

Nichiren Shu News

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Wishing for You to Become a Bodhisattva

Honorable Rev. Nissho Kanno, Archbishop of Nichiren Shu,
Chief Abbot of Ikegami Honmonji Temple, Tokyo

In this early spring of 2022, I give my sincere compliments of the New Year season to all the ministers and devotees of Nichiren Shu, and I truly wish all of you pure and restful happiness.

An epidemic disease caused by the COVID-19 virus has been prevailing for two years. Though we receive vaccination for it and a treatment drug has been developed, all proper caution is still required, just as an old proverb says, "A little neglect may breed great mischief."

The coronavirus epidemic teaches us two important lessons, both good and bad. The dark side is that many people have selfish desires, caring only about themselves, or act with discrimination against those infected by the virus, and that, under the pretext of the coronavirus epidemic, we tend to slacken in our efforts and let up on our duties.

How about the bright side? We have our eyes opened to the stern realities and have been awakened to what should be done. Nothing can be accomplished on our own. Whatever effort you may make, you cannot protect yourself against the coronavirus epidemic. It is difficult to achieve our goal just by following precedent. Just observing time-honored customs and streamlining duties are not what we are all about. The tendency for Buddhist rituals and events to be simplified is marked these days. It is



unavoidable to limit attendance or cancel a luncheon, but it is not good to minimize or simplify the sutra chanting. It is essential to chant a sutra for the deceased to lead to the great Nirvana.

Another bright aspect is that we have an opportunity to reconsider how the original role as a Buddhist should be played. If we are bound too much to old manners for a Buddhist ritual, we are liable to forget or set aside the way it should be. The great purpose of sutra chanting is not only for the departed ones but also for bringing peace of mind to living beings. We must not forget to make ourselves attain Buddhahood!

In Nichiren Shonin's treatise, the *Rissho Ankoku-ron*, he said, "If you wish to have peace for yourself, you should first of all pray for the peace of the country." You cannot reach the state of true tranquility just by seeking our own bliss. You need to pray for other people. When you take in his important lesson and put it into practice in daily life, you are already starting on the road to reach Buddhahood. I truly hope that all the people in the world will find the way of Bodhisattvas leading up to attain Buddhahood under such a coronavirus crisis.

At the beginning of 2022, I hereby offer my New Year Greetings, wishing for each of us to lead the way in becoming a Bodhisattva. With Gassho.

NEW YEAR'S NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

Greetings and best wishes for a Happy New Year to all of our readers. We sincerely hope that 2022 will be a good and safe year for everyone.

Nichiren Mission of Hawaii is holding a special ceremony on January 23 to commemorate the 800th Anniversary

of Our Founder's Birth. This is taking place just after we go to print for this issue of Nichiren Shu News.

We wish safe travel for everyone who is participating and attending, and we look forward to sharing news of this gathering and celebration in our next

issue with expanded coverage of this important and historic event.

2021 was a difficult and unpredictable year for all of us, and it was certainly filled with unexpected challenges, but it was also a time to take stock of our many blessings.

Putting out this paper during a pandemic is no small task. I would like to express my appreciation to everyone who has helped make it possible. I would also like to especially thank you, our readers for your interest and support.

—Rev. Sensho Komukai, Editor

YEAR OF THE TIGER

In the Chinese zodiac, 2022 is the Year of the Tiger. The Tiger is the third sign in the 12-animal zodiac cycle. In China, the Tiger is known as the 'King of all Beasts,' and the zodiac sign symbolizes strength, bravery, and exorcising evil.

Many Chinese make their children wear tiger images on their clothes, hats or shoes for good luck.

Those born under the Tiger sign tend to be competitive, unpredictable,

confident, charming, and well-liked. Their downside is that they tend to be impetuous, irritable, stubborn, authoritative, and overly indulged.

They don't need much preparation to do a good job and can handle anything that comes up. They make great leaders and CEOs.



Each year in the sexagenary cycle is associated with one of the Five Elements in Nature: Metal, Wood, Water, Fire and Earth. This year, 2022, is the year of the Water-Tiger. The water-wood combination is extremely positive. Water offers support in the development and life of wood. In turn, wood

gives water the stability and capability to attain goodness.

This year will be filled with opportunity and prosperity. Technological breakthroughs will be made. It is a suitable year to start a new project.

The lucky numbers are three and nine and the lucky colors are green and gold.

Years of the Tiger include 1938, 1950, 1962, 1974, 1986, 1998, 2010 and 2022.

—Compiled by Sandra Seki



It was the protection of the Buddha that saved me from near death at Tatsunokuchi at midnight on the 12th day of the ninth month last year. Grand Master Miao-lê said in his Annotations on the Great Concentration and Insight that the stronger our faith is, the greater the divine protection will be. Do not doubt this. You should firmly believe in and have no doubt that there is always divine protection.

