

Nichiren Shu News

Published by the Nichiren Shu Headquarters & Kaigai Fukyo Koenkai

No. 146

February 1, 2005

(1)

New Year's Greetings from Mt. Minobu

Honorable Reverend Nichiko Fujii,
Archbishop of the Nichiren Shu Order

Observing the state of the world today, it is very much similar to that of the lifetime of our Founder. What St. Nichiren cautioned us most was self-centered Buddhism, namely embracing Buddhist teaching as a means of attaining selfish goals. Suppose each member seeks his own selfish goal, there is no unity of mind in such a group and quarrels and fighting are bound to occur. This is the state of things diametrically opposed to the teaching of the Buddha who preached to save all living beings.

Our Founder, St. Nichiren, therefore, taught us that the Lotus Sutra, in which the Buddha revealed His state of Enlightenment according to His own mind, can become the only teaching that can connote not only Buddhists but also all other people with different reli-

gions. He also taught us that the "daimoku" is the seed of Buddhas protected by the great compassion of Sakyamuni Buddha.

Therefore, our Founder kindly explains this for us in his "Rissho ankoku-ron (Treatise on Spreading Peace Throughout the Country by Establishing the True Dharma)." "You should promptly convert your wrong faith to the belief in the true and One Vehicle faith. Then this world will all become the land of Buddhas. Will the land of Buddhas decay? All the worlds throughout the universe will become the "treasure lands." Will the "treasure lands" be destroyed? When the land does not decay and is not destroyed, your body is safe and your heart is tranquil. Believe these words and



Archbishop Nichiko Fujii

revere them."

As the inheritor of this writing of our Founder, we must remind ourselves of the concluding statement of this treatise: "I not only believe in this but also will try to lead others in correcting their misconceptions." With our mind and body we have to try not only to uphold the faith in the Lotus Sutra but also spread it to others.

The world today seems incapable of cutting the chain of confrontation and destruction, with each nation raising a sword over her own head insisting on her own assertions and protecting her own interests. This is the very world where the teaching of the Lotus Sutra is most needed.

While staying in Sado as a prisoner, our Founder wrote the "Kanjin

Honzon-sho (Spiritual Contemplation and the Most Venerable One)." In this writing it is stated, "When the sky is blue, the land is bright." As a light is bright in darkness, when the world falls into disorder, a man who wants to rebuild the world is bound to appear. Our Founder, St. Nichiren, called himself as the messenger of the Buddha commissioned to spread the "daimoku" of the Lotus Sutra in the Latter Age of Degeneration, and stood firm in the muddy world to save all the suffering people.

Reading the two writings of our Founder, the "Rissho ankoku-ron" and the "Kanjin Honzon-sho" together, we are told that when we practice the Lotus Sutra, which was preached by Sakyamuni Buddha according to His own mind, as preached in the sutra, we will gain the insight of the Buddha and can see the true appearance of this world, where people enjoy safety and peace. How can we call ourselves Nichiren Buddhists without practicing this teaching of our Founder?

Let Us Not Forget the Goal of Our Founder

Honorable Rev. Tansei Iwama
*Chief Administrator of
Nichiren Shu Order*

Last year many people lost their lives for various reasons within our country as well as abroad. I join all of you in praying sincerely for the repose of the deceased. We pray also for the prompt recovery of the victims of calamities both physically and mentally.

It is not too much to say that today we live in the age of life and death. Nevertheless, we should keep in mind that our Founder preached to us, "Of all fortunes, life is the prime." When we feel truly fortunate to have been born human beings and encountered the Buddha's teaching, the dignity of life can be analyzed in four viewpoints.

1. My life is not my own. It is the blessing of the great heaven and earth, gift of the great compassion of the Buddha, presented to me and allowed for me to live.

2. My life is limited. Accepting it seriously and humbly, I must live every irreplaceable moment for my sake and for others.

3. My life is a link of the chain. Tracing back to the origin of human beings, we find that all human beings are connected to one another. My life continues from my ancestors and will continue to my descendants.

4. My life can be reborn. As shown in the Lotus Sutra, every life is reborn through the past, present,



Rev. Tansei Iwama

and future. As our Founder stated, "Myo means resuscitation," when we believe in the Lotus Sutra, our lives will be reborn as brilliant lives by the power of the great compassion of the Eternal True Buddha.

