

Nichiren Shu News

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'Wish of the Practitioner of Lotus Sutra Must Be Fulfilled'

By Rev. Kanshin Mochida

Rev. Woo Beop-hyeon (禹法顯) has been engaged in missionary activities since 1999 in order to establish the center of "Rissho (立正: establishing righteousness)" in Korea. For him, "Rissho" means to have firm and strong faith.

On October 7, his long-term wish

was finally accomplished with the inauguration of the temple's Main Hall to the sounds of the Daimoku in the Korean language by the members of the Hodoji Temple.

Rev. Joshin Komatsu, Chief Administrator of Nichiren Shu Headquarters, conducted the inauguration ceremony for his first missionary trip to Korea. Approximately 400 people,



Rev. Komatsu delivering a congratulatory message

including the temple members, neighbors, and the supporters from Japanese Buddhist temples attended the ceremony.

Rev. Komatsu, showing his appreciation to Rev. Shin'yu Kageyama, Rev. Woo's teacher, and the participants, stated in his congratulatory address: "Once Rev. Woo wrote in the Nichiren-Shu Journal, 'The wish of the practitioner of the Lotus Sutra must be fulfilled. My role is to distribute the hope and prospect based on Nichiren Buddhism among my temple's members.' I sincerely

hope Rev. Woo continues to try hard to raise the spirit to save all sentient beings while pursuing Buddha's wisdom, and be active in Nichiren missions with the self-awareness as the practitioner of the Lotus Sutra."

Rev. Woo stated at the commemorative banquet after the ceremony: "It has been seven years since I started the missionary in Korea, and finally the Main Hall of the Hodoji Temple has been accomplished. Without the help of all the supporters in both Korea and Japan, it could not have been possible. I do not know how to repay these favors to everyone. Rather I would like to do so by further spreading the Daimoku here."

In spite of the difference of the languages, both the Korean and Japanese Nichiren Buddhists communicated with the faith in the Daimoku as if the development of Korean Nichiren Buddhism would be anticipated.



Some 400 devotees attending the inauguration ceremony



Main Hall accomplished after seven years of missionary work

'I Will Help Prepare for 200th LA Anniv.'

The installation ceremony in which Rev. Join Inoue replaced Bishop Shokai Kanai as the Chief Minister of the Nichiren Shu Betsuin Temple in Los Angeles was held on October 14 at 11 a.m. following the Oeshiki Service.

About 150 members attended the service to say farewell to Bishop Kanai and to welcome Rev. Inoue.

Rev. Inoue became a NONA minister of the Myokakuji Betsuin Temple in San Jose, California, in 1988. He completed the Nichiren Shu

Daiaragyo in 1993. The following year, he became a New York regional minister and lived in Manhattan for 14 years.

Rev. Inoue addressed the devotees of the L. A. temple as follows:

"I'd like to briefly speak about the upcoming 100th anniversary of this temple in the year 2014. I will probably be in charge of the event and I view this as both an honor and a privilege. The forthcoming centennial celebration is due to the efforts and accumulated Buddhist merits of Rev.

Kanai and the past resident ministers of this temple. I would like to make a vow: through my missionary work for this temple, I will help lay the groundwork for its 200th anniversary. I appreciate any help that you can provide in the attainment of this goal."



From left to right: Shami Edward Kanai, Shami Chisho Inoue, Rev. Join Inoue, Bishop Shokai Kanai, Rev. Douglas Kanai and Shami Randolph Kanai

New Mission in Nevada

By Bishop Shokai Kanai

Rev. Joshin Komatsu, the Chief administrator of the Nichiren Shu Headquarters in Japan, assigned me to a new mission of propagating the Lotus Sutra and the Odaimoku in Nevada when I resigned as the resident minister of the Los Angeles Nichiren Buddhist Temple on October 14, 2007.

For 10 years I have visited members and those interested in Nichiren Shu practice in Las Vegas, two or three times a year. It is now the time for me to settle down and establish a new

Nichiren Shu temple in Las Vegas. I am working on obtaining the non-profit organization status from the state of Nevada and the privilege of tax exemption from the IRS.

After receiving the tax exemption number, I will donate all of my Buddhist statues, altar materials and office equipment to the Nichiren Buddhist Kannon Temple of Nevada. One of the Buddhist statues is a Juichimen (11 Faces) Kannon Bodhisattva (deity of mercy) that was given to me by a devoted follower in Japan. The statue is made from Yakusugi (a cedar tree more than one thousand years old,

from Yakushima Island in Southern Japan).

Faith in the Deity Kannon is very popular among many non-Nichiren Shu Buddhists in Southeast Asia and some Americans. Actually the work of Kannon Bodhisattva is revealed in Chapter 25 of the Lotus Sutra. As the result of my long missionary work in America, I believe that it is easier for people to visit a Kannon temple rather than a Nichiren Shu temple.

The first service of the temple will be the Sunrise Service on New Year's Day at the High Point Overlook of the Red Rock Canyon in Las Vegas around 7 a.m. followed by the New Year's Day Blessing Okaji Service at 10 a.m. at the temple on 3920 Spencer

Street, Las Vegas. As the sun eliminates all darkness, the temple will eliminate all darkness of the people who visit the Kannon Temple. I hope many Nichiren Shu and non-Nichiren Shu people attend the service and recite the Lotus Sutra and the Odaimoku together.

With the tax exemption status, I will also be able to start fund raising in order to purchase a new lot for the temple. Hundreds and hundreds of people around the world come to Las Vegas every day; I hope some of these people will visit this Kannon Temple regardless of their faith in the near future. They call Las Vegas "Sin City;" but with our blessings this city will become a Buddha Land.

