder drug originally made according to a secret inherited recipe and never allowed to be taken out of the feudal domain. Dr. Mandai, however, made the han-gon-tan medicine and presented it to Lord Maeda. He had great faith in the Lotus Sutra, especially in Chapter 23, “The Previous



Life of Medicine-King Bodhisattva,” which says, “This Sutra is a good medicine for disease, saving all living beings from all sufferings and from all the bonds of birth and death.” He even carried a statue of Medicine-King Bodhisattva with him at all

times. With the spirit of Medicine-King Bodhisattva, Dr. Mandai was determined to produce the medicine from his ardent desire to help those suffering from acute illness.



Lord Maeda was impressed with the doctor’s unselfish disposition, much like a bodhisattva. Considering it highly important to extend medical aid to all the poor and isolated villages where no one

had ever shared in the benefit of medical services, he adopted a method of selling medicine known as “use first, pay later” system, in which a peddler put different kinds of medicine in a chest and delivered it to a customer’s house. A charge for the used ones would be paid for on the

peddler’s next visit. Thus, the itinerant trade system of selling medicine started, and it became a common sight that itinerant medicine peddlers from Toyama traveled around the country.

Dr. Mandai produced the han-gon-tan medicine to save many lives, and he was held in high esteem as a contributor to the growth of the itinerant medicine trade in Toyama. When he passed away, the medicine peddlers in Toyama wished to receive some of his remains, and they entombed them in Myokokuji Temple in Toyama City. Memorial services for expressing gratitude toward him are

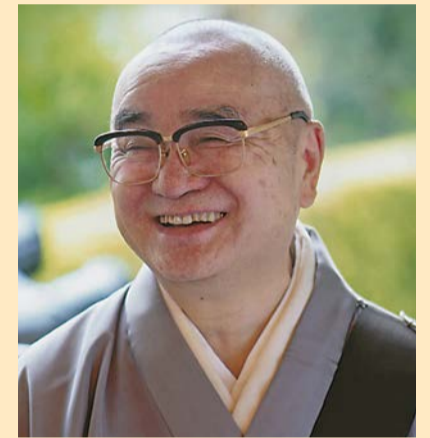


still held at Myokokuji Temple every year on June 5. Those involved in the pharmaceutical industry come to attend the service to praise the beneficial influence of Dr. Mandai.

REVEREND KANNO PREACHES (60)

“I will never break my vow to become the pillar of Japan, to become the eyes of Japan, and to become the great vessel for Japan.”

—Kaimoku-sho (Open Your Eyes)



The Mind of the Odaimoku

Nichiren Shonin proclaims the above “Three Great Vows” in his essay *Open Your Eyes* which he wrote on Sado Island, where he was exiled from 1271-1274. These vows symbolize our Founder’s determination, prayers, and pledges. “Pillar” means spiritual foundation, “eyes” mean religious and cultural perspective, and “great vessel” means the safety of the entire country. The ideas expressed using these symbols are adaptable not only for Japan but for the whole world and the whole universe. More importantly, they are symbols meant to appeal to ordinary people. In these vows, he tells us to keep a firm religious belief on which you can rely, the Odaimoku; to chant the Odaimoku on the basis of a lofty religious and cultural level; and to keep the Odaimoku, praying not only for our own happiness but also the happiness of others. Nichiren Shonin chanted the Odaimoku facing the rising sun at Mount Kiyosumi in Chiba Prefecture on April 28, 1253, proclaiming the founding of Nichiren Shu. He chanted the Odaimoku with these pledges and appeals in mind for us as ordinary people.

In 1260, when He was living in Kamakura, he presented a treatise, the *Rissho Ankoku-ron (Bringing Peace to the Country by Establishing Righteousness)*, to the government. In it, Nichiren Shonin states, “You should promptly change your faith and follow the Lotus Sutra, the good sutra.” *Bringing Peace to the Country by Establishing Righteousness* is not only the title of the treatise presented to the government. It is also a call to action. “Righteousness” means the “Odaimoku.” With these words, Nichiren Shonin is telling all of us to always keep the Odaimoku in mind as we engage in our respective fields. He calls for politicians to do their duties, government servants to do their work, managers to run their companies, parents to raise their children, people to relate to their families, and educators to teach children.... *all with the mind of the Odaimoku!* This is what Nichiren Shonin is telling us in the *Rissho Ankoku-ron*. In the treatise, he also says to us as priests, “If you bend, your shadow will bend,” meaning, “When you go in the wrong direction to find the right path, the world also goes the wrong way.”