Thus we realize that our fleeting lives are in fact precious ones, which should be replaced by the eternal lives granted by the Eternal True Buddha and continue to shine throughout the past, present, and future existence. A person who has this precious life and seeks refuge in the Eternal True Buddha is the posture of a Nichiren Buddhist upholding the "o-daimoku."

The 33rd year of Heisei will be

the 800th anniversary year of our Founder's birth. Facing this memorable year in the near future, we, Nichiren Buddhists, should never lose sight of the fact that our Founder always kept his eyes on the actual world and the people who live in it and left the teaching of the "o-daimoku" for us in order for the Lotus Sutra to spread not only in Japan but also throughout the world as the basis for the world of peace and tranquility.

We, the followers of St. Nichiren, must do our best to achieve his goal. Nichiren priests should exert themselves in missionary activities with the slogan of absolute respect of life based on the teaching of the Lotus Sutra. Each lay follower of our Founder must strive to strengthen the faith in the "o-daimoku," and enlarge the wheel of faith from within the family to out in the society. We must faithfully follow the way our Founder trekked without straying away.

New Year Message from Hawaii

By Rev. Joyo Ogawa
*Bishop of Hawaii
Nichiren Mission of Hawaii*

After the eventful 100th anniversary in 2003, last year was a rather quiet one for us. However, the Perpetual Monument was completed next to the Hondo in October completing all the events affiliated with the 100th anniversary.

The year 2004 was the beginning of the 101st year and we pledged to carry out the slogan: "Pass on the Faith from the Past to the Future and Strengthen This Movement from Hawaii to the World."

The first step for this movement is to "Inherit and Spread the Faith from the Family." In order to realize this the most important step is to strengthen and activate the Sunday School activities.

Although the results won't occur overnight, diligent, step by step efforts will bring about amazing results. We would like to change not only the children but also their young parents' awareness toward religion and the temple. This change was actually seen in the number of attendees who came to the services on January 1 and 2, 2005, which increased compared to the previous year.



Rev. Joyo Ogawa

The movement to build up Sunday School activities is the most important step to pass on our faith to the next generation. It is important for all the members to realize that they are the followers of Nichiren Shonin. Protecting and caring for their temple while cooperating with the ministers will build a better place for faith. If the members and ministers cooperate, this movement will hopefully spread throughout all the

The Year of Rooster

This year is the year of the rooster according to the Chinese zodiac calendar. Two kinds of birds, both imaginary, are referred to in the Lotus Sutra. They are "kalavinka," a bird having a melodious voice found in the valleys of the Himalayas and "garuda," a golden-winged bird feeding on dragons.

In Chapter VII, "the Parable of a Magic City," it reads: Sainly Master, God of Gods! Your voice is as sweet as a kalavinka's. You have compassion towards all living beings... (The Sutra of the Lotus Flower of the Wonderful Dharma, translated by Senchu Murano)

"Garuda," after which the Indonesian flag carrier is named, appears in Chapter I, "the Preface,"

among the congregation listening to Buddha Sakyamuni as He expounds the Dharma.

Nichiren Shonin often refers to a bird in his writings. In "Answer to Nichinyo-gozen," he writes, "...As a bird having a complete pair of wings and a vehicle, equipped with a complete pair of two wheels, there exists nothing which cannot be accomplished by you and your husband."

In "Senji-sho," he writes, "...As nightingales wait for summer to sing and roosters wait for dawn to crow, even beasts know the time. How much more should we choose the right time in practicing Buddhism." (Writings of Nichiren Shonin, Doctrine I, translated by Kyotsu Hori)

Nichiren temples. This is one of the most important aspects of propagation.

We would like to put our efforts into "Passing on the Faith from the

Past to the Future and Strengthen This Movement from Hawaii to the World" to make this year a productive one for everyone!