The Life of Sakyamuni Buddha (2)

By Rev. Shinkai Oikawa, Litt. D.

3. Birth of Sakyamuni

Next we must determine Sakyamuni's birthday. His birthday has long been believed to be April 8 in Japan. It is said He was born on the full-moon night in the month of Wesak, which can be April, May or June in the Southern Buddhism. These are not exactly clear either. We just guess it may be April.

He was born at Lumbini in Nepal near India. The Himalaya Mountains can be seen far from this very beautiful place. "Hima" of Himalaya means snow in the Indian language and they are called mountains covered with snow.

The climate of His birthplace is mild. It is a very good place, not so cold, not so hot. Its industry is agriculture, mainly rice farming. He is said to be a prince born in the castle, but actually His country was not very large. Its size was 60 km by 40 km, which is much smaller than Tokyo.

Sakyamuni's father was King Suddhodana which means "clean rice." His mother was Queen Maha Maya. A stone pillar stands at the Lumbini Grove, His birthplace. The pillar is broken in the middle but the inscription on its foot reads that this is where He was born and that this is free of tax. Tax was exempted because it was a sacred place. King Asoka who inscribed this statement, was a king from 2,200 years to 2,300 years ago. So he is very old and his stone pillar is also very old. This pillar had fallen down and was buried in the soil but was later excavated, proving Lumbini Grove to be His birthplace. So things are getting clearer and clearer.

When was Sakyamuni's history written? Usually a biography is not written while many things about the person concerned are known. Neither were His biographies.

As the disciples attending Him did not write these kinds of things, His biography was not written until long after His death.

What happened then were fictitious writings. We cannot easily believe such biographies. For example, even if it is written that a person flew in the sky, we cannot believe it is true. We know it is



Rev. Shinkai Oikawa

absolutely incredible, because we have been taught that science is true without any doubt. So we can talk only of what is completely obvious. This is difficult when we talk of religion.

His posthumous biographies are filled with episodes of superhuman powers. They are full of stories that He had super-eminent powers. We cannot avoid touching His magical powers of this kind ultimately, whenever we talk of His life.

It is said He used superhuman and magical powers to save people. Few people will follow religious teachings without such plain wonderful powers. Talks of religion easily tend to magical powers. But as for myself, I do not like these tales nor can I satisfy myself of such matters because I cannot fly in the sky nor have I any magical powers.

Then, how did Sakyamuni lead the life of His biographies? I am going to talk of His life chronologically.

4. Sakyamuni in his childhood

I already told you that Sakyamuni was born in Kapilavastu. It is known that there existed sixteen major states in India in those days, but Kapilavastu was not included in them. This means that Kapilavastu was merely a minor state. There was a state called Kosala next to Kapilavastu. Kosala was always looking for a chance to conquer Kapilavastu. According to various sources, Kapilavastu was conquered and annihilated, and all the relatives of Sakyamuni and all the people living in the castle were killed. I think Sakyamuni led an unhappy life.

In the first place Sakyamuni's mother, Queen Maha Maya, died a week or 10 days after his birth. It is not known why she died. His father married his mother's younger sister, Maha Prajapati, who was a very good lady and brought him up without any trouble.

Sakyamuni was brought up by his father, King Suddhodana, with great care because he was the successor to his father as the king of the Sakya nation. But it is said he did not have a strong nature. He is supposed to have been a little withdrawn and quite thoughtful.

An episode states that the country of the Sakya tribe was a rural country where they produced a lot of rice. In a traditional festival of planting rice seeds they prayed for a good crop of rice. Many of them used oxen to plow fields for rice. While the child Sakyamuni was watching the festival, he noticed that when the fields were plowed, a worm was thrown out of the soil, and a little bird picked it up; an eagle attacked the little bird flying up in the sky with the worm in its mouth, killed it with its sharp bills and flew away with it. Sakyamuni did not find the scenes interesting nor did he want to see a more gruesome attack. Instead he felt it sad that the world of birds and



animals was hard to live in.

Another episode tells us that he went out of the castle into a city and encountered a diseased man, an old man, a decaying corpse and a funeral. Deeply depressed by these sights, he came to think it was inevitable that he, too, would get older and die. He wondered what he could do to solve this problem.

It has been said since olden times that there are four types of suffering, birth, old age, illness, and death. It is absolutely impossible for us to free ourselves from these sufferings. Agonizing over these matters, he encountered an ascetic. Of course there were no Buddhist teachings in those days, but there were ascetics of Brahmanism, Hinduism and the others. The ascetic looked to him vivid and calm. Sakyamuni thought he was good, and wondered if he had no sufferings and how he dissolved problems if any. Sakyamuni sought to overcome the sufferings by living the life of an ascetic. In other words, I suppose he was born and destined to be a priest.

As for myself, I think I am rather unsuitable for a priest, aren't I? Buddhism in Japan says "sekembo" and "shussekembo." "Sekembo" means our real life, that is, our real world where there are ordinary men and women, and money circulating round, and delicious and tasteless food, and quarrels without cease, and so on.

The world of priests is "shussekembo," which means a world to escape from our ordinary world. As I rather prefer "sekembo," I tend to enter into the chaotic world. But I am sure Sakyamuni's tendency is to escape from this confused world.

