

# Nichiren Shu News

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## New Year's Greeting: 'Let Us Chant the Odaimoku to Develop Buddha-nature'

By Archbishop Nichiji Sakai,  
Nichiren Shu Order

Happy New Year to you all! We hope to keep our mind and body in good shape and to have vivid and cheerful days throughout the year.

Venerable Rev. Taido Matsubara, the President of the Namu Association, who will be 101 years old this year, says in his poem:

No matter who you are or no matter who I am,

We are all the children of the Buddha.

We all have the Enlightened One in our minds.

Let us respect each other.

Let us believe each other.

It means that all human beings have beautiful seeds in them. Yet these seeds will never germinate if there is no sun to warm them and no water to nourish them. Likewise, unless it is carefully nurtured, a seed of minds (a Buddha-seed) cannot develop itself, and will turn into a waste of talent.

Then, how can we grow a beautiful

seed in our minds?

Nichiren Shonin preaches in his letter written to Nun Myoho-ama, "Say 'Namu Myoho Renge Kyo' and your Buddha-nature will never fail to come out."

This is an important point. The Odaimoku, 'Namu Myoho Renge Kyo,' extracts the essence of the Lotus Sutra. Therefore, to chant 'Namu Myoho Renge Kyo' means to devote all yourself to the Lotus Sutra, to take in the essence of the Lotus Sutra.

'Namu Myoho Renge Kyo' which Nichiren Shonin uttered is the assimilation of himself into the title itself; in short, Nichiren Shonin himself is 'Namu Myoho Renge Kyo.'

Following the teaching of the Lotus Sutra, we chant 'Namu Myoho Renge Kyo' morning and evening. That is the sunlight and nourishment of water to cultivate our Buddha-seeds.

The Zen master Hakuin, who is said to have restored the Rinzai Zen in Japan, tells us, "No matter how anxious, painful, sad, or happy you may

feel, even when you are asleep or awake, or when you stand up or sit, you who practice the teaching of the Lotus Sutra should not stop chanting the sacred title, 'Namu Myoho Renge Kyo,' at any moment. By using this sacred title as a weapon, you should chant 'Namu Myoho Renge Kyo,' sincerely wishing to see the true aspect of the Lotus Sutra with your own eyes."

By chanting the sacred title, 'Namu Myoho Renge Kyo,' I hope you all develop Buddha-nature and deepen the self-awareness of being the true aspect of human beings throughout the year.

(Trans. by Rev. Sensho Komukai)



Archbishop Nichiji Sakai

## 'The Saha World Is the Pure Land of the Original True Buddha'

By Archbishop Joshin Komatsu,  
Chief Administrator,  
Nichiren Shu Order

Our "Rissho Ankoku-Odaimoku Kechien Campaign" earnestly started on April 1 last year. It is recommended that all Nichiren Buddhists should pay homage to our Founder's mountain, Minobusan. Induced by Nichiren Buddhists, many non-Nichiren Buddhists visited Minobusan. I heard that they are all delighted, having a joyful time.

Ministers and lay devotees have kept the mausoleum of Nichiren Shonin as a sacred place where our Founder's spirit has resided for more than 700 years since it was established according to his will. I am sure Minobusan will remain as a holy mountain where people feel at peace.

We are so fortunate to follow the right steps Nichiren Shonin showed us and to have an opportunity to chant the Odaimoku, 'Namu Myoho Renge Kyo,' that we know how precious it is to have faith in him and how delightful it is to have a wonderful life. Turning to the world, however, we find it covered with miserable and depressing events. Under such a stressful condition people today are tired of living and at a loss for what they should be.



Archbishop Joshin Komatsu

Therefore, I can't stop wishing that the world would be as sacred a place as Minobusan because I feel the atmosphere of Minobusan, where I hear 'Namu Myoho Renge Kyo' chanted constantly, is really valuable.

As we try to promote the "Rissho Ankoku-Odaimoku Kechien Campaign" worldwide, let me briefly explain the attitude we Nichiren Buddhists should take.

In a famous novel, "Night on the Galactic Railroad" written by Kenji

Miyazawa, there was a scene in which Giovanni says, "I think we do not have to go to heaven. My teacher told me that we must make a better world here than heaven." We can sense a strong message of Nichiren Shonin in each word of Kenji Miyazawa, who was a devotee of the Lotus Sutra. "Here" mentioned by Giovanni is no other than where we live. "My teacher" can be Sakyamuni Buddha or Nichiren Shonin.