The State of Ichinen Sanzen (6)

By Rev. Kanji Tamura
(translated by Rev. Kanshin Mochida)

The Three Factors of Existence: SAN-SEKEN (1)

The Daimoku chanting practice and missionary works of Nichiren Shonin are integrated into a single phrase of "Actual Three Thousand Existences Contained in One Thought" doctrine of the essential section of the Lotus Sutra. The doctrine of "3,000 existences contained in one thought" articulated by Grand Master T'ien-t'ai is the practice of trying to unify oneself with all existences (by the careful observation of one's own mind), and when this doctrine is transformed into the practice of the Daimoku from the content of the essential section of the Lotus Sutra, (in which the everlasting salvation by the Eternal Buddha is revealed), it is called "actual 3,000 existences contained in one thought doctrine." It is the practice of connecting one's mind to the world of the Eternal Buddha by faith. It is the practice of showing respect to the world of the Eternal and Original Buddha, visible as the Most Venerable One: Great Mandala Gohonzon. (Here, the visibility indicates actuality). It is to aggressively carry out the missionary works in this visible current society. It is also the act of realizing the serene and invisible world of the Eternal Buddha in this real and visible world.

In order to understand "actual 3,000 existences contained in one thought doctrine" advanced by Nichiren Shonin, we should first review the T'ien-t'ai doctrine of "Ichinen-Sanzen." "ICHINEN: one thought," means our mind, which



Rev. Kanji Tamura

changes moment by moment. "Ichinen-Sanzen" means that our momentary mind thoroughly contains all that exist. "SANZEN: three thousand," symbolizes infinity, not as a limited number, though; and this number of three thousand indicates the three categorical concepts: "the Mutual Possession of the Ten Realms," "the Ten Aspects," and "the Three Factors of Existence." Each of those concepts is trying to explain the essence of the universe from a different viewpoint.

This time, we would like to see what "the Three Factors of Existence" are. "the Three Factors of Existence" is to categorize all existences into three regions: the Region of Living Beings, the Region of the Five Constituent Elements (or the region of the body and mind as the entity of living beings), and the Region of the Country and Land (or the environments that surround living beings). By combining the concept of the Three Factors of Existence with the principles of the Mutual Possession of the Ten Realms and the Ten Aspects, it is revealed that our momentary thought is not only connected and united one with every move of the body and mind of all living beings but also spreads throughout the whole environmental world that actually surrounds us.

"The Region of Living Beings" is the category in which each individual life is distinguished by name. That is, being called "Mr. A" or "Ms. B." Likewise, the category is the assembly of all those individualistic lives, which can be recognized separately. In other words, it means each living being in our daily life.

However, the classification of being divided by names like "I,"

"you" or "he" is not so stable after all. After ten years, would I really exist? Would you exist, or would he? The existence which I think is me is anatomically a complex of various cells, flesh, skin and bone. They are protein and calcium. Once its vital activities end, those cells would decay and disappear in the course of time. Thus, in a sense this category could be superficial as scientifically the substance of the Region of Living Beings is nothing but the complex of protein and so on. Nevertheless, from the Buddhist viewpoint, the real substance of "I," "you" or "he" is the body and mind temporarily consisted of the so-called "the Five Constituent Elements." (That is the 2nd Region or Factor of "the Three Factors of Existence.") "Five Constituent Elements" consists of "Material (or color)," "Reception," "Conception," "Activity" and "Perception." In Buddhism, the mind is set above the body, so only one element; "Material (or Color)," is about the body, and the other four elements of Reception, Conception, Activity and Perception are about the mind.

"Material (or Color)" indicates something visible, but not only that. This element widely includes voice, smell, taste and sense of touch. That is, something being recognized by five senses is "Material (or Color)." "Reception" is the function of senses or the ability to sense something. For example, if there is a chocolate cake, its brown color enters our view, and the mental function of receiving the color at that very moment is "Reception." "Conception" is the function of making images in the mind. If there is a chocolate cake, it reflects on, so to speak, the cathode-ray tube of the mind as its vision (smell, sound and so on). To grasp those images is the

function of "Conception." "Activity" is a complicated mental function such as making speech, thinking, having desire or will. If we see a chocolate cake, we would describe it, using speech and thinking in the mind, "This is chocolate." Then, we may wish to have it. Those mental functions are "Activity." "Perception" is the broad blanket function that pulls together other three elements of "Conception," and "Activity." The mind is synthesized by this function of "Perception." Then if Perception goes wrong, the mind becomes psychosomatic or schizophrenic. Because of "Perception" we are able to perceive a chocolate cake as per normal. Seeing our nature composed by those mental functions, we now know which is the central point of "the Three Factors of Existence" is. That is the "Region of the Five Constituent Elements." If the five elements of the Five Constituent Elements are united temporarily, it becomes a life. If those elements spread out, the life is gone. Likewise, the relationship between living beings and their five mental elements is like the both sides of one coin.

