

Nichiren Shu News

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(1)

750th Anniv. Events Wind up in Great Success

Chanting of the Odaimoku resounded on Mt. Minobu on May 21 as some 3,500 devotees assembled there to attend the closing ceremony of the 750th anniversary of Nichiren Shonin's proclamation of his faith.

Archbishop Nichiko Fujii, head priest of the Minobu-san Kuonji Temple officiated the ceremony and made an appeal to Nichiren followers, declaring, "Let us strive for the dissemination of the True Dharma, let the Buddha's light shine through generations, and make every effort to bring peace by establishing the True Dharma and realize a pure land on this earth."

Preceding the grand ceremony at Minobu, "World Festa 2003," festival for various NGO groups related to Nichiren Shu Buddhism was held on April 20 at the Ikegami Honmonji Temple as the conclusion of the activities of the Odaimoku Propagation Movement.

Highlighting the various events was the International Exchange Symposium. The speakers, four from Japan and three from London, Hawaii and Korea made reports on their activities to disseminate the teachings of the Lotus Sutra among young people.

By Rev. Ryuoh Faulconer
Nichiren Buddhist Temple of Portland

In April, I returned to Japan to take my three new disciples (Linda Caine-Barret, Matt Miller and Philip Sorenson) to the Seicho-ji Temple, where the three received the Docho and became Shami of the Nichiren Order. My original plans were to go to the Seicho-ji Temple, then stay a week for visiting the Hommon-ji Temple and Minobu. But, at the end of the month, a truly wonderful event took place: an International Festival with representatives from around the world.

After a couple of weeks of pilgrimage to Kamakura, Izu and Minobu, the four of us went to the Hommon-ji Temple and Headquar-



Archbishop Fujii declares a successful conclusion of the 750th commemorative events

ters for the International Festival.

We met the European group on April 19 the night we arrived at Headquarters. That night we had dinner and talked with this group of people from England, Italy, Spain and Russia.

We became friends immediately. We all had the same dreams and hopes with our practice and dissemination of the Odaimoku in the world. The next day we met a group from Hawaii and also the group from Korea. There were also people from Cambodia and India.

Even with a few language difficulties we reached out to our brothers and sisters in the Dharma. The mood was happy and the energy was also very high.

The festival, World Festa 2003, started. We wandered through many booths that were representing different organizations who help people

around the world. It was rainy, but this did not slow us down. The celebration went on.

After lunch, a ceremony was held to pray for peace. Seeing so many representatives get up on stage and pray for peace in their native language was exciting. The ceremony was not very long but very memorable.

A dialogue was held at Headquarters where many representatives told their inspirational stories. A book was handed out with translations of each story into the different languages of those who were present. This was truly a momentous occasion.

I thought of all the people around the world. I thought of Nichiren Shonin and his wish to spread the Lotus Sutra to the whole world. I realized at this moment that it was starting to reach the whole globe.

Even though this is the beginning, the fruits of all the efforts of overseas missionaries and followers from around the world was evident in this room with us.

That night we had dinner together at the Omori Tokyu Inn, and talked about what was needed to spread the Dharma. We talked about the difficulties and the rewards. It was like we already knew each other. Our lives were joined together in our wish to end suffering in the world, in our prayer to end war and poverty.

The next day, on April 21, we went to Mt. Minobu to participate in the concluding service for the 750th anniversary of Nichiren Shu. After the Mando parade a group from Europe and the three new Shami and I went to Nichiren Shonin's mausoleum and prayed. We thanked him for his guidance and also told him that our missions were continuing.

We would spread the Odaimoku to all people around the world. A representative from each country present prayed to Nichiren Shonin in their native tongue. I felt a calmness around me but also awareness of all the work ahead.

On April 22, we went to the ceremony at the Kuon-ji Temple after visiting the top of Mt. Minobu. Many people came up to us and wanted to talk. They wanted to know where we were from. They were excited to meet us and we were very happy to



Devotees pack the Main Hall of the Minobusan Kuonji Temple on May 20

meet them.

Everyone was very kind. I was reminded of my practice and the Dharma many times. Like all things this also had to come to an end.

The next morning the three Shami and myself headed for Narita and home. The International festival and the 750th anniversary celebration were the perfect way to end this month long stay in Japan.