The Original Sakyamuni Buddha was, is and will be wishing to lead us all to Buddhahood, while Nichiren Shonin taught us that this Saha World where we all endure sufferings, is the Pure Land of the Original True Buddha.

Accordingly, we find that the vow to make this world better than any other world, which Kenji Miyazawa mentions through Giovanni, is equal to the one that Nichiren Shonin is wishing to build in this world by establishing righteousness, that is, to set up a peaceful Buddha-land always full of heavenly and human beings.

Following the way of Never-Despising Bodhisattva, who only bows and praises anybody, Nichiren Shonin submitted to the military government his "Essay to Establish Righteousness to Secure the Peace of Our

Country," trying to plant a Buddha-seed in people's mind, though he had to go through a severe life. In his poem "Be not Defeated by the Rain..." Kenji Miyazawa looked on a blockhead as himself who would like to have a Bodhisattva life.

Looking back on their careers, I think both Nichiren and Kenji Miyazawa were able to sense people's sorrow and suffering much more keenly than any other person.

Our campaign, the goal of which is to establish a peaceful land with peaceful minds by respecting each other, largely depends on the efforts of Nichiren Buddhists. Each individual all over the world is asked to be a devotee to the Lotus Sutra, who as a Bodhisattva from the soil or as a "blockhead" can have a deep sympathy for all the joy, and pleasure, or sorrow and suffering of others.

(Trans. by Rev. Sensho Komukai)

### Events

December 2007–January 2008

- Dec. 8: Buddha's Enlightenment Day
- Dec. 5–9: 3rd Sodorin Training Course at the Seichoji Temple, Chiba, attended by 27 shamis, including four from overseas in preparation for the Shingyo Dojo
- Jan. 1: Memorial Day Service for Nichiji Shonin
- Jan. 13: Otoko-e, New Year's event on Minobusan to offer greetings to our Founder
- Jan. 21: Memorial Day Service for Nichiro Shonin

by Rev. Tsuoh Yokoi

# The Life of Sakyamuni Buddha (3)

By Rev. Shinkai Oikawa, Litt. D.

## 5. Studies in the olden times were to learn by heart

Although Sakyamuni liked to escape from such a chaotic world, He could not avoid practicing such martial arts as archery and wrestling. Of course He studied, too. As for studies, they had neither letters nor written sutras in those days. Therefore, all they had to do for studies was to learn by heart, namely stuffing their heads with knowledge.

Letters appeared in the times of Emperor Asoka, around 300 B.C. We know this because there exist the rock edicts of Asoka that are a collection of inscriptions carved in a natural rock face. There still remain seventeen or eighteen such edicts in India. Researchers proved that these are the letters of King Asoka's times, about 300 B.C. These cannot be called letters, because they are very plain and elementary.

Ordinary letters appeared in India about 2,000 years ago, around the beginning of the Christian Era, and sutras began to be written. Indian letters are phonograms that show only sounds, not ideograms like Chinese characters that show meanings from their own shapes.

Sutras were all memorized in the olden times, and people were reluctant to write sutras in letters because they would not be memorized if written in letters or characters. People worked hard to memorize sutras when there were no letters or characters. We do not try to memorize words or characters today because we have personal computers. Convenience makes us all degenerate.

Sutras were written in letters 2,000 years ago. Once sutras were written, people did not try to memorize them, though they memorized them very hard before. At first, they insisted that they would never write sutras. But sutras were written at last, because people who remembered sutras all died. This is absolutely true. Once an epidemic broke out in ancient times, many people died at once because medicine was not highly developed. There are a lot of records showing that 2,000 or 3,000 people died of an epidemic. They had no means to protect themselves against



Rev. Shinkai Oikawa

the disaster at all.

Only people who are alive can learn something by heart. Almost all died and no one could memorize anything, but the Buddhist teachings had to survive even in manuscripts. Therefore, people began to write sutras for this purpose. In the beginning they were not willing to write sutras but were obliged to do so as there was no other choice.