(Trans. by Rev. Kanshu Naito)
(to be continued)



The Asoka Pillar and its inscription at Lumbini

Rev. Nakajo Appointed as Acting Head Priest of Seichojoji



Rev. Reisho Nakajo

Rev. Reisho Nakajo, former minister of the San Francisco Nichiren Buddhist Temple and present head priest of the Daijoji Temple, Fukui Prefecture, was sworn in as the Betto (the Acting Head Priest) of the Seichojoji Temple,

Kamogawa City, Chiba Prefecture, in a ceremony held at the Hommonji Temple, Ikegami, Tokyo, September 19.

He succeeded Rev. Nittai Okazaki who earlier retired from the office due to illness. The Seichojoji Temple is the place where Nichiren Shonin spent the first five years or so after entering the priesthood at the age of 11, and the place where he proclaimed his faith as the Founder of Nichiren Shu at the age of 31 in 1253.

Rev. Nakajo received the letter of appointment from Archbishop Nichiji Sakai of the Nichiren Shu Order. The ceremony was attended by Rev. Shuko Harita, Executive Director, Missionary Department, Shumuin; Rev. Ryogyo Osa, Head of the Secretariat of Chief Administrator; and representatives of the lay devotees of the Seichojoji Temple.

Born in 1937, Rev. Nakajo graduated from the Department of Literature of the Rissho University majoring in history. In 1960, he went to the United States as an overseas minister and worked 16 years as the head minister of the Sacramento Nichiren Buddhist Temple and the San Francisco Nichiren Temple. After returning to Japan in 1976 he became the head priest of the Daijoji Temple.

Elected to the Congress of Nichiren Shu in 1993, Rev. Nakajo served successively as Executive Director of Overseas Missionary Bureau, Executive Director of Financial Affairs, and Executive Director of General Affairs.

"I am determined to do my best for the prosperity of the Seichojoji Temple, the holy place of Proclamation. I shall be most grateful if the 'Nichiren Disciples' and related people will extend assistance," said Rev. Nakajo. Rev. Zeryu Nakajo, his father, also served as the Acting Head Priest of the Seichojoji Temple from February 18, 1982 to April 17, 1984.

Events

October–November

- Oct. 4–5: Docho: Initiation Ceremony at the Seichojoji Temple, Kiyosumi, Chiba
- Oct. 6–8: Chief Administrator's missionary trip to Korea, attending the Inauguration Ceremony of the Hodoji Temple
- Oct. 10: Service in Memory of the Founder's Exile to Sado Island
- Oct. 13: Oeshiki: the 726th Memorial Service for the Founder
- Oct. 22–25: Training for Lay Devotees at the Kuonji Temple, Minobusan
- Nov. 1 to Feb. 10: The 100-day Ascetic Practice starts at the Hokekyoji Temple, Nakayama, Chiba
- Nov. 3: Airing of the Shogyoden Hall at the Hokekyoji Temple, Nakayama, Chiba
- Nov. 11: Service in Memory of the Komatsubara Persecution
- Nov. 13: Memorial Service for Nichizo Shonin
- Nov. 30: Graduation Ceremony of the six-month session of the Fukyo Kenshujo

by Rev. Tsuoh Yokoi

Nichiren Shonin and His Lay Followers (2)

By Rev. Kanji Tamura
Professor, Ritssho University

Toki Jonin (2)

According to Nichiren's letters, Toki Jonin assisted Nichiren Shonin to continue studying from his younger days. This means that Toki Jonin was acquainted with our Founder even before he became a follower of Nichiren.

It is confirmed that Nichiren wrote more than 40 letters to Jonin and his wife. Since Jonin was specially well versed in the teachings of Nichiren among his followers, Nichiren often showed his teachings to his followers through the letters addressed to Jonin.

Let me take up the "Bojikyoji (Forgetting the Personal Copy of the Sutra)," a letter addressed to Jonin.

In March 1267, Jonin visited Minobusan to dedicate the ashes of his mother who died a month earlier to the mountain. Nichiren then was 55 years old and Jonin, 61. After holding the memorial service for his mother, Jonin started for home. Discovering that Jonin had left his sutra behind, Nichiren, dispatched a messenger to take it to Jonin with an attached letter.

Referring to famous forgetful persons, Nichiren ridiculed Jonin saying, "Now, Jonin Shonin left behind his



Rev.
Kanji Tamura

own sutra. He may be the most forgetful person in Japan." Then Nichiren criticized the priests of other sects of Buddhism who slander Nichiren while forgetting the true intent of the Buddha. Showing how worthwhile were the deeds of past saints who sought for the Buddha's teaching even risking their own lives, Nichiren then praised Jonin's deed of filial piety even though Jonin was not a saint but an ordinary man, saying:

"Now Mr. Jonin, you are a foolish person in the Latter Age of Degeneration, and an unenlightened person unable to renounce worldly desires. You are not a layman nor a monk, but a layman in the appearance of a priest. Your mind is not good nor evil, but is like an idiotic sheep.

"Nevertheless, you had a merciful mother. In the morning, you report to the office to work for your master, and come home in the evening. Your daily life was dedicated to your mother. Your mind is nothing but filial piety.

"However, toward the end of last month, showing the mutability of 'life and death,' your mother went to the

land of the dead. I, together with you, grieved over it. Reaching the age of 90, it is orderly for a parent to go away and leave an offspring behind. Thinking it over, your lost mother will not return."

In an overwhelming grief at the loss of his mother, Jonin, hanging the ashes of his mother from his neck, traveled from Shimousa (present Chiba) to Minobusan and visited Nichiren Shonin in his hermitage. In the hermitage, Nichiren was chanting the sutras and lecturing on them. Nichiren continues:

"Shown the way into the hermitage by a guide, Jonin placed the ashes of his mother in front of the altar enshrining a statue of Sakyamuni Buddha, threw his entire body on the floor, put his hands together and opened both eyes to pay respect to Him. Then, the grief of Jonin disappeared all at once when he realized that his head was the head of his parents, his legs were the legs of his parents, his ten fingers were the ten fingers of his parents and his mouth was the mouth of his parents; they were like the seed and fruit and body and shadow."