We took home with us inspiration and hope for the future. We also

made many new friends in the Dharma. The three Shami have gained new inspiration to strive hard to study and practice to become the best Nichiren Shu ministers they can be. For me, it is a comfort to know that we are headed in the correct direction. I know that there are many things to be done, but I know that in the future the Dharma will spread throughout the world. May the Odaimoku continue to resonate throughout the globe.

Dinner Held for Overseas Visitors

The 61-members group of "International Pilgrimage," visiting Japan to attend the final 750th anniversary ceremony at Minobu, were the guests at a dinner party held at Tokyu Inn Hotel, Omori, Tokyo.

The party was attended by members of the Kaigai Fukyo Koenkai (Overseas Propagation Promotion Association) and Kokusai Bukkyo Shinkokai (International Buddhist Fellowship Association). It was co-sponsored by the Shumuin Headquarters and the two associations.

Ms. Sulekha Kumbhare, Minister of Health and Water Supply, Maharashtra State, India, and the founder of the Dragon Palace Temple, expressed her appreciation for the invitation by Shumuin to attend the concluding events of the 750th anniversary of Nichiren Shonin's proclamation of his faith and made brief reports on the activities of the Dragon Palace Temple.

Dr. Timour Makhamatov, Deputy Executive Director of the Peace Pagoda Foundation, Russia, presented the "Lotus Sutra" translated into Russian by Dr. Alexander N. Ignatovich, to Rev. Ichimyo Fujisaki, Executive Director of the Missionary Department, Shumuin.

Thirty-one devotees from Korea were present, headed by Rev. Woo Hee-tae. They were the members of



Rev. Ichimyo Fujisaki receives a Russian Lotus Sutra from Dr. Timour Makhamatov

Sil Soung Sa Temple in Pusan, and To To Sa Temple in Seoul. Europeans led by Rev. Shoryo Tarabini were five from England, two from Italy, one from Spain, namely Javier Sanchez, and Timour Makhamatov from Russia who presented a Russian Lotus Sutra to the Shumuin.

Also among the guests were Rev. Dim Chittha of Cambodia, Rev. Joyo Ogawa who was with six devotees from Hawaii, and Rev. Nun Shokei Shtephens of the Daiseion-ji Temple, Germany.

Attendants from overseas departed for Mt. Minobu on May 21 and attended the concluding ceremony of the 750th anniversary on Mt. Minobu on May 22.

International Symposium: 'Namu Myoho Renge Kyo' Has Become Common Language

By Shoryo Tarabini, Jogyoji Temple, London

Over the past few months, we had been discussing, planning and anxiously waiting for our first Nichiren Shu International pilgrimage to the Kuonji Temple on Mt. Minobu, Ikegami Honmonji Temple in Tokyo, and many other major and historical Nichiren Shu Temples. This was the first pilgrimage in the 750 year history of Nichiren Buddhism.

More than sixty believers assembled from Korea, Cambodia, India, Russia, Germany, Italy, Spain, England, the United States of America (Hawaii and the mainland), as well as various youth and other groups from Japan, and members of the Nichiren Shu International Group on April 20 at the Nichiren Shu Headquarters Building in Ikegami, Tokyo, to report their various activities.

Originally, 20 believers from Malaysia were scheduled to participate in the group discussion, but due to the worldwide SARS epidemic, they were forced to cancel their plans at the last moment, much to the disappointment of both the Malaysians and the other International believers.

However, desiring to demonstrate that our fellow Malaysian believers were still with us in spirit, the Malaysian flag was carried into the symposium by the other believers and remained with the congregation during every activity through the week-long pilgrimage.

The auditorium at the Nichiren Shu Headquarters Building was filled to standing-room only capacity. Furthermore, it was later reported that despite bad weather, over 8,000 peo-

ple attended the various FESTA activities throughout the Hommonji Temple that day.

The Symposium was inaugurated by Rev. Giyu Tabata, Director of the Propagation Dept. of the Nichiren Shu Headquarters, followed by four colour slide presentations by associations of temples located throughout Japan.

Mr. Toshiro Kato of the Aishin-kai from the Myodenji Temple, Kanagawa Prefecture, spoke about the Oeshiki activities (commemorating the Nichiren Daishonin's passing into Nirvana).

Mr. Takaaki Koga of the Hichisho-Kai from the Gokokuji Temple, Yamaguchi Prefecture, then spoke about the youth club activities of their temple in an attempt to encourage more young men and women to become involved with the temple and Buddhist faith and practice.

This was followed by Mr. Shinya Toki of SEFT (children's gathering) from the Eishoji Temple, Aomori Prefecture, who spoke about their temple's children's activities.

