New Year’s Greetings from Minobusan: Learn True Meaning of ‘Rissho Anokoru-ron’

By Honorable Rev. Nichiko Fujii
Archbishop of the Nichiren Shu Order

Minobusan is the seat of the Bud- dha, where the murmur of aged cedar trees and little streams becomes the Buddha’s voice preaching the Lotus Sutra. Thus our Founder said, “As we on Minobusan recite the Lotus Sutra daily and night and discuss the Great Concentration and Insight morning and evening, we feel as though we are in the Pure Land of Mt. Sacred Eagle.”

Our Founder, Nichiren Shonin when his disciples and followers were subjected to severe persecution while Japan as a nation was at the brink of destruction by the threat of the Mongol invasion. In 1275, our Founder wrote a letter to Lay Priest Soyo Jiro Horen s t a t i n g , “Heaven and earth are a mirror in which the state of a country is clearly reflect- ed. The continuous series of natural dis- asters today in Japan is the misgov- ernment of the ruler of Japan reflected in the mirror of heaven and earth.” In other words, Nichiren Shonin continuously taught us that we can establish peace and tran- quility and realize the state of the Bud- dha Land in this world if we work together based on the True Dharma. After studying various schools of Buddhism for 16 years, Priest Rencho (Nichiren Shonin) returned to Mt. Eozyo to promulgate a new school of Nichiren Buddhism in 1253. Know- ing the True Dharma of the Buddha Sakyamuni, Rencho wanted to rectify the false teachings advocated by oth- ers.

At the age of 38, Nichiren Shonin wrote the “Rissho Anokoru-ron (Essay on Spreading Peace Throughout the Country by Establishing the True Dhar- ma)” and submitted it to Hojo Tokiyori, Former Shogunal Regent of the Kamakura military government. Unfortunately, Nichiren’s political proposal was not accepted by the mili- tary government. Moreover Nichiren Shonin thereafter had to go through a series of persecutions. We can say that the “Rissho Anokoru-ron” indeed was the starting point as well as the conclu- sion of our Founder’s missionary activ- ity.

By advocating “Rissho Anokoru-ron” Nichiren Shonin tried to see the condition of the time, society and the people reflected in the bright mirror of the Buddhists of the Latter Age of Degeneration and re-establish the teaching of the Buddha in the Latter Age of Degeneration through the One Vehicle teaching of the Lotus Sutra. This is our Founder’s way of repaying the debt of gratitude to the Buddha Sakyamuni. We, Nichiren Buddhists, who have been guided by our Founder and given the seed of Buddhahood, should respectfully learn the real motive of Nichiren Shonin in writing the “Rissho Anokoru-ron.”

“Namu Myoho Renge Kyo.”

Now Is the Time to Fulfill Our Duties

By Honorable Rev. Shokai Kanai
Chief Administrator of Nichiren Shu:

In reading the writings of Nichiren Shonin, we are taught by our Founder that those who study and practice Bud- dhism must know the “time.” Besides, he directs us to closely observe the real- ity of society with the “Buddh-eye,” not the value judgement or perception of ordinary people.

As we observe the social conditions today, the changes in the living bases and transformation of the family and household due to the continuing trend of the falling birthrate, aging of society, and fluctuations in economic condi- tions are giving rise to serious uneasi- ness in society. Especially in recent years, things have been steadily getting worse in respect to human lives as, for instance, the rise in vicious crimes and suicides, tragic incidents involving chil- dren, and a trend of slumbering human life.

Moreover, we are unable to put brakes on the destruction and pollution of nature, while the fear of destruction of life is closing in on us in the form of the strife against the background of deep-rooted racial or religious antago- nism and the spread of acts of terror- ism. The foundation for the dignity of human life has been shaken severely. This is the very condition in the Latter Age of Degeneration.

Living in such an alarming and dif- ficult time as this, we must review our activities firmly based on the “Sacred Title of the Lotus Sutra, I must sincerely pray for your peace and hap- piness and for you to spend your valu- able life meaningfully throughout the year of 2006!”