Next is "the Region of the Country and Land." A certain place or space is needed for the existence of something. The Region of the Country and Land indicates the environments, which surround living beings. Nature such as mountains or rivers, or artificial environments such as buildings or roads are parts of this category. Summarizing the concept of The Three Factors of Existence, we could say that the place of space where we live is "the Region of the Country and Land" and "the Region of the Five Constituent Elements" is the substance of our existence, "the Region of Living Beings." Those three regions are always associated with each other without separation.

(to be continued)

The Legend of Nichiren (13)

By Rev. Gyokai Sekido, Ph. D.

Matsubagayatsu Persecution

Nichiren Shonin built a hermitage in Matsubagayatsu, Kamakura, presumably in 1254, a year after he left the Seichoji Temple in Kominato. There he started propagation activities. Many disciples and lay followers gathered around him. According to a legend, encounters with the leading lay followers occurred in those days. On April 28, 1254, just one year after he left the Seichoji Temple, Nichiren Shonin and Shijo Kingo (1229-1296) got acquainted with each other when Shijo Kingo offered his umbrella to Nichiren Shonin who was walking back to his hermitage in the sudden shower in the evening.

Nichiren Shonin is well known for his street preaching in Kamakura. It was not possible, however, to preach in the busy street in Kamakura, then the capital of the country. Street preaching may not have been done. Historians claim that people were listening to him over the window of his hermitage which faced to the street. As his preaching became popular, the number of the people, who came to his hermitage to hear his preaching over the window,

increased. This, they claim, came to be called as Nichiren's street preaching in later days.

A severe earthquake hit Kamakura in 1257. Almost all of the shrines and temples collapsed. Terrible scenes were described in detail in the writings of Nichiren Shonin. His descriptions correspond with the description of the "Azuma kagami," an official record of the Kamakura Shogunate, in many ways. Thus, the writings of Nichiren Shonin, including many letters sent to his followers, are claimed highly authentic as historical materials. In the "Ankokuron-gokan-yurai," he mentions the severe earthquake on August 23, 1257, and the violent wind on August 1, 1258. These records correspond to those of the "Azuma kagami."

Nichiren Shonin wrote the "Rissho ankokuron (Establish Righteousness and Bring Peace to the Country)" in July, 1260. In this book, he proposed the method of putting an end to misfortunes from the religious point of view. As a result, his hermitage was burnt down by a hostile mob in August of the same year.

According to a legend, Nichiren Shonin was saved by a monkey. His

hermitage was set on fire and burnt down on August 27, the day of "Taishaku-ten (god)," (sacra devendra, or popularly known as Indra). On that day, Nichiren Shonin was offering sutra chanting to the Taishaku God. The monkey is known as messenger of the Taishaku God.

Casually, Nichiren Shonin opened

a window slightly to see the moon. Outside, there was a white monkey. The monkey pulled the sleeves of Nichiren Shonin's robe. Thinking it strange, he climbed the mountain in the rear of his hermitage, guided by the white monkey, and arrived at a cave. From there, he saw his hermitage on fire.



Rev. Gyokai Sekido



The picture shows a sudden shower in the streets of Kamakura. The woodblock print is reproduced from "Nichiren Daishi Shinjitsu-den"

'We Will Foster Education for Lay Members'

By Rev. Shokai Kanai, Bishop
Nichiren Shu Minobusan
Beikoku Betsuin

I would like to express my appreciation to the ministers and members of the Nichiren Order of North America for electing me as the new Bishop of NONA.

There are two major concerns which I feel affect our organization. One is the lack of effective communication. I will try to expedite communication among ministers, churches and temples as well as between ministers and their congregations. Electronic mail may solve this problem. If you need to contact me, my e-mail address is revkanai@nichirensu.org. I read my mail daily and will respond as soon as possible.

The Los Angeles Nichiren Buddhist Temple, the original founding place of NONA, was glad to celebrate its 90th anniversary and to sponsor the 25th NONA Convention last year. However, considering our 90 year history, we lack the growth and participation. Many groups organized by lay people, such as

NSA, Rissho Koseikai, Shinran Kai, and Shinnyo En are increasing their membership in America.

Mahayana Buddhism is supposed to be based on lay people which leads to my second concern. I propose with the cooperation of the NBIC and NONA, that we consider a variety of events designed to foster education for lay members.