Finally, Mr. Kenji Esumi of the Renchoji Temple, Shimane Prefecture, spoke about how they encouraged children, young men and women and their families to become involved with the temple and its services, festivals, and various other activities.

These presentations were then followed by a report on the development of Nichiren Shu in Europe, the vari-

ous problems and hopes for the future by Mr. Nigel Wray of the Jogyoji Temple, London.

Mrs. Roberta Han of the Nichiren Mission of Hawaii related her experience of encountering Nichiren Shu Buddhism and continuing her many long years of faith.

Mrs. Chol Gi-mil of the Botosa Temple, Korea, spoke of her long years of Buddhist practice, overcoming many hardships and obstacles through her strong faith and supporting the propagation and growth of Nichiren Shu in Korea.

Then Shoryo Tarabini of the Jogyoji Temple, London, and Nichiren Shu of Europe discussed the spirit of hope and peace throughout our world as seen in the Lotus Sutra. This was followed by the final talk of the day by Rev. Woo Hee-tae (Botosa Temple, Korea) who spoke warmly of the importance of maintaining consistent faith in the Lotus Sutra while striving to seek out and practice the correct teachings of Nichiren Buddhism.

The attendees were highly encouraged that afternoon by the various activities being carried out to promote Buddhist faith, and world peace. Throughout the day and the following week, we spoke and joked with one another, creating new friendships, exchanging experiences and praying together while renewing and deepening our faith. We were all further touched by the sincerity and warmth

of the three new American shami and their Master, Rev. Ryuoh Faulconer from the Portland Temple.

While we were together with one another over the week, many of us could not speak to one another directly, simply because we could not speak all the various languages. Often we could only converse using gestures and smiles.

But in the end, we were all able to warmly communicate with one another and forge firm bonds. It became clearly apparent to all that it was indeed the words of the Buddha's heart, the Lotus Sutra and Namu Myoho Renge Kyo, that became our shared International language.

After the symposium, we gained many rich experiences visiting Minobusan, praying together at our Founder's tomb, and visiting all the temples erected on the sites where he once lived, propagated the Dharma and endured hardship after hardship. We were all determined to return home and share these memories and the lessons we had all gained.

Furthermore, we all left with a renewed determination to devote ourselves to the realization of our Founder's great aspiration of attaining worldwide Kosenruffu, in which all people in every country will someday embrace the Lotus Sutra.

Indeed, now that I have returned home, I have been receiving many phone calls daily from all over Europe that express this new warmth and depth in faith.

We are determined to return once a year and bring more and more people, so they too will have a chance in sharing the joy and wonderful experiences we were so fortunate to encounter.



Rev. Shoryo Tarabini



Participants chant the Odaimoku



Mr. Nigel Wray



Mrs. Roberta Han



Mrs. Chol Gi-mil



Attendants of the International Symposium at the Shumuin Headquarters, April 20

The Legend of Nichiren Shonin (3)

The accurate biography of Nichiren can be perceived through his essays and letters and the ancient documents. But there are many dramatic legends, too. So, let us think about various legends in this paper.

By Rev. Gyokai Sekido

Entering the Priesthood

Yakuo-marō (Nichiren as a child) went to the Seicho-ji Temple on Mt. Kiyosumi at the age of twelve to receive an elementary education. Then he became a priest and was renamed Rencho (Lotus of the Eternity) at the age of sixteen. As mentioned before, there was no person comparable to him in religious turn of mind.

When Yakuo-marō was three or four years old, some friends came to boast that they had caught many sparrows with rice cakes put on a branch of a willow tree as bait. Yakuo-marō was not interested in catching sparrows. Instead, he is said to have admonished them not to kill creatures by telling them an old tale that he had heard from his father: "Once upon a time, a foolish old man caught a tortoise and was about to kill it. A court noble who saw him took pity on the tortoise, and he gave the old man clothes in exchange for the tortoise's life. Later, when the

court noble's little child fell into the sea, hundreds of tortoises appeared to rescue the child by supporting him on their backs." Thus it is said that Yakuo-marō was a child with a grounding in religion.