—Nichiren Shonin, *Differences Between the Lotus Sect and Other Sects Such as the True Word Sect* (ST 106)

In this treatise, Nichiren speaks from his own experience of being led to the execution ground at Tatsunokuchi, then saved after the sword was drawn to behead him. By his example, he shows us that the way to face the most difficult circumstances without fear is to strengthen and deepen our faith in the Wonderful Dharma of the Lotus Sutra. Today our world is full of difficulties that can seem overwhelming. Through our faith, we grow confidence that help is always there when we need it.

—Rev. Shinkyô Warner

My Child's Birth Changed My View of Life and Death

By Rev. Tsuoh Yokoi,
Myoshoji Temple, Aichi Prefecture

Today when a child is born, more than half the time, husbands are standing by in the delivery room watching over the moment of childbirth. Because I would like to do everything I possibly can to support my wife during labor, I was also present as she was giving birth. A friend of mine who saw the moment of childbirth told me how deeply he was moved by the birth of a new life and how obliged he was to his wife for having achieved such a great thing. I had expected the same emotion would appear with me. However, at the moment I saw our newly born baby, I actually thought,

"I will pass away someday. That's for sure." A newborn baby is full of vitality. Overwhelmed with this vibrancy of life, I fully realized that I must live in preparation for dying. I do not think I had ever been thinking deeply about my own death before. Our Founder said, "I should study the matter of the last moment of life first of all." Now I truly grasp his words.

All are supposed to die. But is a life gone? I do not think so. In my opinion, a life can be taken over by somebody with whom you are concerned. As I have received my life from someone, I offer my life to those I am related to. One's life is supported by others. Though my body dies out, my spirit will live

on. No life will become extinct. Death does not mean everything is over. "The duration of my life is immeasurable. I am always here. I shall never pass away." These words of the Buddha in Chapter 16 of the Lotus Sutra sink deeply into my mind. Now that I have seen a new life come into being and become conscious of my death, I really feel that life is handed down, confirming that all our lives are eternally united with the Buddha. His life can be given over to us with His great compassion.



Rev. Tsuoh Yokoi has found a new perspective on life and death.

A Pilgrimage to Kyoto – Honpoji Temple Is Filled with Faithful Art

By Rev. Kosei Uchida

Nisshin Shonin, born in 1407, awakened in his teens to the importance of the Lotus Sutra and strictly followed the teachings of Nichiren Shonin. He traveled across the country to spread the True Dharma and finally established Honpoji Temple in Kyoto in 1436 as his main base for missionary activity. In the turbulent war period, Nisshin Shonin concluded that people in the country should place their faith in the right Lotus

teachings so that they would be able to live in peace. He admonished the Shogun Yoshinori Ashikaga, who was notoriously called "Fear for all people," because of the Shogun's tyrannical government. Nisshin Shonin's claim was refused. Indeed, he was captured for the crime of disturbing the public order and experienced excruciating tortures in jail, including having the tip of his tongue cut off and having a burning pot placed on his head. Nisshin Shonin did not stop reciting the Odaimoku, *Namu Myôhō Renge Kyô*, even during these hellish torments.

His life-threatening actions with his unbending spirit became the topic of much talk in Kyoto. More and more people became his ardent followers, especially among wealthy people in business and industry who were often resistant to authorities. As members of the influential merchant class, the Hon'ami Family, whose business was in the appraisal, polishing and cleaning

of swords, became devoted followers of Nisshin Shonin and gave strong support to Honpoji Temple.

Even 70 years after Nisshin Shonin passed away in 1488, support from the Hon'ami family to Honpoji Temple continued. Koetsu Hon'ami (1558-1637), who was well acquainted with calligraphy, pottery, painting and tea bowls, kept his faith in the Lotus teachings, wrote copies of the *Rissho Ankoku-ron, Treatise on Spreading Peace throughout the Country by Establishing the True Dharma*, and *Nyosetsu Shugyo-sho, The Way of Practicing the Teaching of the Buddha*, and made a Karesansui, a dry landscape garden, at Honpoji Temple. As shown in the picture, two semicircular flat stones are embedded in the garden. This stands for

the Chinese character of 日, or *nichi*, meaning day. Ten hewn stones are put together for a decagonal shape to make a pond with 蓮, or *ren*, meaning lotuses growing in it. The garden was constructed to express the characters of 日蓮, or Nichiren. We can tell from these artworks how deeply Koetsu and his family were devoted to the Lotus Sutra and Nichiren Shu teachings.

Other works of art, such as the painting "Buddha Entering Nirvana" by Tohaku Hasegawa, can be seen in special exhibitions. If you can, please arrange an opportunity to visit Honpoji Temple. You will see how deeply it is influenced by works of art and how faithfully artists are devoted to keeping the temple grow in posterity. Do not forget to chant the Odaimoku in front of the garden.



A statue of Nisshin Shonin.



Honpoji Temple.



Part of the garden at Honpoji Temple represents the sun (*nichi*) and lotus flowers (*ren*), referring to Nichiren.