“Heaven: Where Is It? How Do We Get There?” was a broadcast by ABC as a holiday special on December 20 last year, preceding the Christmas Holi- days. Barbara Walters, a long time anchor, interviewed the most fascinat- ing people of the year 2005, including the Dalai Lama and Richard Gere, a Buddhist Hollywood star. Her inter- viewees were Buddhists, Jews, Muslims, evangelical Christians, and atheists. She also stopped by a maximum secu- rity prison to mingle with members of the Palestinian militant group, Hamas, and sat down with an attempted suicide bomber. She asked, “Would you like me to go to hell?” “Yes” seemed to be his answer. According to many of the interviewees, Buddhists go to hell because they do not believe in Jesus Christ or the Prophet Muhammad’s teaching of the Buddha in the Latter Age of Degeneration and re-establish the teaching of the Buddha in the Latter Age of Degeneration through the One Vehicle teaching of the Lotus Sutra. This is our Founder’s way of repaying the debt of gratitude to the Buddha Sakyamuni. We, Nichiren Buddhists, who have been guided by our Founder and given the seed of Buddhahood, should respectfully learn the real motive of Nichiren Shonin in writing the “Rissho Anokoru-ron.”

“Namu Myoho Renge Kyo.”

Let’s Create the Buddha Land on This Earth

By Rev. Shokai Kanai
Los Angeles Minobusan Betsuin

Happy New Year to You All!

With your trust in the Odaimoku or the Sacred Title of the Lotus Sutra, I sincerely pray for your peace and hap- piness and for you to spend your valu- able life meaningfully throughout the year of 2006!}

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“Namu Myoho Renge Kyo.”
The Doctrine of Ichinen Sanzen (12)

By Rev. Kanji Tamura

Theorem (R1) and Actuality (J1)

Various Meanings of “Ji: Actuality” (2)

The doctrine of “3,000 existences contained in one thought,” which Nichiren Shonin advocated, is that of “Ji: actuality” encompassing the practice and movement within the real world of “Shiki: Color.” Nichiren Shonin describes the five letters of the Daimoku as “mixed in one thought,” which some meanings, and in the previous article, we learned three of them: first to actually feel Lord Sakyamuni, secondly to chant Daimoku, and thirdly to worship the Great Mandala as the Most Venerable One. In this article we also learn other meanings of the “Ji” based on Nichiren Shonin’s writings.

4. Practice of Sowing the Daimoku, Seed of the Buddhahood in the Hearts of Sentient Beings

In his Kanjin Hon'zono-sho (Treatise Revealing the Spiritual Contemplation at the Time of Practice of the Daimoku), Nichiren Shonin describes the five letters of the Daimoku as “the Buddha seed of Ichinen Sanzen.” He maintains that without the Daimoku, not only the attainment of Buddhahood by people but also the consecration of the object of worship out of wooden statues and portrait statues will be meaningless. The Buddha seed of Ichinen Sanzen means both the seed that contains Ichinen Sanzen doctrine and the seed that brings the doctrine and the statue. According to Nichiren Shonin, Ichinen Sanzen means more than the state of enlightenment privately attained through mental contemplation. It is the world of the Buddha’s enlightenment realized through the practical missionary work in the real time and society.

Nichiren Shonin prays for peace after burying the Lotus Sutra he had copied halfway up Mt. Fuji (The picture is reprinted from “Nichiren Shonin-den Emaki,” painted by Uenaka Jikisai)

Lotus Sutra through “Shiki: Color” substan-
tiates the prediction of the Lotus Sutra in the real world. In his Kamakura period, Nichiren Shonin (the Lotus Teaching) Nichiren Shonin writes that he has reached the self-awareness of the practice of the Lotus Sutra, who has overcome misunderstanding, obstacles and difficulties (numerous minor troubles and four major ones) to spread the Lotus Sutra.