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

Fourth Workshop in Brazil

By Rev. Yodo Okuda

The fourth Nichiren Shu Workshop in Brazil was held on August 24-25 in Sao Paulo, Brazil. Since we have no temple of our own in Sao Paulo, and the number of attendees this year was limited, we rented space from a Brazilian Jodo Shinshu priest whom we know.

This year’s theme for the workshop was, “Daily prayer practice and how to carry out *Shodaigyo* (chanting the Odaimoku in unison) correctly.” It has been five years since we lost our official temple in Brazil, so propagation has been done online. Fortunately, followers in big cities like Sao Paulo, Rio de Janeiro, and Recife, as well as other local areas, are enthusiastic and actively hold meetings and practice sessions. Whenever they assemble, they recite from the Lotus Sutra and practice *Shodaigyo*.

The sessions must be based on good manners and correct procedures, like the strict mannerisms of Budo (Japanese martial arts), or else the sessions are not worth the time and effort. I would like to focus on adhering to the procedures and correct manners during the prayer session.

Since there were only 15 participants this year, a lot of time was spent on questions and answers and talking with

the attendees. I wish I had done more research about the area where we rented the space, as we ended up spending extra time looking for places to eat.

However, I felt that each member’s responsibility has become stronger, and the connection between members is good. Though we were able to get help from a priest from a different order, we need to build a place of worship for Nichiren Shu in Brazil. Hopefully, next year, one of our shami will enter Shingyo Dojo and take his vows as a Nichiren Shu priest. We must all support him so that we can realize the dream of setting up a temple of our own in Brazil.

—Translated by Sandra Seki



Fourth Nichiren Shu workshop held in Sao Paulo, Brazil brings enthusiastic participants together.

Temples Associated with Nichiren Shonin in Kamakura: Ryukoji Temple

By Rev. Kanshu Naito

Ryukoji Temple is located near the site where the Tatsunokuchi Persecution took place in 1278. It was previously located at the foot of a low hill near Katase-Enoshima in Kamakura. Kumaomaru, later known as Nippo Shonin, who followed Nichiren Shonin to the Tatsunokuchi Execution Site, built a temple called Shikikawado at Tatsunokuchi in 1337, 55 years after Nichiren Shonin's death. It was later named Jakkozan Ryukoji Temple. The name "Jakkozan" came from Nichiren Shonin's "Letter to Shijo Kingo" (1271), in which he wrote, "Tatsunokuchi in Soshu Province is the very place where Nichiren gave up his life. The place is, therefore, comparable to the Buddha's land... Since all the events leading to the Tatsunokuchi Persecution took place for the sake of the Lotus Sutra, this place should be called the Pure Land of Tranquil Light."

The main gate of the temple was built in 1864. It is made of Japanese Zelkova and roofed with copper. Various Chinese historical events are carved on eight

elaborate sculptures decorating the gate. On the left side, behind the gate, there is a dungeon called Goreikutsu, meaning "spiritual cave," where Nichiren Shonin was temporarily imprisoned while at the persecution site. A bronze statue of Nichiren Shonin is enshrined inside. In the center of the magnificent main hall, which was built in 1832, stands a statue of Nichiren Shonin, carved by Nippo Shonin himself.

Nippo Shonin also carved the statue of Nichiren Shonin that is now enshrined at Ikegami Honmonji Temple. Both statues are said to show the living image of Nichiren Shonin. The stone called "Shikikawaishi" (a stone covered with leather), which Nichiren Shonin was forced to sit on during the Tatsunokuchi Persecution, is placed inside the temple. In front of the building which enshrines the stone, there is a big hanging frame that says "Shikikawado," meaning "Leather Mat Temple." A five-story pagoda built in 1910, made of Japanese Zelkova with a copper roof, rises upward to the sky on the right side of the hill behind the main building. This is the only formal style wooden pagoda in

Kanagawa Prefecture. A big white stupa for some of the Buddha's genuine ashes was built in 1970 to commemorate the 700th anniversary of the Tatsunokuchi Persecution stands to the left of the same hill. Some people from the Sakya tribe of India come to maintain it once every few years. It has twelve plates with carvings depicting Nichiren Shonin's life on all four sides.