We have already degenerated so much that we could not even read written sutras. Human beings have kept on degrading little by little. If we do not use our brain we become senile easily, I am afraid. People used their brain very hard in ancient times. I have a good example. You know the terms such as Silk Road and Tripitaka masters, don't you? It is said that they brought a lot of Buddhist sutras on camel backs on a very long journey from India to China with many difficulties. In the case of Hsüan-chuang (Genjo Sanzo), it took him 16 years to go to India and return. It is an extremely long journey, isn't it? Nowadays we can travel there aboard an airplane and be back tomorrow. But it took sixteen years to go there and return in those days. What is more, with pieces of luggage, don't you think it is very troublesome and painful?

In reality, however, it was not really so much. They did not have such a hard time. What did they do then? They memorized everything. Actually they put everything necessary for them in their brains, and came back with no heavy luggage. In fact, there are many such examples. There were some problems, of course. They sometimes forgot something important on the way home.

This is true, too.

An example is a sutra in the "Shinkokuyaku-daizo-kyo (The New Japanese Translation of the Entire Buddhist Scriptures)" which I translated. There is no latter half of the sutra. It is written on its last page, "I cannot remember any more." And then it is written, "People will come one after another to bring the same sutra as this one after me. Please add to this, then." In other words, it is said, "I brought the sutra in my memory."

Human brains are as excellent as this example. They are wonderful. For example, a pianist plays the piano without a musical score. We easily wonder how a pianist can play in this way. But it is quite possible. You all have had such a treasure as this since your birth. I hope you will do your best.

## 6. Sakyamuni's 'Leaving the Home'

As for Sakyamuni's study, we can assume He studied many things till He was 20 years old because the Indian people study till they are 20 years old.

Sakyamuni was married when He finished his studies. He married Princess Yasodharā from a neighboring country. He had a son named Rāhula. He left them and became a priest, however. Although it sounds good to be a priest, in brief, He ran away from home.

Sakyamuni discarded His wife, child, father, mother, and throne, and left home when He was 29 years old. I cannot explain how, but I can easily guess that He embittered all members of His family as a result. Why did He run away from His family, make them sad and become a priest?

It is easy to understand why if we say that He sought after "spiritual enlightenment." I suppose He was not satisfied to live in comfort in his royal palace, but was afraid He would completely degenerate soon if He continued to live such a life of luxury. He may have thought many things, I guess. At any rate,



Sakyamuni leaving his palaces on Kanthaka

He must have thought what human beings were, and whether it was good or not that He had been living in comfort in order to save old people, sick people, dead people and people with problems living in the towns. Such thoughts may have driven Him to run away from home. This is the starting point of religion.

Nevertheless, it is a drastic decision for anyone to become a priest by discarding his family. Sakyamuni made such a drastic decision at the age of 29. Up until then Sakyamuni wore showy clothes, had three palaces to live in for summer, winter and the rainy season, and got away with doing everything in His own way with ladies in attendance around Him. And we can guess He had three wives, including well-known Yasodharā. He led such a happy life. Everything got changed one day suddenly.

Sakyamuni left his palaces on the back of His favorite horse named Kanthaka, waded across the Anoma River on the state border, shaved His own hair by Himself, took off all His clothes, put on the shabby clothes of a hunter, that is to say, rags of wandering around in the woods, and set out on a journey for Buddhist ascetic practices with the very least of personal belongings. As for the least of personal belongings, there are eight for a priest: three pieces of robes or "three robes," that is to say, an outer robe, a middle robe and an under robe. And then comes an alms-bowl. Next, a belt and a razor for shaving the head. The seventh consists of needles and threads for sewing. The eighth, a water strainer to filter muddy river water before drinking it. These are eight pieces of personal belongings for a priest. Sakyamuni started on a journey for Buddhist ascetic practices with them.

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

# Year of the Rat of Senior Earth

By Rev. Shoko Ito  
President, Nichiren Shu Newspaper

This year's animal is the rat. The 12 animals of the Asian lunar calendar are well known. Actually there are 60 combinations in the calendar from the rat of senior wood (kinoe-ne) to the boar of junior water (mizunoto-i) based on the 12 animals and the 5 components of the world. The 60th birthday is called a circuit of the calendar.