Thus Nichiren Shonin taught that Jonin and his parents achieved "the attainment of Buddhahood with their present bodies" by having the same faith. Jonin was fully satisfied with the



A statue of Nichijo enshrined at Nichihonji Temple, Nakamura, Chiba

memorial services for his mother on Minobusan and started out on his way home.

In his letter, Nichiren Shonin teaches us many things: 1. leaving ashes of the deceased in the care of an acquainted priest and asking him to conduct memorial services; 2. Nichiren Shonin was loudly chanting sutras and making lectures on them daily; 3. Sakyamuni Buddha lies at the root of our faith in the Lotus Sutra; 4. our mind and body always reside with our parents, and we are living with our ancestors, making it important for us to hold memorial service for our ancestors; 5. the attainment of Buddhahood by our deceased parents realizes our attainment of Buddhahood through prayers for the deceased.

How do you interpret this letter of Nichiren Shonin?

(Trans. K. S.)
(to be continued)

People I'll Always Remember (12)

By Rev. Ryusho Matsuda



'We Will Be Attending at Somewhere in Gohonzon'

Dear Devoted Nichiren Buddhists,

Everybody in this world wishes to have happiness in daily life and to end this life peacefully. As Nichiren Buddhists, we believe the best way to attain this goal is exemplified by the life of Nichiren Shonin.

I often wonder what Nichiren Shonin was thinking on his deathbed in October, 1282. I believe that he might have asked at least the following three questions of himself.

1. Did I follow the teaching of the Buddha?
2. Will the true teaching (the Lotus Sutra) be spread in the future?
3. What will happen when I die?

Regarding the first question, I think he could bravely and confidently answer, "Yes, I did follow the teaching of the Buddha." After long study, he found the ultimate truth that will save all people including himself, and he concluded: "All the good deeds and virtues of the Buddha Sakyamuni are manifested in the title of the Lotus Sutra. However sinful we may be, we shall be naturally endowed with all the deeds and virtues of the Buddha if we adhere to these five characters [of the Odaimoku]."

Regarding the second question, he might have foreseen that the Lotus Sutra would spread in the future. A few days before his passing, he selected six senior disciples and spoke to them, instructing them on how to carry out his work. Finally, he called the youngest disciple, thirteen-year-old Nichizo, and gave him the particular mission of converting the Imperial fam-

ily in Kyoto. It was his wish and hope that all people in the future would practice the Lotus Sutra.

Now 726 years after his passing, can we say that his wishes and hopes were realized? Of course, we see so many people who have faith in the Odaimoku throughout the world. However, he might say, "Not Yet! Look! There are still so many people who have not yet heard even a phrase of the Lotus Sutra." He might admonish us in this way. In other words, on behalf of him, it is our task to spread his teaching to our neighbors and community.

As for the third question, based on his faith in the Lotus Sutra he could confidently answer, "I will go back to the Buddha-World." The Lotus Sutra Ch. 2 states, "All things are from the outset in the state of tranquil extinction. The Buddha's sons who complete the practice of the Way will become Buddhas in their future lives." Ch. 12 states, "Good men or women in the future who hear this sutra with faithful respect caused by their pure minds and have no doubts will be reborn before the Buddhas of the worlds of the ten quarters." Nichiren believed this and taught his followers not to be afraid of death.

We find this conviction in many letters written to his followers. He frequently stated that, "I will meet you at the preaching site of Sakyamuni Buddha." He was sure that he would be going to the Buddha-World.

Many people are afraid of death, because they do not know when and where death will come and what will happen when they die. It is impossible

for ordinary people like us to know where we are going after death.

Many religious books and philosophy books talk about this problem. But nobody has returned from death to explain what happened when they died. It is a question that goes beyond our ability to find empirical evidence.

Is it, then, a meaningless question? If we are not sure of where we are ultimately going, then do we have to give up asking such questions? Right here, where the limits of empirical verification meet the need for existential meaning, we see how important faith is.

Even though we are not sure of our ultimate destination, we must nevertheless make a decisive choice to give our lives meaning.

I read a story of a lady in Japan who was told she had only three months left to live due to a terminal cancer. She was a famous public reciter, particularly known for her readings of Lafcadio Hearn's works.

She had many requests for her performance from all over, and after thinking over what she was told by her doctor, she decided to accept one request for her final performance and made an appointment to perform it six months later.

It was amazing that she performed it so successfully, though she was already unable to remain standing. After that performance, she gradually weakened. One day, she said to her husband, "When I die, my soul will jump into your mind. Is that ok?" Her husband could not refuse and nodded his agreement gently.

Then she started saying to her children, relatives, and nurses, "I will enter into his body." Her husband just smiled at her when she said this. After saying this, her mind became at ease and peaceful and she died quietly in her husband's arms.

Like this lady who trusted in her husband and found refuge in him, we

can have a confidence in the future through our practice and faith in the Buddha. Like the husband, the Buddha will respond to our trust with warmth and compassion providing a secure refuge. In this way we will be able to face death fearlessly.