Moreover, in his Toki Nyudo-dono Go-henji (Response to the Lay Priest Lord Toki), “The Great Concentration and Insight states that the three states of heaven and earth disturb the practitioners. Now they are disturbing me, Nichiren, in detail, and they are more powerful than those at the time of Grand Masters T'ien-t'ai and Dengyo. There are two ways of meditating on the doctrine of Ichinen Sanzen. One is the ‘theoretical’ way, and the other is the ‘actual’ way. Grand Masters T’ien-t’ai and Dengyo practiced the former while I now practice the latter. As my method of practicing meditation is superior, difficulties befalling me are harder to bear. What T’ien-t’ai and Dengyo propagated was based on Ichinen Sanzen of the theoretical section while what I, Nichiren, propagate is based on Ichinen Sanzen of the actual section. The difference between the two is as great as the difference between heaven and earth.” Nichiren Shonin regarded the active substance as more important than the notional practice, and stipulated that the Ichinen Sanzen of “Ji: actuality” as the practice of realizing the Fifth Dharma Land in this real world. He was proud of spreading the Daimoku and overcoming persecutions in the Age of Degeneration. That is to read the Lotus Sutra through “Shiki: color.” (Trans. by Rev. Kaishin Mochida (to be continued))

The Legend of Nichiren (19)

By Rev. Gyokai Sekido, Ph. D.

The Arrival of the State Letter of Mongolia

The state letter of Mongolia was delivered in 1268. Ostensibly it stated that they wanted to establish a friendly relationship with Japan. In reality, however, Japan’s obedience to Mongolia was demanded. If Japan didn’t obey the demand, the letter stated that Mongolia was ready to use military force. The people in Japan were all terrified by the threat of the Mongolian attack. There was a person who predicted this crisis. It was Nichiren Shonin. He predicted the crisis of the foreign invasion of Japan in his “Rissho Anokoku-ron (Essay on the Peace throughout the Country by Establishing the True Dharma)” (Trans. by Rev. Kanshin Mochida).

The drought continued from about the fifth month of 1271. Nichiren Shonin competed in prayer for rain with Ninsho Kaido, who was the prime Buddhist priest in Japan. Nichiren Shonin was the fifth son of Abe Sadato (1019-1087) in present Chiba Prefecture. Abe Sadato was defeated by Ninsho Kaido, who was named Ninsho. Ninsho himself became a priest, too, and he was named Nichigen. Nichigen later became the third chief priest of Minobusan. Nichiren is believed to be the second son of Soya Kyoshin, follower of Nichiren Shonin in Shimousa (present Chiba Prefecture). Nichiren was a descendant of Abe Sadato (1019-1087), a local magistrate in the Tokohoku District during the Heian Period. They escaped to Kai and became farmers when Abe Sadato was defeated by Ninsho Kaido (1087). They climbed Mt. Fuji from there. The sky was fine and the scene of the various provinces was wonderful. Nichiren Shonin burned eight volumes of the Lotus Sutra that he copied in the mountain. Then they recited the Lotus Sutra. Because of this, the ground is called the “Kyoga Take (the Peak of the Sutra).”

On the way down the mountain they dropped in at the village of Kodachi-mura. Many villagers who respected Nichiren Shonin gathered, and they chanted the Daimoku. They had pieces of paper in hand and asked Nichiren Shonin to write the Most Venerable One (Honzon). There were 28 sheets of paper, and Nichiren Shonin wrote the sheets together and wrote the big Honzon. It exists in the Okano-miya Kochibō-ji Temple of Suruga (present Surugadai City). (to be continued)
People I’ll Always Remember (1)

By Rev. Ryusho Matsuda

Do not seek to obtain this Gohonzon just anywhere, for it exists only in the flesh of those who have faith in the Lotus Sutra and who chant “Nam Myoho Renge Kyo.” (A Response to Lady Nichinyo)