Thirty-six years ago falls in the same year of the rat of senior earth (tsuchinoe-ne). A scene of my college life is fondly remembered as I was studying at the Rissho University in those years. Professor Eishu Miyazaki was teaching us the history of Nichiren Shu.

Prof. Miyazaki's "A Study of the Forbidden Fujū-fuse (not receiving nor



Rev. Shoko Ito

giving) School" and "the Origin and Development of the Fujū-fuse School" are still highly regarded as masterpieces in the study of Nichiren Buddhism.

Under Prof. Miyazaki's guidance, I studied "Bandai-kikyō-roku (Record of the Monastic Mirror for 10,000 years)," a selection of the writings of Fujū-fuse scholars.

I found the following phrase in the writing, "On the 20th of the 12th month in the year of the rat of senior earth, while I (Nichio) was talking with

Nikkei in front of the master (Nichiden), the master said, 'The condition of the world is getting terrible. People are tired and cannot bear anymore. You should read the chapters of the Magic City and Encouragement over and over.'"

This was an instruction of Nichiden, the 20th head priest of the Myokakuji Temple of Kyoto, left to Nichio, who succeeded his master as the head priest of the temple.

It was the year of the rat of senior earth, 1588, just 420 years ago. I feel that this happened not so long ago as it was only seven circuits of the calendar.

Toyotomi Hideyoshi came into power after Oda Nobunaga on his way to unifying the country. Still the era was unstable in the vortex of war. Nobunaga set fire to Mt. Hiei in 1571. The Azuchi debate, that critically dam-

aged Nichiren Buddhism, occurred in 1579. Everything was transient. Nobunaga himself was killed in Honnoji in 1582.

Both chapters of the Magic City and Encouragement show how to undergo and overcome hardships with the power of faith. I cannot recognize much difference between the current world and the world Nichiden described 420 years ago.

Our Founder, Nichiren Shonin, pictured the suffering of the people in his "Rissho Ankoku-ron." Since then, the tradition of his followers and us has been carrying on the faith while facing the real world.

Now, at the beginning of the year of the rat of senior earth, we, Nichiren followers are commissioned to spread the Odaimoku and the teaching of the Lotus Sutra. Let us do our best to serve as the nucleus of the "Odaimoku and Peace" campaign.

(Trans. by Rev. Kanshin Mochida)

# Nichiren Shonin and His Lay Followers (3)

By Rev. Kanji Tamura  
Professor, Rissho University

## Nichiren Shonin and Shijo Kingo Yorimoto (1)

Shijo Kingo (1245-1300, though some disagree) and Toki Jonin were probably the two most influential followers of Nichiren Shonin. Also called Nakatsukasa Saemonnojo, Yorimoto, as his father had been, was a retainer of the Ema (or Nagoe) family, a relative of the main branch of the Hojo clan, performing chiefly office work. Yorimoto held an imperial government post of Saemonnojo, which was known as Kingo according to the T'ang office system. Accordingly Yorimoto was also called Shijo Kingo. It is said that the Shijo family had been followers of the Hojos in Izu even before the Hojos rose against the Taira clan together with Minamoto Yoritomo, and therefore the fief of the Shijo family was located in Izu.

Shijo Kingo had been Nichiren's follower even before Nichiren was exiled to Izu. As Nichiren had a thatch hut at the Nagoe Matsubagayatsu section of Kamakura to engage in propagation activities, it was probably in the neighborhood of the Ema (Nagoe) family residence, where Kingo worked. Thus it is believed that Nichiren and Kingo became acquainted during the early days of Nichiren's propagation in Kamakura.

Kingo's wife, who was named "Nichigen" by Nichiren Shonin, was two years older than Kingo and both were devoted followers of Nichiren. It is confirmed by an existing letter that Nichigen received guidance from Nichiren when she was in the unlucky age of 33. According to Nichiren's letters, Yorimoto had no children, his fief



Rev. Kanji Tamura

was in two places, and he had three brothers (an elder and two younger).