Now, how about Nichiren Shonin? What was Nichiren Shonin's vision for his future? Ch. 1 of the Lotus Sutra clearly explains the setting of the drama, "Who, Where, When, and What". Chs. 11, 15, and 16 compose the central drama and revelation of the sutra, which reveals that Sakyamuni Buddha is the Original Buddha and that Mt. Sacred Eagle is the place where Sakyamuni Buddha has been teaching from the remotest past. For that reason, Nichiren Shonin says, "I will meet you on Mt. Sacred Eagle." This was his clear vision of the Buddha-World.

Can we, also, have a clear vision of Mt. Sacred Eagle? Not many people are able to. Therefore, Nichiren Shonin wrote the Great Mandala Gohonzon, as the expression of the Dharma World that includes Sakyamuni Buddha and Many Treasure Buddha in the Stupa of Treasures. The other Buddhas and the four bodhisattvas, such as Superior Practice, standing outside the stupa are their attendants.

When we have faith in Gohonzon, we will also be attending at the site of Mt. Sacred Eagle, or somewhere in Gohonzon. As written in the Lotus Sutra Ch. 5, "Having heard these teachings, they became peaceful in their present lives. In their future lives, they will have rebirths in good places, and enjoy pleasures by practicing the Way, and hear these teachings again."

We should be able to fulfill our wishes with conviction in these words, and thereby find ourselves embraced by the rays of wisdom and compassion of the Buddha.

With Gassho

(The End)

'I Owe My Parents Tremendous Debt'

By Shami Ryusho Jeffus
Boston Myogyoji Sangha

Several years ago I approached Rev. Ryuoh Faulconer about becoming a Nichiren Shu minister. At that time he told me he would only consider accepting someone to train if they lived in Portland, Oregon. Shortly after my Father passed away I wrapped up my personal life here in North Carolina and moved to Portland.

During the first couple of years I worked closely with Rev. Faulconer at the Portland Nichiren Buddhist Temple. During that time, under his guidance and effort, we saw many people begin their practice as Nichiren Buddhists. By holding services every morning and regular Shodaigyo meditation services every week, we all learned many valuable things about the practice of Nichiren Shu and appreciation for the Lotus Sutra.

At the same time I enrolled at the Portland State University, going back to college to finish up where I had left off 40 years earlier. Between being enrolled in college full time and helping Rev. Faulconer at the temple I was constantly busy, but have many wonderful golden memories. Then in February of 2006 Rev. Faulconer finally allowed me to take Tokudo, the first formal ceremony in the process to becoming a Nichiren Shu minister.

I remember at that ceremony in front of 30 or more of my classmates and friends from Portland, I took Jukai, had my head shaved, and received my robes. I could not help but have tears welled up in my eyes.

It was difficult for me to say my part without crying. This was the fulfillment of a life-long desire of mine. From the time when I was barely 20

years old I had wanted to become a Buddhist priest. At that time the way was blocked to me because of language and a variety of other issues, but the desire remained there.

Earlier this year, Rev. Faulconer was formally transferred to Boston and he told me he felt it was time I return to Charlotte, North Carolina and begin the work of spreading the Dharma and build a temple there.

He said I should begin the work as soon as I could graduate and finish my degree. In March I graduated and within a couple of weeks I had my personal belongings packed and loaded onto a truck to begin the cross-country trip.

Before leaving Charlotte I had worked with several women in the area who were interested in Nichiren Buddhism. When I returned I contacted them and together we have begun the work of building a Sangha here in the South.

In addition, there was one person in South Carolina, about two hours drive away, who also wanted to join with us. Since returning one other individual has been attending on a regular basis and contributes in many valuable ways to our Sangha, even though he has not officially joined Nichiren Shu.

A couple of months ago I finalized the purchase on a building in an area of town which is both residential and a business area, as well as home to several churches.

I have spent the past several months working on fixing it up so that a temple could be in the front part and living space in the back.

We have a nice large room for the Hondo and another room that serves as dormitory space and library.

In October we welcomed Rev. Faulconer to Charlotte to perform a blessing on our space as well as celebrate Oeshiki. Additionally we had an open house during which time we welcomed some of our friends and supporters.

At that event we had two of the young men stay overnight and experience practice in a slightly more intense training atmosphere. It was a good opportunity for us all to practice the Dharma together and celebrate our new home.

Weekly I conduct Shodaigyo meditation service as well as Sunday morning services. We have been able to welcome one student from the University of North Carolina Charlotte to one of the Shodaigyo sessions and assisted her with researching Buddhism.

During our conversation after Shodaigyo she asked me a question about whether as Buddhists we were persecuted by Christians in this community. It made me stop for a moment to consider how to reply. This question did bring to my mind one significant point, and that is education.

My reply was that we were not directly persecuted, and probably it was because people here, especially in Charlotte, are not even aware of Buddhism except as an ethnic practice supporting certain

non-Caucasian populations.

It made me really consider the work I have to do to spread Buddhism here. It is not just a matter of teaching people about Nichiren Shu, it is also about making people aware there is another way to live, that there is another religion which provides answers to life's many questions.

Next year I will go to Shingyo Dojo, the time will pass rapidly between now and then. It is with great excitement and with great reservation I prepare for that time. Constantly, in the back of my mind is the great mission I have accepted and what a tremendous responsibility it is. Also, I am reminded of how fortunate I am to be able to carry out Nichiren's mandate to teach others the Lotus Sutra.

Finally, I must add, all of this would not be possible without the tremendous debt I owe to my parents. It is because of them that I am able to try to spread the Dharma, they have provided me with a wonderful inheritance, allowing me opportunities I would not have on my own.



Shami Ryusho Jeffus active at missionary work

'Why Did You Decide to Become a Priest?'