Gozensama! This is the passage of Nichiren Shonin which you showed me the day you dedicated this temple. In your dedication prayer, you expressed your gratitude to Nichiren Shonin saying, “In order to return a favor to Nichiren Shonin, I have established this temple here in San Jose. May the tiny seed that I planted here grow big and wide throughout the world.” In the beginning, we did not have any members, but you entrusted me to spread the wisdom of Nichiren Buddhism. You also said, “I wish to build a small mausoleum and extend my hand to sustain this temple.” With your encouragement, I was able to start my mission of spreading the true spirit of Nichiren Shonin.

Gozensama! You always said that a temple must be a place to practice Buddhism, but also a place to widen the Buddhist thoughts among all people: Buddhists as well as non-Buddhists.

Gozensama! Now, 25 years later more than 500 people pass through this temple weekly. Many of them are not Buddhists, but despite their differences in cultural background, race, and religion, they put their hands together in Gassho in front of the Buddha. They attain rich and pure minds by being around the Buddha.

Gozensama! You also said that Nichiren Buddhism must have American-born priests in the future, then true American Nichiren Buddhism will take root in the soil. You predicted that one of your disciples, Rev. Arnold Shinko Matsuda, who was born in the U.S.A., has succeeded me. I am sure that he will proceed into the next quarter-century confident that the fruit of the Odaimoku received by the faithful comes from a flourishing tree which grew out of the seed of the Buddha’s teaching planted 25 years ago in San Jose.

Although I have resigned from the position of the head priest, I will continue to devote myself in supporting the Gohonzon of this temple. So, please permit me to become a small living mausoleum after you.

The Year of the Dog

By Rev. Hoyu Maruyama

2006 is the year of the Dog in Chinese astrology. The year of the Dog in Japan is considered to be a year of a new start following the year of the Rooster, the year of big changes. 1946 was also the year of a new start just after World War II ended, when the Japanese Emperor declared he was a human, and the first popular election took place. In 1958 Mr. Shingen Nagashima joined the Yomiuri Giants, which is said to have changed Japanese professional baseball. In 1982 Nichiren Shonin Soka Gakkai celebrated its 100th anniversary of Nichiren Shonin.

Nichiren Shonin met the year of the Dog five times in his life. Above all, the second year you wrote in the 17th century and the eleventh year of Bunnei (1274) were years after big changes had happened to him. The former was the year following the death of Izu, when he wrote “Shoinsho (the Essay on Four Debts of Gratitude)” and “Kyokisho (the Essay on Four Dedication Prayer),” and the latter was the year he wrote “Kanjin honzonshoku (the Spiritual Contemplation and the Most Venerable One)” and depicted Dammandala Gohonzon (the Most Venerable One), when he was permitted by the military governor to return to Kamakura from Sado, where he had been exiled, and then left Kamakura for Minobusan on the twelfth day of the fifth month.

Nichiren was at Kominato when he died. He was 50 years old in the year of the Dog, 1226. He was studying in Kamakura at the age of 17 in 1238. He was supposed to get sick, so we exercise and take eye drops. We do not want to get old, so ladies make themselves up with cosmetics to look young. We do not want to die, many people receive dialysis or organ transplants. The things that we do everyday are related to being free from the four cycles of birth, old age, disease and death, aren’t they?

Because we want to be free from disasters from fire, water, wind and water, we listen to the weather forecast and buy expensive insurance to protect our homes and families. Your life today must be better than that of your parents. Your children’s and grandchildren’s lives should be better than yours. Please try to make this world better for your self and others. Whatever you do at work or at home, please be sure that you are trying to make this world better. Please keep my message in your mind throughout this year.

Not only do we wish to go to the Buddha Land after our death, but also we try to create the Buddha Land on this earth.