According to a legend, Yakuo-marō's mother was named Ume-giku (Plum-chrysanthemums). Having heard no news from her son in the temple, she felt as though they had been separated by seas and mountains. Looking at the distant sky, she wondered whether or not he was crying for his parents. Then she worried that he might be mistreated by the people in the temple. With her husband's permission and with anxiety, she at last started for the temple carrying with her the pears which Yakuo-marō liked and new clothes for him. Nevertheless, she was barred from seeing him in the temple because Mt. Kiyosumi was closed to women. While she was sitting on a stone by the mountain road and lamenting, an employee of the temple carrying firewood on his back passed by. She asked him to tell her son that she was there to see him. The man

willingly agreed to do that. Yakuo-marō, who had decided to become a Buddhist priest, however, felt that it was like looking for a stone after throwing it away for his mother to have come to see him. Greatly

touched by her affection, however, Yakuo-marō came out of the temple to see his mother, who was so happy to see him again. Yakuo-marō then told her that he wanted to become a priest to save all the people as well as his mother and father from every pain. Hearing her son's decision, Mother Ume-giku shed tears of joy, wetting the stone she was sitting on. This "stone of tears" is said to exist on Mt. Kiyosumi even today.



Rev. Gyokai Sekido



(This picture is taken from "The Scroll of Nichiren Shonin's Life and Traditions," published by Nichiren-shu Shinbun-sha, 1995)

Report on Activities in Malaysia

By William Tan

Secretary, Penang Nichiren Shu, Malaysia

Our members ushered in the New Year 2003 with special prayers at our temple on the morning of the 1st of January. And exactly one month later we celebrated the lunar Chinese New Year with much tradition in culture, joy and happiness.

During Chinese New Year, our members visited the Cheshire Home for the handicapped, where we gave away oranges, Chinese New Year cookies and red packet (packet containing money) to the inmates.

Twenty Malaysian Nichiren Shu members registered to attend the "World Festa" celebration scheduled for April 2003. There was much discus-

sion with Rev. Tarabini on the arrangement of schedule for visiting temples during his visit to Penang in March.

But unfortunately the outbreak of severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) hit China, Hong Kong and Singapore badly. We in Malaysia were spared from this contagious outbreak and had only isolated suspected cases, of which all were actually infected during their stay in countries hit by SARS.

The 20 members who would be going to Japan on April 19 had to make a decision on their journey as SARS was then at its peak. It was unanimously agreed that the trip had to be postponed for safety reasons but more importantly to safeguard the health of all overseas participants as well as the entire community of Nichiren Shu in Japan. We again look forward in the very near future to make our visit to Minobusan and renewing our friendship with all members of International Buddhist Fellowship Association (IBFA) and all Nichiren Shu believers worldwide.

Malaysian Nichiren Shu members during their usual prayers session now chant Chapter 26 of the

Lotus Sutra to protect all members from any negative implication of SARS.

On May 15, 2003, the Malaysia Buddhist community celebrated Wesak Day. Our Association also joins in this joyous occasion by offering plenty of flowers and fruits on the altar.

After the prayers to commemorate Wesak Day all members also participated in the ritual of bathing Baby Buddha.

Our temple also remained open for the rest of the day for the public to pay respect to Lord Buddha and also get a chance to bathe Baby Buddha.

The month of May also saw several activities and celebration. Members joined in the inaugural of the "Tai Chi" class which is conducted every Sunday evening. Flower arrangement class for the ladies was conducted by Ms Yeap Guat Khim, the Assistant Treasurer of the Association. Mother's Day was celebrated on May 11 with a cake cutting ceremony.

In line with our faith and practice, there will be more welfare activities offered to the handicapped, orphans and old folks home.

We hope that with such activities, we are able to reach out and sow the seed of the Lotus Sutra to all the unfortunate with the hope that all will gain enlightenment some day. With Gassho.



Tai Chi class



Flower arrangement class



Group photograph with inmates of Cheshire Home

SAN JOSE

Annual Bazaar

The teriyaki box lunch held on Sunday, April 6th, turned out to be a big success. Eight-hundred box lunches and other foods like curry rice, noodles, festival rice and barazushi were also sold out. Besides, there were booths for cut flowers, craft sales, manju and dango sales by the Tachibana School.

The Marimokai showed their special skills in a koto performance while members of the Shibata Sogetsu School made several beautiful flower arrangements. The San Jose Kendo Dojo and Shorinji Kenpo Dojo also helped in making this event a success.

Every year this event is carried out with more people attending and giving a hand.

2003 Scholarships

The Nichiren Buddhist Temple of San Jose is offering scholarships totaling \$1,200 to several outstanding college students and graduating high school seniors who are members of organizations affiliated with the temple.