Shami Kanjo Bassett and Rev. Kanshin Mochida

By Shami Joel Kanjo Bassett
Honkyuji Temple, Tokyo

The hardest question I had to answer at the shami test week in Minobusan last September was the interview session. The interviewer asked, "Why did you decide to become a priest?"

Many answers came to mind, only one made it out of my mouth: "Because of my mother's death . . ." Going on about it was selfish and pointless so I kept it at that.

Even so it felt like being on the hot seat for a while. When I got out, Shami Sorenson, next in line said, "That was quick,

you were only in there for a minute."

The rest of test week at Minobusan was challenging but lots of fun, like being back at college again only this time with clarity, purpose and peace of mind.

On the best days training is like that, challenging and fun, with clarity and purpose. On one level becoming a shami and training at Sensei's temple seems hard.

In one year there has been an endless amount to do with little free time to do it, but things have gotten done. Not because of me of course but from the incredible teaching and support from Sensei and everybody at the Honkyuji temple: Sensei's father Reverend Kansen Mochida and his wife,

Sensei's wife, and Suzuki Shonin.

Sometimes selfishness gets the best of me and training seems hard and difficult. When that happens, I remember Mom. In her last months dying at home from cancer she never complained.

She faced death bravely and peacefully. If she could do that, the least I can do is remember that and the advice she always gave my brothers and me to be thankful for all the wonderful opportunities we have been given in life and endeavor to pass them on.

(Editor's Note: Shami Kanjo, 46, Massachusetts, U.S.A., is a businessman engaged in international marketing. He is planning to enter the Spring Shingyo Dojo in 2008.)

'Pretty Busy and Structured'

By Shami Philip Ryunin Sorenson
Boston Myogyoji Sangha

My name is Shami Philip Ryunin Sorenson, and I am currently living and training at Joenji temple in Shinjuku, Tokyo. I arrived at Joenji six months ago for training in preparation for attending Shingyo Dojo in the future. I am happy to be here and grateful for the people who had faith in me.

Life here is pretty busy and is

structured, but it's never dull or boring. There is not a day that passes that I do not learn something new or different. I am grateful to the Bishop and all the ministers here for their advice and patience in training me.

I sincerely feel that they want me to succeed and be a good minister in the future. When I felt sad or depressed or homesick, they always had a smile and words of encouragement. At first I felt like an outsider, but as time has gone by, I have had more

responsibility and have become more of a part of the team. All of my frustrations and worries have melted away as each day passes.

I feel as if I have made many new friends who I will miss when I leave. I am currently training to take the chanting test on December 3.

In Gassho



Shami Ryunin Sorenson, now a part of the team

Pilgrimage to Minobusan from Southeast Asia

By Derrick Teh
Penang Ichinenji Temple

Ever since May 2002, when 88 members from Penang Nichiren Shu Buddhist Association were converted to Nichiren Shu, pilgrimage to Minobusan was the ultimate goal for all Penang Nichiren Shu members. That included my family and me.

From that moment, I have quietly prayed to the Gohonzon every single day hoping that one day I will be able to take my whole family to Minobusan to express our sincere gratitude to Nichiren for blessing us with good health and happiness.

My dreams and my prayers became a reality on October 11, 2007, when our beloved Rev. Myosho Obata organized a pilgrimage to Minobusan for the Southeast Asian members. A total of 35 members from the S.E.A, 14 from Penang, 2 from Jakarta, 2 from Klang, and 17 from Singapore, went on this holy trip. Deep inside my heart I was really happy that Nichiren had answered my prayers. As it was our first pilgrimage trip, as well as the first experience for my three daughters to travel aboard an airplane, we shall always cherish the experience forever in our hearts.



Rev. Obata and members receiving temple seal stamped on their stamp book



"Okaicho" unveiling service in the main hall

Looking back nine years, when I first started to practice Nichiren Buddhism, I was the only one to have faith in the Gohonzon. And now my wife as well as our three daughters have joined me. Not only that, occasionally my parents, brothers, sisters, mother-in-law and sisters-in-law also have joined us for prayers in our temple. I really hope that some day, they too will have faith in the Gohonzon.

When I look back, I can see how my faith and practice have changed my life. I am deeply impressed by the power of chanting "NAMU MYOHO RENGE KYO."

Here I would like to share with you one of my experiences on "Praying for healing the sick." I am rather observant of people who suffer from illness and will normally pray for them. Originally, the list of people that I chanted for was my parents and close relatives. Gradually, my list has grown to include my temple members, friends, and colleagues and sometimes, total strangers (usually from the newspapers). There was one incident that my friend's mother of seventy-some years old went into a coma after a fall and she had to undergo cranial surgery. I quickly knelt down in front of my Gohonzon to pray for her. Two days later I received the good news from my friend that her mother had regained consciousness and was slowly recovering. When I got this good news, I was really stunned! I quickly knelt down expressing my gratitude to the Gohonzon. I visited her at the hospital and put my hand on her forehead while she was asleep and chanted three times NAMU MYOHO RENGE KYO. That was really a miracle. It is really nice to chant for others and see their well being, and it really helps to strengthen my faith.

Coming back to our pilgrimage, on October 12, 2007 evening, we reached Minobusan. The atmosphere there was so amazing, the air



Memory of the pilgrimage to Minobusan

was so fresh and cool. And the temple was so unique and beautiful. It was definitely one of the most impressive temples that I have ever seen!

It was really our dream to visit Minobusan and pay our respect and express our sincere gratitude to Nichiren in front of Nichiren's mausoleum. The members offered incense and chanted together with Rev. Myosho Obata.