New Year’s Retreat

By Ryusho Faulconer

On December 31st, 2005 the Treasure Tower Temple, also known as the Nichiren Buddhist Temple of Portland, held a New Year’s retreat. The retreat started on New Year’s Eve at 7 pm. Over a dozen participants registered and prepared their bedding for the night. At eight everyone went to the Suigyo area, where they all participated in water purification. After Suigyo, we spent a hour-and-a-half folding paper cranes for peace in the upcoming year. Two hours before midnight, we began a candlelight service based on the Hokke Sempo. The service was conducted completely in English and everyone participated. We finished the service a few minutes before midnight. At midnight, we began the ringing of the temple bell 108 times. The participants took turns ringing the bell over a 54 minute time period. Then we all went to sleep. In the morning, we did a 90 minute Shodaigyo service which was followed by a New Year’s service. Otoso and Ozon were consumed by the participants at the New Year’s breakfast. Around noon the group disbanded with the hopes that the New Year would be a time of peace, prosperity and greater faith.

Nichiren Buddhism in Cultural Background

This ginkgo tree came to be called the “Ginkgo Tree for Antitoxin” many years later, and its leaves are made into talismans as a miraculous medicine. Eye drops are made from its extract. The tree is also called “Rokushikyo”, because it has nuts, “Gimmian”, are said to be shaped like a dog’s fangs. What is more, the tree is also called “Sakasa-cho”, because of its branches hang down. It is known as one of the most rare trees in the world. (Trans. by Rev. Kanshu Naito)
Mr. Nishioka:

I am fighting a case in court at the moment about the medicine effect. Many doctors and patients who have used the medicine testified on the effectiveness of it. Because of this trial I am not working now and I have to visit the temple more often than before. I think this came about as an arrangement of the Buddha.

Rev. F.: How did you encounter the Hokekyoji Temple? What is your personal history?

Mr. N.: My father was a parishioner of the Shrine and I am a second generation Japanese in Brazil. When I was young I had no connections with the Lotus Sutra. I was first introduced to it in my 20s through Rev. Kojun Matsuura, who became a priest in Brazil and Rev. Kimura from Japan. With their influence I became an ardent follower of the Lotus Sutra. Twenty-five years ago, I initiated another group of followers and built the Myohokan Monastery. But there was a confrontation about the way of proceeding at the time. Rev. Matsuura, Rev. Kimura and a few others including myself left and became an independent religious organization. Later Rev. Kimura returned to Japan because his master had passed away and when Rev. Matsuura passed away, the group could not continue meeting. Through the help of Rev. Kimura, we asked for help from Nichiren Shu and five of us became Nichiren Shu followers.

Rev. F.: Have you had a lot of hardships? Mr. N.: No, I haven’t. This is all the will of the Buddha. Members at the Hokekyoji Temple have increased and I am very satisfied. I would like to continue increasing the number of members.

Rev. F.: What is your dream for the New Year?

Mr. N.: The temple we are renting at the moment has become too small to house all the members. We would like to move to a more spacious place. If possible I would like to build my own temple. There were major operations in installments. I am looking for a suitable place at the moment.

Rev. F.: Thank you very much, Mr. Nishioka. Mr. Nishioka lives with his kind wife, three sons and a daughter. He lost his first son many years ago. The boy suffered from cerebral palsy and even after major operations he passed away at the age of eighteen. Even so Mr. Nishioka gives thanks to the Buddha for making the boy live till he was eighteen. At his son’s final moments, Mr. Nishioka held him in his arms and the end came peacefully. For this again Mr. Nishioka is grateful to the Buddha for making his son pass away quietly and peacefully.

The Buddha will always protect Mr. Nishioka because of his good deeds and personality of giving, helping and gratitude. He only wanted to help people and before he realized it, he had made a fortune. He always gives large amounts of donation to the temple and when others refused to sign the document of guarantor for renting the temple premises, he gladly took on this responsibility. Mr. Nishioka comes to the temple twice a week, and we hope he will stay healthy and continue to support the Hokekyoji Temple.

(Trans. by Sandra Seki)