Any high school senior or college student who is a member of an affiliated organization of the temple and who intends to study at a college or university should not forget to submit an application form and a written essay to the temple no later than June 1.

The scholarship will be presented to each recipient on June 14 or 15. The accompanying essay must be about 250 words in length and on one of the following topics: "My View on Buddhism," "Buddhist Cultures," "My Family," or "Society and Myself."

New Book and Video by NBIC

The Awakening to the Lotus: An Introduction to Nichiren Shu (\$10 donation) is a good book not only for those who don't know about Nichiren Shu Buddhism but also for the followers who want to refine their understanding about their religion.

"Nichiren-sama, the Life of Nichiren Shonin" (\$10



Church Events

By Sandra Seki

donation). This video was originally produced by Nichiren Shu Young Ministers Association of Tottori Prefecture in Japan. NBIC converted the Japanese video into English. This video is good for both adults and children.

New Shami

Shami Matt Miller, a member of the temple, has taken a vow to become a Buddhist priest on April 4th at Kiyosumi, Chiba Prefecture, Japan. He studied under the guidance of Rev. R. Faulconer of the Portland Buddhist Temple.



Shami Matt Miller

HAWAII

New Nokotsudo (Columbarium)

During the month of April the new Nokotsudo began accepting urns and ihai of the families which had previously registered for the columbarium. For those who wish to acquire a space, one-time fee of \$500 per urn and \$100 for a glass door per niche will be requested.

Grand Dedication Service

The dedication service for the new Main Hall in conjunction with the commemorative services celebrating the 750th Anniversary of the Establishment of Nichiren Buddhism and the 100th Anniversary of Nichiren Buddhism in Hawaii will take place on June 21 and 22, 2003. The Archbishop Nichiko Fujii of the Nichiren Shu Order will be coming from Japan to officiate a formal service and more than 1,000 guests from Japan are expected to join in the celebration.

Due to the limited capacity, the temple is going to have multiple services: dedication of the New Main Hall on Saturday, June 21 at 10 a.m.; 750th and 100th Anniversary commemorative service at 2 p.m. on the same day officiated by Archbishop Fujii; the banquet from 6 p.m. at the Sheraton Waikiki Hotel ballroom, also on the same day; three commemorative services at 10 a.m., 12 noon, and 2 p.m. in the New Main Hall on Sunday, June 22. On Monday, June 23, there will be a dedication ceremony for the 100th anniversary monument at the original Kapapala Temple on the Big Island.

LOS ANGELES

Memorial Service for the Unknown

On Sunday, May 25, preceding Memorial Day, a special memorial for the deceased of the Boyle Heights Area and all the people affiliated with the temple

was held at 10:30 a.m. in front of the Monument of the Unknown, which was erected on December 8, 1991. A memorial service has been held every year since then on the day preceding Memorial Day.

90th Anniversary

The Los Angeles Nichiren Temple is going to be celebrating its 90th anniversary in August, 2004. The following events are planned: installation of wooden tablets for the deceased head ministers of the temple, publication of the temple album of the past 90 years, a grand ceremony to be officiated by Abbot Nichiji Sakai of the Ikegami Honmonji Temple, building the Koichi and Toyo Nerio Hall, major repair and painting of buildings, NONA Convention to be held at the temple, and others.

Lotus Sutra Time Capsule

After the Sunday service on March 9, Rev. Shokai

Kanai placed all the sacred items collected from the members into a "time capsule," which was placed in a hole dug in the front garden. The capsule was lowered into the ground during a ceremony officiated by Rev. Kanai. The members present were given the opportunity to toss some soil on the time capsule. The Odaimoku Monument stands guard over the capsule until its unearthing by a future generation.

Educational Material for Children

Rev. Kanai has just started to translate the 80 volumes of the Minwa Fu Hokekyo Dowa by Rev. Koke Matsumoto of Minobu, Japan. It was written for grandparents and parents to read to their children and grandchildren. Although the content is very deep, it is easy to understand.

Those who would like to have a copy of the translation, please contact Rev. Kanai. He will send the English translation with pictures for children. The children can make their own picture story books of Sakyamuni Buddha and the Lotus Sutra.

World Festa 2003 in Ikegami



NPOs' display



Quiz program



Symposium attendants



An NGO group reports their activities



Shamisen performance by students of the Omori No.3 Junior High School

NICHIREN SHU NEWS

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