During the Persecution of Tatsunokuchi in the ninth month of the eighth year of Bun'ei (1271), as Nichiren himself writes, many disciples and lay followers of Nichiren, as many as 999 out of 1,000 of them, retreated, causing the Nichiren Order of Buddhism to be at the brink of extinction. Shijo Kingo also was about to be deprived of feudal territories and exiled only to be saved through the mediation of his lord, Ema Mitsutoki. When Nichiren was about to be beheaded at Tatsunokuchi, Kingo together with his three brothers rushed to Nichiren who was being led to the execution ground, begging to follow him in death. Later, Nichiren writes in his letter from Minobusan, "Indeed I do remember that when I was about to be beheaded you followed me holding the muzzle of my horse and cried in agony. How will I ever forget it in the future!" It seems that Kingo's residence was then confiscated by the Kamakura military government.

Thus Shijo Kingo remained a faithful follower of Nichiren throughout his life. After escaping death at Tatsunokuchi, Nichiren then was exiled to Sado. In the second month of the ninth year of Bun'ei (1272), Nichiren, on the island of Sado, wrote the "Kaimoku-sho (Open Your Eyes to the Lotus Teaching)" as a keepsake from himself and sent it, first of all, to Shijo Kingo. It explains that Kingo was recognized as a leader of the sangha by its founder. It also shows that Kingo was

able to understand the teaching of Nichiren.

In the ninth month of the ninth year of Bun'ei (1272), Kingo sent a messenger carrying various articles of donation all the way to Sado requesting Nichiren to hold the third year memorial service for his late mother. Nichiren wrote a thank-you letter in return, stating first that the dissemination of Buddhism depends on the faith of the ruler of the country and explaining it with examples how the quality of the ruler influences the fate of a country. Nichiren continues to write in this letter that the country of those who slander the True Dharma will inevitably be destroyed and that Nichiren has encountered various difficulties as he tried to stop slandering the True Dharma.

Appreciating the various goods donated by Kingo for the third memorial service for his mother, Nichiren then praises him saying that the merit of giving a donation to a messenger of the Buddha who spreads the Lotus Sutra (e.g. Nichiren Shonin) is superior to supporting numerous Buddhas.

Nichiren further states that the Lotus Sutra is the supreme True Dharma attested to the truth by the "three Buddhas (Sakyamuni Buddha, the Buddha of Many Treasures, and Buddhas of Manifestation)." It is the "direct copy" in letters of Sakyamuni Buddha's voice preaching the True Dharma. Therefore, the Lotus Sutra itself is the living Sakyamuni Buddha.

Thus Nichiren told Kingo, "The characters of this sutra are equipped with the intent of the Buddha. For instance, the seed, seedling, and rice plant are different in appearance, but they are all equal in essence. The same is true with Sakyamuni Buddha and the letters of the Lotus Sutra; they look different but are the same in essence. Therefore, when you see the letters of the Lotus Sutra, you should consider meeting with the living Sakyamuni Buddha." And Nichiren praised Shijo Kingo saying that it was the utmost expression of filial piety to hold a memorial service through this precious Lotus Sutra and that Sakyamuni Buddha would never fail to recognize Kingo's deep kindness of sending offering all the way to the Province of Sado.

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



Statues of Shijo Kingo and Nichigen, his wife enshrined at the Habano-bo Temple, Minobusan

## The 8th Anniv. of Dragon Palace Temple: 'World Peace Depends on Our Minds'

By Rev. Sensho Komukai

The Dragon Palace Temple, Kamptee, India, marked its eighth anniversary on November 24, 2007. The service was conducted by Rev. Kansan Mochida, the leader of the delegation of the Nichiren Shu International Buddhist Friendship Association from Japan.

The temple was established on November 23, 1999, by Ms. Suleka Kumbhare with the support of Ms. Noriko Ogawa. Since then the delegation has visited it to officiate the anniversary ceremony every year on the full moon day of November.

This year some 10,000 local people attended the service and the ceremony.

At the ceremony Rev. Mochida said to the attendees, "We are very thankful and happy to know that you are chanting the Odaimoku, 'Namu Myoho Renge Kyo,' believing in Sakyamuni Buddha through the guidance of Ms. Suleka Kumbhare.

"She said eight years ago at the inauguration ceremony of the Dragon Palace Temple, 'Even the world peace depends on our minds. True peace emerges when we throw away the mind of violence, vowing not to take the lives of others. This must be done through us chanting the Odaimoku, and through encouraging others to chant the Odaimoku.'

"Please let us chant 'Namu Myoho Renge Kyo' for happiness!"