We also visited the actual site of Nichiren's cottage and observed the Oeshiki Ceremony in the Main Hall (Hondo). The beating of drums and the chanting of "Namu Myoho Renge Kyo" in the Main Hall made us feel as though we had reached the Mt. Grdhrakuta (Sacred Eagle), the place where Sakyamuni Buddha preached the Lotus Sutra. We also felt that our Founder, Nichiren Shonin, was with us chanting together.

Some members went to the museum beneath the Main Hall, where many of the Nichiren's calligraphy, his portrait, and the other treasures are kept.

Due to time constraint, the members did not have the chance to walk the 287 steps, "Steps of Enlightenment" heading up to the Kuonji Temple. We shall return to accomplish this walk in the year 2010.

Besides Minobusan, we also dropped by Kitayama Hommonji Temple, Iwamoto Jissoji Temple and also our beloved Rev Obata's Temple, the Chotokuji Temple.

We were really impressed and touched by the warm and wonderful welcome by Rev. Chosho Obata, Rev. Myosho Obata's husband, and his members at the Chotokuji Temple.

Rev Chosho Obata performed a



Mr. Teh and his family

Lotus Blessing for all of us and after that the members were busy wandering around the temple and taking photographs (like tourists!). It was really a majestic temple with a nice hillside view. At night, we had a grand dinner, followed by a dialogue with Rev Chosho Obata and his members. We really enjoyed ourselves very much, singing and dancing. We will always remember the song "Unchained Melody" which was sung by Rev. Chosho Obata. A compliment from all the members: he has a marvelous voice.

Thank you very much Rev. Chosho Obata and Rev. Myosho Obata for your kind hospitality. We really appreciated it. May the Buddha Bless All of You!

We have really gained lots of experiences among members and strengthened our faith during this trip. After returning home, the members are still so excited and happy to share the wonderful experiences with other members. This has inspired many members to want to visit Minobusan in the year 2010. See you again on Minobusan in the year 2010!

Church Events

HONOLULU

Foster Garden

By Ms. Carol Adams, member of the Honolulu Mission

On September 22, 2007, I attended the Mary Foster Birthday Festival. The celebration of Mary Foster's life was held under the Bodhi tree (ficus religiosa) at the Foster Botanical Garden. The program included Taiko drummers, speakers, and Hawaiian, Indian, and Thai dancers.

This was my first visit to Foster Garden. I was very curious about the Bodhi tree after reading an article

about the upcoming festival and Mary Foster's interest in Buddhism.

The Foster Garden Bodhi tree is more than 90 years old. It was propagated from a Bodhi tree plant in Ceylon (now Sri Lanka). Anagarika Dharmapala, a famous Ceylonese Buddhist teacher, presented the tree to Mary Foster in 1913.

Mary Mikahala Robinson Foster's interest in Buddhism developed after her first meeting with Dharmapala in 1893. She was very troubled after her husband died and found comfort in Buddhism.

She made donations to the Ceylonese Bodhi Society, the temple at the Bodhi Gaya in India and funded the Foster-Robinson Hospital for the

Poor, which today is part of the Colombo General Hospital in Sri Lanka.

In Hawaii, Foster funded a small Buddhist temple on Fort Lane and gave land on Pali Highway to the Hompa Hongwanji Mission.

When I first saw the Bodhi tree, I was disappointed. At a glance, the tree did not look healthy because its tall and twisted large trunk looked very dry. The tree is growing unevenly and is leaning to the right.

The left side of the tree seems to be missing altogether. However, as I sat under this Bodhi tree for the two-hour program, its beauty suddenly struck me. The tree stands tall and its green leaves are very distinctive with

its heart-shaped, extended tips. I found myself at peace and very relaxed as the leaves fluttered in the gentle breeze. The leaves made their own melody.

There are three other Bodhi trees in Honolulu. They are located at the Honolulu Myohoji Mission on Nuuanu Ave., on the University of Hawaii Manoa campus and at the Jodo Mission on Makiki Street.

We don't know very much about Mary Foster. However, her legacy includes the Foster Botanical Garden and contributions to many Buddhist causes. Her efforts blend the spirit of Hawaii and spirituality of Buddhism. On that September morning, we celebrated it under the Bodhi tree.



Church Events

By Sandra Seki

LOS ANGELES

Yakisoba Fund Raisere

The annual Yakisoba Luncheon was held in the dining hall on Sunday, Nov. 18 from 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. The cost per serving was \$6. The profit will be used for the maintenance of the temple. Many people say, "The Nichiren's Yakisoba is so delicious! You can freeze it for a meal later!"

Eitaikeo Memorial Service

The annual Eitaikeo (Perpetual Memorial Service) was held at 10 a.m., Sunday, November 18.

This service is conducted for the deceased who are registered on the temple's perpetual memorial record. Over 265 names of the deceased ancestors have been registered since the temple began this service in the 1950's. During the service, Rev. Inoue prayed

for the deceased by reading out their names.

The temple prays for the deceased once a year during this Perpetual Memorial Service so that they may attain Buddhahood. All members and their families are encouraged to attend this service. If you have any questions regarding the Eitaikeo, please contact the temple.

Annual Cleanup

Rev. Inoue always greatly appreciates all of the volunteers' help in keeping the temple clean and neat throughout the year. He says that the member's volunteer work will help them and others attain Buddhahood quicker. The annual year end cleanup will be held on December 8 from 9 a.m. The Women's Club will be serving lunch to all the volunteers.

Pigeon Control

In recent years, the temple

has been having pigeon problems. Many different applications and techniques have been tried. However, nothing worked so far.