A Dharma Conference is held almost every year at different temples and churches. This year it will take place in Lexington, Kentucky from June 10-12.

An intensive seminar for Japanese speaking people was held at the Los Angeles temple in November 2003. I held a similar program for English speakers during the first week of December last year, while celebrating Bodhi Day. We fasted from Friday night till Sunday morning. There were three services a day plus shodaigyo, shakyo, shabutsu, meditation, lectures, taiko practice etc. NBIC will organize a

similar seminar for lay people, with one representative from each temple or church on February 18 and 19th, 2005.

World Peace Prayer chanting is held on the second Wednesday of each month at the L.A. temple. During this service, three members take turns officiating, beating the mokugyo, and ringing the bell. This practice may help them conduct a service at their homes together with their families and friends. or even hold a Sunday service when their minister is away. In the past,

many devoted Nichiren Shu members were unable to teach Buddhism to their children due to the lack of proper knowledge about Nichiren Buddhism. Nowadays, many NONA ministers hold study classes on the Lotus Sutra and Nichiren Shonin's life history and teachings in English. I would like to encourage you to continue seeking the Dharma for your own sake and for others.

This summer, I am planning to hold a summer camp for children near Big

Bear Lake in the San Bernadino Mountains. Mrs. Takako Osumi, a retired elementary school teacher with summer camp experience, is researching this project. I would like to encourage you to begin saving funds and plan to involve your youngsters in what I'm hoping will be a memorable event.

My long-range intention is to build a structure to enshrine a statue of Kannon Bosatsu or Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara, who is revealed in Chapter 25 of the Lotus Sutra. Kannon, considered as the bodhisattva of great compassion, mercy and love transformed himself into thirty-three different persons in order to save those in trouble and sorrow. Kannon is very popular among Chinese, Vietnamese as well as many non-Nichiren Buddhists in Japan. My hope is that people may approach Nichiren Shu through Kannon Bosatsu.

In closing, I would like to call upon all the temples, ministers, members and supporters of NONA for your physical, mental and spiritual help in accomplishing these goals as I embark on my four-year term as the Bishop of NONA.

Thanking you with Gassho!



Rev. Shokai Kanai

Ichinen Sanzen Part 6: The Three Realms

By Rev. Ryuei McCormick
San Francisco, California

Today Nichiren Buddhists most often explain ichinen sanzen, the "three thousand worlds in a single thought-moment," in terms of our cognitive, emotional and spiritual development. The hells, hungry ghost realms, heavens, pure lands and so forth along with the supernatural inhabitants of the various worlds are not so much seen as descriptions of geographical locations and actual beings as they are metaphors for states of mind and ways of viewing and interacting with the world based on our habits, tendencies and assumptions. This is nothing new to Buddhism, however.

Nichiren Shonin also spoke of the six worlds of the hells, hungry ghosts, animals, fighting demons, humanity, and the heavens in his most important treatise, Kanjin no honzon sho (Spiritual Contemplation and the Focus of Devotion), in terms of our mental and emotional states of being. Nichiren observed:

As we often look at each other's faces, we notice our facial expression changes from time to time. It is full of delight, anger, or calm sometimes; but other times it changes to greed, ignorance, or flattery. Rage represents the hells, greed-hungry ghosts, ignorance-animals, perversity-fighting demons, delight-gods, and calm-humanity. Thus we see six worlds of illusion in the countenance of people, from the hells to the worlds of the gods.

I would be wary, however, of assuming that medieval Buddhists like Nichiren understood these worlds and beings as only psychological realities. Like pre-modern Christians, pre-modern Buddhists like Nichiren understood that one could approach scripture on many levels and that the literal meaning was not the only one. Medieval Christians interpreted the Bible in terms of its literal meaning, allegorical meaning, moral meaning, and spiritual meaning, thus relating a given passage to allegedly historical events, and various metaphorical meanings relating to faith, morals and spiritual development. All of these interpretations would be seen as complementary and in no way contradictory. Putting it simply, they did not view the Bible as either literally true or figuratively true, but as both literally and figuratively true. In the same way, Nichiren related to the six worlds (actually he was speaking of ten including the "worlds" of the arhats, pratyekabuddhas, bodhisattvas and Buddhas) as both mental states and as literal realms inhabited by mundane and supernatural beings wherein one could be reborn.