The solemn and grand memorial services called Tatsunokuchi Honan-e



(Persecution Memorial Service) are held September 11-13 each year. Mando (a festival in which lanterns are offered in penance to Nichiren Shonin) are dedicated by neighboring religious associations from evening to night on September 12, and many people gather to watch the Mando Parade. Men from the neighboring town pound steamed rice into cake on the morning of September 12 while chanting the Odaimoku and offering hand-made peony flower-shaped cakes (*botamochi*) covered with sweet black sesame seeds to Nichiren Shonin. This tradition goes back to the historical event when the Nun of Outlook Platform (Sajiki no Ama) offered *botamochi* to Nichiren Shonin on the way to Tatsunokuchi. Even today, the *botamochi* in small paper bags are thrown to visitors who come to pay homage at the temple after the services held at 6:00 p.m. on September 12 and at midnight on September 13. The *botamochi* are offered by Joeiji Temple, Kamakura. These are called '*botamochi* which did not sever the head,' and people eating the *botamochi* can be assured of safety throughout the year.

Buddhism Q&A (15)

By Rev. Ryuei McCormick

Are hardships necessarily the effect of "karma," or actions done in past lives?

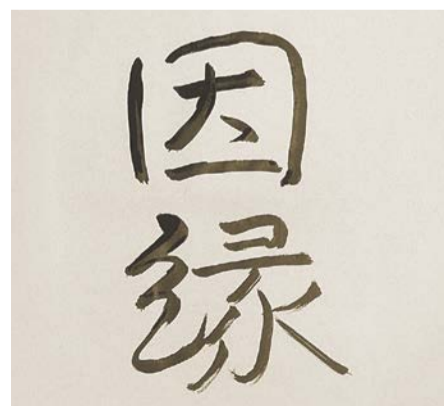
It may surprise people to learn that on several occasions Shakyamuni Buddha rejected the view that everything is determined by karma. In one such instance, the wanderer Sivaka asked the Buddha whether everything a person experiences is the result of what was done in the past. In his reply to Sivaka (*Connected Discourses 36.21*), the Buddha asserted a variety of other causes and conditions besides karma that contribute to what is experienced in the present. Pali commentaries on the Buddha's discourses later enumerated five types of causation: (1) inorganic change, (2) biological processes, (3) non-volitional mental processes, (4) volitional activity, and (5) the selfless activity of awakened beings. It is the fourth type of causation, volitional activity, that refers to the law of karma, whereby wholesome deeds lead to pleasant fruitions, and unwholesome deeds lead to unpleasant fruitions.

Nichiren Shonin also acknowledged that karma was not the only cause of misfortune and hardships. In a letter, *A Reply to Lay Priest Lord Ota (Ota Nyudo-dono Goherji)*, Nichiren Shonin wrote about the causes of illness to a sick lay follower. He cited the teaching of Great Master Tiantai in *The Great Calming and Contemplation* that there are six possible causes: (1) disharmony among the four elements (earth, air, fire, and water), (2) immoderate eating and drinking, (3) inconsistent practice of meditation, (4) problems caused by a demon, (5) actions of a heavenly demon, and (6) karmic retribution.

We might come up with different ways of classifying or naming the factors that bring about illness as opposed to medieval scholastic Buddhist categories (e.g., we might talk about stress or toxins in the

environment rather than demons for instance), but the point is that according to the teachings of Shakyamuni Buddha, Grand Master Tiantai, and Nichiren Shonin, phenomena have a variety of causes and conditions of which the outcome of past karma is just one contributor. The fruition of karma may be a decisive factor, and most relevant in many cases, but that is not something we should presume without the insight of a sage, an advanced bodhisattva, or a buddha.

While present circumstances have at least partially been determined by past actions, the important thing to understand as Buddhist practitioners is that, in each moment, we have the freedom to determine our present actions. We can choose to either reinforce old karmic patterns and bind themselves more closely to unwholesome patterns of cause and effect, or we can forge new, more liberating ways of being in the world and cultivate wholesome patterns of cause and effect that will ultimately unbind us from those old karmic patterns. Our practice of chanting the Odaimoku is aimed at helping us develop the wisdom to cultivate the latter more responsible, awakened, and liberating course.



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.

Health and Wellness Retreat

By Rev. Kanjin Cederman

Seattle Enkyoji Nichiren Buddhist Temple holds a bi-monthly retreat that focuses on Health and Wellness. Our last retreat, held October 4-6, was a great success.