On October 2, the temple applied new eco-friendly products: Pignx made from natural chemicals and ingredients found in plants. The venter cleaned up and washed out the droppings first, then three workers went up to the roof and applied the gel product.

The application is supposed to work for two to three years. We have observed the reaction of the pigeons. They looked confused and walked on the ground as if they had consumed a whole bottle of sake. As the vendor explained, the pigeons were experiencing the odor or gas that is given off by the gel and will now stay away from the smell.

If you see any pigeons at the temple, please let us know. We are monitoring

their activities.

HONOLULU

Why do Buddhists Chant?

By Rev. Shingyo Imai

Many people ask me why Buddhist believers chant something like "Namu Myoho Renge Kyo," "Namu Amida-butsu," and "Namu Daishi Henjokongo."

Not only Japanese Buddhists but also, Korean, Chinese, Tibetan, South East Asians and Indian people chant names of Buddhas, bodhisattvas and guardian deities.

In Buddhism, to call the name of the worshipped objects is important because in Buddhism, three types of practice: practice by the body, the mouth, and the mind, are called for.

These are called in Japanese, "Shin (body), Ku (mouth), I (mind) no sango" (three practices).

If you think of the Buddha on His teaching, say it with your voice and do it with your body. That's the meaning of the "Shin-Ku-I-no Sango." We chant Namu Myoho Renge Kyo. Namu means "I devote myself to..." and

Renge Kyo means "the Wonderful Dharma Lotus Flower Sutra." So the meaning of Namu Myoho Renge Kyo is that I devote myself to the teachings of the Lotus Sutra.

It is said that the Lotus Sutra is the highest teaching of the Buddha. Therefore, whenever we think of the Buddha and his highest teachings, we say the name of it and we practice the teachings of the Lotus Sutra.

That is the reason why we chant!

New Year's Basket

The Mission is planning to hold a fund raiser by arranging some special New Year Baskets with New Year Decorations. They will include Omamori amulets, Soba and Soba sauce, Eto towel (Year of the Rat), a rake for good business, Japanese fan etc. Each basket will be blessed by ministers of the Mission.

Also included are English directions on how to prepare soba and explanations of the omamori amulets and rake for good business. It is great for a New Year gift. Please order them now from your Mission.

In Search of Bodhisattvas: 'I Would Like to Engage in the Work of Easing Pain of Others'

By Rev. Kanto Tsukamoto
Jogyoji Temple, London

I visited Finland toward the end of June and held a seminar on Buddhism in Kokkola, a port town, 450 kilometers or so to the north of Helsinki, the capital of Finland, for two days, June 30 and July 1.

Themes of the seminar were the life of Sakyamuni Buddha, a history of Buddhism, and fundamental Buddhist teachings. Participants, about 10 in number, practiced meditation. Most of them had never heard of Buddhism before, and the seminar was popular among them. A local group offered to co-sponsor another seminar on Buddhism.

The Evangelical Lutheran Church



Participants of the seminar practicing meditation

is the state religion of Finland. Hence, most of the people are Christians. It was very meaningful, I believe, to have held a seminar on Buddhism in a rural port town where the population has never had a chance to know about Buddhism.

Tom Stenman is the person who made preparations for the seminar. A follower of Nichiren Buddhism, Tom is living with his wife Janna and their three-year-old daughter, Poppy. Tom is a seeker of truth, having gone through many ordeals before he met with the Lotus Sutra.

Now 37 years of age, his ordeal started from the time of his birth. A difficult delivery caused damages to his brain. The capacity of his memory was impaired. He had difficulty in memorizing. It took longer for him to learn than others.

His brothers treated him with love. One of them, 7 years older, gave Tom a drum, which brought new hope to him. He was awakened to music and found joy in singing. However, the ordeal was merciless.

The kind broth-

er, who gave Tom a drum, took his own life at 17 years of age. The incident was engraved deeply in the mind of pure-hearted Tom. His parents were divorced when Tom was 13 years old. After entering high school, he became addicted to alcohol and drugs. However, he did not give up singing. At around 17, he formed a music group, and started holding concerts.

At 21, he released his first single CD "Spring," which proved to be a big hit on the radio. His first album, "Fresh" was released at age 23. Soon after, he suffered from mental illness resulting from the mental damage he received in his childhood. He repeatedly entered a mental hospital. However, he did not give up singing. His tender voice brought peace to people's minds. At one time, he ranked as the most popular singer at a Swedish radio station. He was married to his first wife at 26.

He lost all his property at 31 due to the business failure of his wife. From around this time, he was awakened to Buddhism, and quit drinking. However, he was divorced. At 33, he released the second album, "Instant Elation" and got married with Janna, and was blessed with a daughter, Poppy.

Hardships continued to fall on him. However, he became mentally



Tom and Poppy

stable as he practiced meditation of Buddhism. His recovery from mental illness was so remarkable that it astonished his doctor. Presently, he does not drink even a drop of alcohol. By chanting the Odaimoku daily, he continues music activities.

"I would like to engage in the work of easing the pain of others since I think I am competent to do so," said Tom.

He is really a bodhisattva. It is because, suffering from hardships himself, he is resolved to help others overcome their difficulties. Nichiren Shonin fought against hardships not only to spread the Lotus Sutra. He risked his own life in his effort to relieve people from their sufferings, receiving their sufferings as his own. He was awakened to the mission of saving people entrusted by the Buddha Sakyamuni.

When Tom came across the Lotus Sutra, he was awakened to the mission of bodhisattva. He can be claimed to be one of the "bodhisattvas appearing from the soil."

Nichiren Shu News

c/o NICHIREN SHU Shumuin

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