This capacity to hold both a subjective or psy-

chological interpretation of the ten worlds, and a more objective or literal view explains how a medieval Buddhist like Nichiren could speak of these worlds as mental states in the Kanjin Honzon Sho, but then write in great detail about the sufferings found in each of the eight great hells and the kinds of deeds that will lead to rebirth in them in works like the Ken Hobo-sho (Clarification of Slandering the True Dharma) without even a hint that any of it is just metaphor or allegory. This can be very disconcerting to modern Buddhists who assume that Buddhist cosmology is restricted to myth and metaphor and would like to believe that the pre-modern teachers of Buddhism shared this assumption. This is simply not the case, and I believe that with very rare exceptions pre-modern Buddhists were not very different than their Christian counterparts in accepting the mythic and as yet unchallenged world views of their respective traditions as literal fact.

So how do we as modern Buddhists who are trying to faithfully follow the teachings passed on to us account for this? Do we sweep it under the rug by pretending that the great teachers of the past like Chih-i or Nichiren didn't really mean what they were saying when they spoke in terms of literal heavens and hells and point instead to other passages where they speak in terms of metaphor? Or do we acknowledge that their worldview was very different from ours and just dismiss them or at least those passages that do not gibe with our own understanding of the world? And how does this impact our understanding of the three thousand worlds in a single thought-moment? I would like to suggest that instead of dismissing anything that is stated in mythic terms or reducing everything to psychological explanations, we should perhaps open ourselves to the possibility that these mythic forms could also be conveying something that transcends mere subjectivity or objectivity.

In the Kanjin Honzon Sho, Nichiren goes to great length to explain the significance of the doctrine of the 3,000 worlds in a single thought-moment taught by the founder of the T'ien-t'ai school, Chih-i, in his magnum opus the Great Concentration and Insight. As described in the earlier installments of this series, this doctrine teaches that each of the ten worlds from hell to Buddhahood contains the ten worlds and these 100 worlds manifest in accord with ten factors of causal relations. Ten worlds times ten worlds times ten factors is 1,000 aspects and these are applied to the three realms of (1) the five aggregates of a single entity, (2) the community of sentient beings, and to (3) the environment. One now has three thousand "worlds"

that encompass the manifestation of all the states from hell to Buddhahood in terms of individuals, societies, and the insentient environment. It was this doctrine that gave rise to the T'ien-t'ai claim that even grass and trees could attain enlightenment. Nichiren states: "Speaking of a mind having '1,000 aspects contained in 100 realms,' we consider sentient beings only. When we talk about '3,000 existence contained in one thought,' we consider both sentient as well as insentient beings." I think this shows that Nichiren did not consider the ten worlds as only applicable to mental states, and furthermore he saw Chih-i's doctrine of the 3,000 worlds in a single thought-moment as revolutionary precisely because it did not confine itself to the psychology of a single individual but pointed to the manifestation of the ten worlds in social aggregates and in the environment of living beings as well.

I think that this is an insight that we can still learn from. We can still demythologize the ten worlds and do not have to accept that there is literally a fiery hell filled with ox-headed demons beneath our feet or heavenly palaces floating overhead. But at the same time we can acknowledge the insight that we do create hells and heavens not just within ourselves but also in our social arrangements and in the so-called objective world around us. In other words, we are part of an interdependent system that takes in our minds, bodies other people and living beings, and the earth itself. When we create an infrastructure and the kind of wealth that allow us to fly all over the world in a matter of hours or to communicate instantly with people all over the world via the internet, isn't this an example of heavenly blessings that are by no means simply subjective? On the other hand, when famine claims the lives of thousands due to civil wars or genocidal policies, is the hungry ghost world still just a mythic symbol of a state of mind? It sounds trite to say that our attitudes affect our relationships with others and that our civilization impacts the environment for better or worse, but it is easy to forget this and to neglect our responsibility for cultivating ourselves, bringing out the best in others, and ensuring that our society's impact on the environment and on other people is wholesome and beneficial rather than callous and destructive.

I hope that modern Buddhists will see that the teaching of the three thousand worlds in a single thought-moment is not only a way of coming to know and bring out the best in ourselves, but it is also a teaching that can help us awaken to the interconnections between individuals, society, and the environment. Through the Odaimoku, the actuality of the three thousand worlds in a single thought-moment in terms of practice, we aim not only to bring out our own Buddhahood, but the Buddhahood in the people and also the world around us.