Ms. Suleka Kumbhare



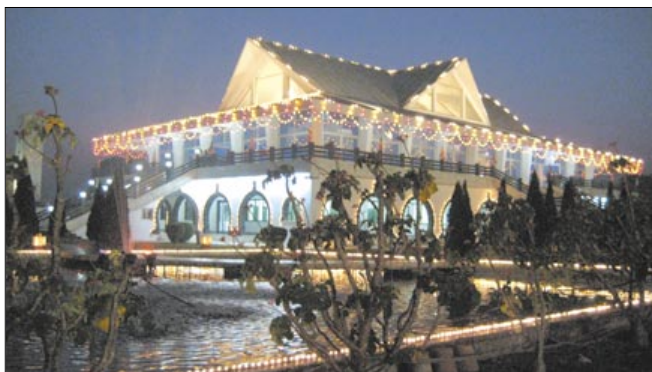
An elderly devotee



Students chanting Odaimoku



Rev. Kansan Mochida (front row, third from right) and delegation



Night view of the Dragon Palace Temple



# Church Events

By Sandra Seki

## NORTHEASTERN UNITED STATES

### Newsletter Published

The Nichiren Shu Sanghas of the Northeastern U.S. consisting of New York Nichiren Buddhist Sangha (New York, Rev. Shogen Kumakura), Nichiren Buddhist Sangha of Greater New England (Boston, Rev. Ryuoh Faulconer), Western New York Nichiren Buddhist Sangha (Buffalo, Rev. Kanjin Cederman), Rochester Nichiren Shu Buddhist Sangha (Rochester, Rev. Kanjin Cederman), and Maine Nichiren Shu Fellowship (Gorham, Maine, Rev. Ryuoh Faulconer), started issuing its newsletter.

The first winter issue was distributed last month. This newsletter named "Gyo" (Practice) will be published quarterly and it will include articles from the ministers of the Northeastern U.S. Sanghas as well as from lay members of the sangha. If anyone is interested in writing articles or comments please e-mail, call or write to Revs. Faulconer, Kumakura, or Cederman.

Rev. Ryuoh Faulconer of the Myogyoji Temple in Boston states: "A year has passed since I became the resident minister of the Boston Myogyoji. The roots of a sangha have been nurtured and sturdy roots take time to grow. I have met many wonderful people and hopefully will be able to create a bridge to help build a strong and prosperous sangha.

"Two new ministers were ordained in 2007 and both have already started creating sanghas in their respective

areas. Revs. Faulconer, Kumakura, and Cederman would like to implement new programs and practices in this part of the country. With the sanghas all being so close to each other, they would like to create an atmosphere where the sanghas could grow together.

"I hope that everyone will work toward a unified and strong group of members here in the Northeastern region. We hope to continue our efforts to spread the wonderful Dharma throughout the world."

## SAN JOSE

**Karma**  
By Rev. Arnold Matsuda

Karma refers to an action and its consequences. It is also called the law of cause and effect. Conditions in the present were caused by our actions of the body, speech, and mind in the past and conditions of the future are caused by our actions of the body, speech, and mind in the present.

Karma, however, is different from fate or destiny. The Buddha taught us that "According to the seed that is sown, so is the fruit you reap. The doer of good will gather good results. The doer of evil reaps evil results. If you plant a good seed, then you will enjoy good fruit."

So you may ask yourself, "How can I accumulate merits and bring good karma to myself, my family, friends and at large to the whole world in the future?"

I believe that the way to accumulate merit is to follow one of Buddha's fundamental teachings called the Eightfold

Noble Paths: 1) Right View, 2) Right Thought, 3) Right Speech, 4) Right Action, 5) Right Livelihood, 6) Right Effort, 7) Right Mindfulness, and 8) Right Meditation.

I believe that by following the above, we will be able to accumulate merits for a good karma in the future. Let us be grateful for the good karma that we have received and continue to accumulate merits for our future.

Let us remember and apply the concepts of the teaching throughout our daily lives so that it will pave the way towards our enlightenment as well as enrich our lives and those around us.

## HONOLULU

### Support for the Poor

The temple asks the congregation to bring toiletries like toothpaste, toothbrushes, shampoo, conditioner (things tourists may bring home from hotel bathrooms or airplane trips). These items will be taken to the River of Life Mission in the downtown area to support the homeless and indigent people as a bodhisattva practice.