First, I would like to explain why we hold these retreats and their importance. Many temples simply hold services and have an occasional retreat. Here at Enkyoji, we are focused on experiential Buddhism, so that practitioners can see tangible change and growth in their lives through practice and study. We do this by developing and deepening our practice within the context of our lives. Even for myself as a priest, I need to continue to feel and see the benefit of my practice to encourage and support others. If I don't see it, how can I transmit it to others? Another essential factor is to be able to have the proper physical and mental balance to allow what is hidden to be revealed through the regulation of our lives. This is something that many modern Buddhists do not consider in their practice, nor have they been taught about it. Buddhism, in many ways, has been treated as a philosophy found in a book. However, Buddhism was meant to reveal our true nature. That can only be attained if we are in the right state of being. As Master Tiantai teaches us in the *Smaller Treatise on Calming and Contemplation* (小止観), this begins with regulation of all aspects of our lives. Master Tiantai states as an example, "It is like playing a harp. First, you must tune the strings so that they are neither too tight nor too loose, and then you can begin playing wonderful music." This means that if we do not properly prepare for practice in body, mind and spirit, we will not be able to correctly attain the benefit. Our Founder, Nichiren Shonin, showed his understanding of this idea in a passage from the *Tokidono Goshō* that many of us gloss over due to its harsh tone. "Nichiren's followers must strive to attain Buddhahood by shortening sleeping

hours and by cutting the time for rest. If not, you will repent forever." Directly to the point! If we don't correctly understand this, we can learn the true meaning by engaging in such practice.

In this retreat, we learned about our body types based on Ayurvedic medicine, which was a major influence on ancient Buddhism and is taught in the *Great Calming and Contemplation* of Master Tiantai. This allows us to understand our natural balance and work towards restoring it. We begin with the basic human action of eating. *Ki*, or energy, both positive and negative, starts with what and how we eat. I think that many people are surprised that something so simple, and yet so profound, is the basis of Buddhism. We also shared many different teachings that can help rebalance and maintain focus in our lives such as Forest Bathing (*Shinrin-yoku*) or Mountain practice. This begins with introducing morning practices that are essential to maintain happiness and balance for one's daily life. These provide the basis for other practices. Many people come every time we hold these retreats, studying and growing deeper in their amazement of the Buddhist teaching. I hope that you will come join us.

Our next retreat will be held from December 6-8, 2019. All are welcome!



TEMPLE EVENTS

Puunene Nichiren Mission Rev. Jinshi Sasabe Bon Dance in Maui

I participated in the Bon Dance and Segaki service on June 8 at the Puunene Mission in Maui. About 200 hundred people attended this event. We chanted the "Odaimoku" as an offering to the ancestors at the Segaki service. After the service, I beat the drum while reciting Chapter 16 of the Lotus Sutra before the Bon Dance. Rev. Josho Yamamura and I recited from the Lotus Sutra for about an hour in the Hondo during the Bon Dance. After everything was over, we helped clean up.

I was surprised to see so many people participate in the Bon Dance. Most of the participants probably did not know the meaning of the dance. That is a shame, because it is important to understand the meaning. The meaning of the dance is to give thanks to our ancestors because we appreciate that we are here because of



them. If even one of them did not exist, we would not be in this world now.

People often ask me where they will go after they die. It is very easy to answer that. They are not in the western world or the eastern world or another world far away. They are in this world with us. I would like to explain the importance of the offerings to our ancestors to many people in the future.

Nichiren Mission of Hawaii

Rev. Shokai Kanai

Indigo Blue

Our temple held an introductory workshop with Temari's Ann Asakura on November 9 and 16. Temari is the Center for Asian and Pacific Arts, founded as a nonprofit organization to promote traditional crafts. The workshop was held at the Nichiren Mission Social Hall.

Participants learned how indigo permanently dyes fabrics and how to use resistance methods and control hue shades. There were lectures on indigo, and the participants examined an international collection of indigo-dyed textiles.



Nichiren Shu Head Office

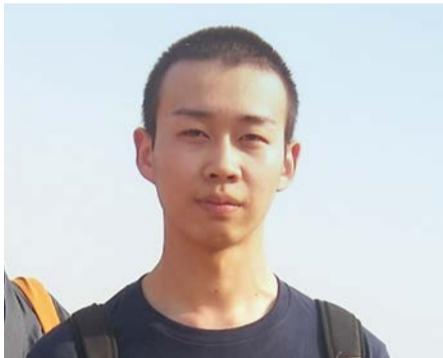
Rev. Gitetsu Shiota

Nichiren Shu Scholarship

On October 23, Rev. Gitetsu Shiota, Executive Director of the Missionary Department, presented the Nichiren Shu Scholarship to Jung Yong Hyun, a student from South Korea, who is currently studying at Minobusan University. This scholarship is funded by the Shumuin and given to promising foreign students studying Nichiren Shu Buddhism in Japan.