ITALY

Nichiren Shu in Italy
(compiled from the story by
Rev. Shoryo Tarabini)

Buddhism in general is becoming very widespread throughout Italy. Besides the Soka Gakkai (SGI) which officially declares having 50,000 members in Italy, there are another 50,000 Buddhists made up primarily of Tibetan, Zen, Theravada and other Nichiren groups. In addition to the 11 Italian SGI centers in Italy there are currently 41 temples officially registered throughout Italy. The government recognized Italian Buddhist Association (U.B.I.) consists of 27 Tibetan, 3 Theravada, 8 Zen temples, of which 6 are either headquartered in Japan or based on a Japanese school, one Chinese and one Korean temple. Other schools and lay groups present in Italy are not yet registered. This includes: Nichiren Shoshu, Nipponzan Myohoji (which has constructed a peace pagoda in Sicily), Hommon Butsuryu Shu, Rissho Kosei Kai, Reiyu Kai and the Shingon derived Shinnyo-en. Of all the various Nichiren schools and groups (including the SGI) throughout Europe, Italy has the most followers and believers followed by France, Germany and then the U.K.

Rev. Tarabini's first contact with the Italian believers started in March of 2001. Five months later he traveled to Italy where he conducted the first conversion ceremonies and on August 1, 2001, established 'Nichiren Shu Italia' in Rome. Ever since then, the Italian believers and Rev. Tarabini have labored together to build an Italian Sangha in preparation for his move to Italy this year. As a result there are now a little over 100 members and believers and he has been able to establish small orders in such places as Napoli, Rome, Firenze, Le Marche, Milano, and Torino. There are still other places where groups are on their way to become full-fledged orders such as in Bologna, Padova, the southern province of Bari and the island of Sardegna.

Nichiren Shu Italy has been growing and gradually becoming a stable organization. The Italian members are made up of families, retired people, young married couples, stu-

dents, teachers, actors, artists and a vast variety of people. At present 90-95% of these believers are former Soka Gakkai members. After leaving the SGI, these people were searching for a place to continue their faith and study Nichiren Buddhism. On encountering Nichiren Shu many felt suddenly quite at home and felt that they had finally arrived at a truly Buddhist Sangha different from what they had experienced over the years in the SGI. These people have taken much responsibility to work hard in building the Sangha, studying and practicing together, and encouraging newer members, inviting them to different meetings when the priests visited Italy. Inspired by the London Sangha and temple, they decided to name their quarterly newsletter "La Brezza del Dharma" (Hofu, Dharma Breeze) in honor of the London Hofuzan Jogyoji Temple and the English believers who took the first steps and paved the way to establish Nichiren Shu throughout Europe.

On April 28, 2003, Rev. Tarabini established a small temple in Rome near the Vatican, called Jiyuzan Byakuren-in, which was donated by Mr. Shoko Milesi (the first person to contact Rev. Tarabini about Nichiren Buddhism four years ago). Furthermore, Rev. Tarabini has rented a small house outside of Milano to function as an Italian and European central propagation temple which will be named Guhosan Renkoji. He will be moving to Milano from London sometime in February.

Jodo-e in London
By Rony Eerebout, Belgium

On 12 December 2004 the annual Jodo-E Ceremony was held at Hofuzan Jogyoji Temple in London. On that day, we commemorate the day in which the Prince Siddhartha Gautama attained enlightenment at the age of 35 and became Sakyamuni Buddha with a candlelight service.

Nichiren Shu members and believers from several places throughout the UK and Europe gathered at the London temple to celebrate

Church Events

By Sandra Seki



Rev. Tarabini bestows the Omandala on Rony Eerebout at the Jodo-e service at the Jogyoji Temple, London, Feb. 12. Rev. Kanshin Mochida, Rev. Eiyu Ishii and Rev. Shodo Ando from Japan attended the service held in London, Rome and Milano



The congregation at the Jodo-e service at the Byakuren-in Temple, Rome, February 13



The congregation at the Jodo-e service at the Renkoji Temple, Milano, February 14

this important event together. The service was officiated by Rev. Shoryo Tarabini, joined by Rev. Kangyo Noda and two priests from Japan, Rev. Kanshin Mochida from the Nichiren Shu Administrative Headquarters and Rev. Eiyu

Ishii from Choshoji Temple in Tokyo, and one priest from Germany, Rev. Kyohei Ono.