### New Year's Celebration in the Japanese Culture

This year as a fundraiser, the Nichiren Mission made special New Year's baskets. Inside the baskets were several items related to New Year's celebration in Japan. Many questions were asked about why certain items were used.

Rev. Shingyo Imai has explained the significance of some of these items:

Soba: In Japan, people eat soba (any kind of soba) as the

"Toshikoshi Soba" which literally means "passing over to the new year soba." Soba is long and this means long life. People pray for a long life by eating soba at the end of the year.

Crane: "Tsuru wa sennen, Kame wa mannen," is a Japanese proverb to express long life. It means that cranes live for a thousand years and turtles live for ten thousand.

Rake: The rake is used to collect leaves. The rake with a New Year's decoration in the basket means that it will collect good luck and good business.

Salt: Salt is used to purify things in Japan. There is a small packet of Hawaiian salt in the basket, which has been blessed by the ministers.

Otoshidama: This is not in the basket but it is a tradition at New Year for children in Japan. In the U.S. children get presents at Christmas. Likewise, in Japan, children get monetary gifts called "otoshidama," from adults at New Year. "Toshi" means year and "dama" means coins, so in the past the otoshidama consisted of coins, today it has become bills!

## LAS VEGAS

### 'Radiance'

This is the name of the first newsletter published by Rev. Shokai Kanai, who has moved to Las Vegas to propagate Nichiren Buddhism at the Nichiren Buddhist Kannon Temple of Nevada.

Propagation of the Odaimoku in Nevada began on New Year's Day with the sunrise chanting at Red Rock Canyon. The first official blessing for visitors was held at 10.30 a.m. at his temple in Las Vegas.

It included a kito blessing to bless the visitor's good health and prosperity through-

out the year. He gave ofuda (blessing tablets) to each family after the service. Otoso sake sips for good health were also served after the service.

### Life in Las Vegas By Bishop Shokai Kanai

Since moving to Las Vegas, I wake up early in the morning and worship the morning star (Venus), and other stars as well as the moon from my backyard. I chant the Odaimoku and after a short rest, I go for a walk to a park nearby before sunrise.

I chant the Jigage at the end of chapter 16 of the Lotus Sutra and a phrase from chapter 21, "As the rays of the sun and the moon eliminate all darkness of the world, this person takes away suffering of all people."

After coming home I do the morning service. As you know the rays of the sun, the moon, and the stars illuminate darkness and give energy to all living beings, so I would like to bring happiness and harmony to everyone who visits the Kannon Temple. People call Las Vegas, "Sin City," but I hope and pray that this city will become the Buddha Land.

### Hoshimatsuri and Setsubun

Setsubun means "divide seasons" in Japanese. According to the ancient Japanese calendar it is the eve of spring. During the Setsubun service those who were born in the Year of the Rat will throw roasted soybeans to the congregation to chase away the evil spirits. Hopefully, attending this ceremony will cleanse your evil minds.

Those born in the years: 1924, 1936, 1948, 1960, 1972, 1984, 1996, and 2008 are born in the Year of the Rat. An amulet will be presented at your request. Please contact Bishop Kanai at (702) 396-6276.

**Bishamonten** Visitors flock the Zenkokuji Temple, Shinjuku, in Tokyo during the first three days of the New Year to pray to Bishamonten, one of the

Seven Deities of Good Fortune. This deity is also one of the four guardian deities of the four directions in Buddhism. He protects the northern sphere.

### Ebisu Deity of Good Business

The Hongakuji Temple, Kamakura, is crowded on the first three days of the New Year and Jan. 9 and 10 with the visitors who pray for good business to Ebisu, the Deity of Wealth and Commerce.

Visitors receive bamboo twigs decorated with good-luck tokens from fortune girls dressed in eboshi hat, suikan short coat, and red hakama skirt.

Minamoto no

Yoritomo, the founder of the Kamakura Shogunate, first dedicated a shrine in Kamakura to Ebisu, now enshrined in Hongakuji.

(Story by Rev. Hoyu Maruyama;  
Photo by Rev. Gyoo Uesaka)



## Nichiren Shu News

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