Jung's master, Rev. Renkei Suzuki of Myogyoji Temple in Kanagawa Prefecture, told Jung Yong Hyun that, after he becomes an ordained Nichiren Shu priest, it will be his responsibility to propagate Nichiren Shu in South Korea, following in the footsteps of Rev. Woo Beop-Hyoen who has already established Hondoji Temple in Toechon Gwangji-si, South Korea.

THANK YOU FOR THE PAST SIX MONTHS



By Rev. Jinshi Sasabe

There are two reasons why I wanted to go to Hawaii as an overseas missionary trainee. First, my cousins live in Vancouver, Canada, and I visited them many times since I was a child. I also visited various countries, such as India, with my father. That got me interested in foreign culture.

Next, I trained at Ikegami Honmonji Temple in Tokyo, which is one of the major Nichiren Shu temples, for a year after graduating from university. Many foreigners came to the temple, and they asked me a lot of questions about Buddhism. I couldn't answer their questions sufficiently in English, and I was quite frustrated. That is why I came to Hawaii as an overseas missionary trainee.

I have had many valuable experiences that I never would have experienced in Japan. After spending six months in Hawaii, I learned three important lessons for my future. First, it is important to express myself clearly to others. Second,

it is necessary to communicate with the members at all times. Third, Bishop Kanai taught me that it is very important to have a lot of questions about various things and to always have excitement for whatever I do.

In May 2021, we will be celebrating the 800th Anniversary of Nichiren Shonin's birth in Hawaii. My training is almost over, but fortunately I will stay to help with the preparations for the commemorative services in Hawaii as an assistant minister for the Nichiren Mission of Hawaii.

I'd like to express my gratitude to all the members for their kindness to me at all times and their constant support of the Mission. I think that the role of a priest is to convey the teachings of the Buddha and deliver the power of the Buddha to the people who need it. So, I will try my best to propagate the merits of the Odaimoku to as many people as possible in Hawaii.

I must return to Japan to obtain a special visa from the American Embassy in Tokyo. Therefore, I am returning to Japan temporarily but I will certainly return to the Nichiren Mission of Hawaii as soon as my visa is granted.

Thank you everyone! See you soon!



THIS EDITOR'S FINAL NOTE

It has now been a full decade since I was asked by the former editor of Nichiren Shu News, Rev. Keiryu Shima, to take over his position. Though I had been working on the staff of the paper doing translations and compiling articles from the very first issue of the paper in 1976, taking on the duties as editor was far beyond anything that I was prepared for as an individual. I was honored by his trust, but at the same time I was completely overwhelmed.

It has been incredibly challenging at times, but with the help and support of the Nichiren Shu community worldwide, everyone at Nichiren Shu Headquarters, the people at NOPPA, and help from the ministers and members of the international Sanghas it was possible. There is no way I could have done this alone. There are far too many people to thank individually over these years of working on the paper, but there are many genuine friendships that have grown out of this experience. Together, we have been able to move the paper forward.

I would like to especially thank the assistant editors, Revs. Shinkyō Warner and Ryuei McCormick, as well as our art director Alan Rowe, for all of their incredible work and commitment to putting out a quality paper. I would also like to especially thank my dear friend, professional photographer Jan Louy, who has been a tremendous source of support and inspiration over the years.

As the editor of Nichiren Shu News, I was able to connect with members of



different Sanghas throughout the world. Their enthusiasm to spread the Dharma is amazing, and Nichiren Shu News is said to be a helpful tool in propagating Nichiren Shu.

I will be stepping down as editor at the end of the year, and I am passing the baton to Rev. Sensho Komukai, who has also been translating and writing articles for the paper. Rev. Komukai has my full support, and I know that he will do great things in this role, and I encourage everyone to help him in this new endeavor.

I hope all of you will continue to support Nichiren Shu News so that it will continue to help propagate the Lotus Sutra throughout the world!

I want to thank you everyone for your support! It has been my privilege and honor to work with all of you.

—Sandra Seki, Editor

Calendar for December 2019–January 2020

- DEC 8** Jodo-e (Enlightenment Day) commemorating the day when the Buddha attained Enlightenment.
- DEC 31** New Year's Eve Service; Bell Ringing Ceremony held throughout Japan.

- JAN 1** Memorial Service for Nichiji Shonin, one of the six main disciples of Nichiren Shonin.
- JAN 13** Minobusan Opening Ceremony for the New Year at Kuonji Temple
- JAN 21** Memorial Service for Nichiro Shonin, one of the six main disciples of Nichiren Shonin

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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*.

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