For me this was my first time to experience such a ceremony in a Nichiren Shu temple. I was deeply impressed by the beauty and

sacredness of the ceremony. Many candles spread on the altar, on the tables and other available spaces throughout the main sanctuary lit the temple, creating a festive and welcoming but holy atmosphere, together with a sense of warmth and homely comfort.

The ceremony started with offerings of those candles to the Buddha. We all recited the Lotus Sutra in the glow of candlelight. In his sermon, Rev. Tarabini talked about the life and enlightenment of Sakyamuni Buddha.

This service was also the last one formally officiated by Rev. Tarabini as Jogyoji's Chief Priest. It was a very emotional moment for everybody when he welcomed Rev. Noda as the new Fifth Chief Priest. A reception marked the end of this beautiful celebration. This was also the opportunity to talk and ask questions to the priests from Japan who came here especially to celebrate with us. I am grateful to the Buddha for this wonderful chance to see them and talk to them. Many of those present were new to me. However, I felt a strong feeling that we had met before and that this was a happy reunion after a long interval. The reason must be that we are related to each other through the Odaimoku. We of different nationalities were gathered together to deepen our friendship, faith and practice as Nichiren Shu Buddhists.

Overall, the ceremony provided a kaleidoscope of memories and sensations. I am sure that each one who was there will have their own. The joyful feeling of chanting together and of being together with a group of people who are walking similar paths will never go away. I consider myself fortunate beyond calculation to be a member of this temple and to be able to study the Lotus Sutra. Let us all endeavor so that the teachings of the Lotus Sutra, implanted in our hearts by Nichiren Daishonin, become the refuge of the lives of the people throughout the world.

SAN JOSE

Welcoming the New Year

When you pay homage to your temple at New Years, you will notice a New Year decoration at both sides of the entrance to the building. This decoration is called Kadomatsu which is made of pine branches which symbolizes longevity. Some places add bamboo stalks and plum twigs, which symbolize constancy and purity, respectively.

Inside the building, you will find the Kagami-mochi, a set of round rice cakes offered to the Buddha and Nichiren Shonin. The two cakes are slightly dif-

ferent in size and are stacked one on top of the other, decorated with auspicious ornaments like fern, leaf and citrus fruit.

When you enter the Hondo, you must chant the Lotus Sutra and the Odaimoku in front of the Buddha and Nichiren Shonin. You repent your conducts of last year, send merits to your ancestors and make a New Year resolution. You also pray for happiness and world peace and vow to the Buddha that you will do your best to realize your prayers.

After the service you will be served Toso, rice wine flavored with herbs. This is the traditional way to celebrate New Years and it is believed that Toso has

the power to drive away evil and to invite good health for the new year.

Seminar for Lay Persons

The Nichiren Order of North America (NONA) and Nichiren Buddhist International Center (NBIC) will co-sponsor a seminar for lay members of Nichiren Shu on Friday, February 18th and Saturday, February 19th at the NBIC office in Hayward. The seminar will be over around 4:00 p.m. on Saturday.

Program of the seminar includes the etiquette of Nichiren Shu members, teachings of the Lotus Sutra, Nichiren Buddhism, and Shodai-gyo Meditation.

NICHIREN SHU NEWS

c/o NICHIREN SHU Shumuin
1-32-15, Ikegami, Ota-ku,
Tokyo 146-8544, Japan
Tel. 03-3751-7181 ~ 3

Board of Trustees: Tansei Iwama, Chief Administrator, Nichiren Shu; Bungyo Yoshida, President, Kaigai Fukyo Koenkai; Ryosho Nakajo, Executive Director, General Affairs Bureau; Shoshin Kurihara, Executive Director, Missionary Bureau; Giko Tabata, Director, Missionary Department, Nichiren Shu

Editorial Board:

Editor.....Keiryu Shima
Supervisor-Editor
.....Kyotsu Hori
Foreign News Editor
.....Sandra Seki
Staff Writers ... Tesshu Saito
.....Gen-ichi Oikawa
(overseas)...Ryuken Akahoshi
..... Chishin Hirai
Advisor..... Hoyu Maruyama