Writings of Nichiren Shonin

VOLUME TWO
NEW SECOND EDITION

By Rev. Shinkyō Warner

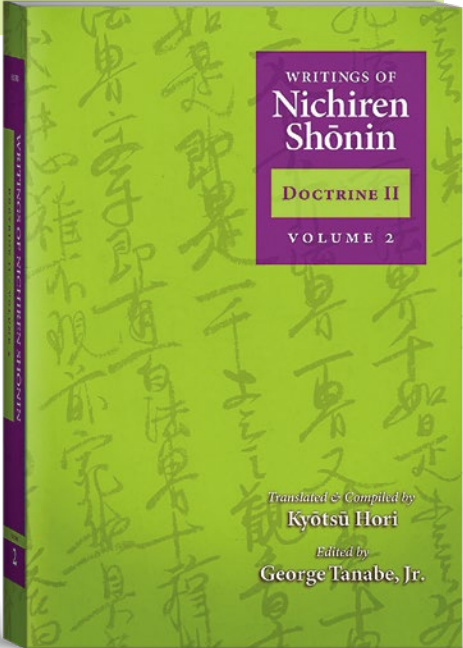
Continuing with our update of the *Writings of Nichiren Shonin* series, Volume Two was released on December 8 last year, coinciding with the date of our Founder's birth. This volume contains 23 of our founder's writings, including two more of Nichiren Shonin's five major writings: the *Kaimoku-sho*, *Open Your Eyes to the Lotus Teaching*, written on Sado island soon after Nichiren was exiled there following the Tatsunokuchi Persecution, and the *Kanjin Honzon-sho*, *A Treatise Revealing the Spiritual Contemplation and the Most Venerable One*, written a year later, also during his exile on Sado Island.

The volume includes many other interesting works, one of them is the *Hasshu Imoku-sho*, *A Treatise on the Differences between the Lotus Sect and Eight Other Sects*, in which Nichiren Shonin uses diagrams and tables to illustrate differences in the periods of the Buddha's teachings, and in the tenets of other sects of Buddhism in Japan.

The *Shojo Daijo Fumbetsu-sho*, *The Differences between Hinayana and Mahayana Teachings*, provides more description of the essential section of the Lotus Sutra, *hommon*, how it relates to the theoretical section, *shakumon*, to all other teachings of the Buddha, and to T'ien-t'ai's 3,000 existences in one thought.

The *Rissho Kanjo*, *A Treatise on Establishing the Right Way of Meditation*, begins as a criticism of Tendai monks who have abandoned the Lotus Sutra and taken up spiritual contemplation as described by T'ien-t'ai. Nichiren Shonin explains that not only is T'ien-t'ai's spiritual contemplation grounded in the Lotus Sutra, the insight to be gained by spiritual contemplation is the Wonderful Dharma of the Lotus Sutra.

Much like the first volume, this volume has an extensive glossary of terms used in the writings included in the volume. This makes it an excellent resource for study groups and anyone seeking to deepen their understanding and practice of the Wonderful Dharma.



Study Tour Reboot for 2021

International Section

The Nichiren Shu Study Tour Program has a longer history than you might think, stretching back to 2006. The inspiration for the program came from the Propagation Department, rather than the International Section. It was originally conceived as an informal event to give Rissho University students the opportunity to gain volunteer experience in Southeast Asian countries with a short-term exchange program arranged with Buddhist NGO groups in the field,

and coincided with the long Japanese university winter break.

Instead of going skiing or snowboarding with their friends, study tour participants repaired schoolhouses in Laos, visited AIDS Shelters in Thailand, assisted archaeological excavations in Cambodia and cleaned up post-earthquake villages in Nepal.

Over the years, the program evolved from an informal domestic activity for university students to a formal International Section annual event bringing together people of different ages

from all over the world. It also gained more responsibility and scope in the spirit of the "You're a Buddha" international propagation campaign slogan.

In 2017, the program brought overseas devotees to Minobu to experience a four-day Shami-like training program. In 2018, it sent Nichiren Shu-affiliated scholars on a religiously oriented cultural exchange in Germany.

The curtailment and reconfiguration of all Nichiren Shu activities during the COVID-19 pandemic hit the study tour program particularly hard: all activities were canceled for 2020. This year, the International Section relaunched the Study Tour as series of online seminars organized around the central theme of comparative religion and cultural exchange, promoted for the first time using Line, a popular social media platform.

The first online study tour theme was Buddhist cuisine, specifically, traditional Soto Zen *shojin ryori* (精進料理) where preparing food is a part of Zen practice. On October 22, some 40 participants from all over Japan, ranging in age from 18 to 60, gathered on Zoom for a two-hour seminar conducted by Rev. Shoshi Takanashi, resident priest of Eifukuji Temple (Soto Shu) in Gunma Prefecture. Rev. Takanashi has published several books on Soto Zen Buddhist



cuisine aimed at making it easy for anyone to prepare dishes and enjoy the benefits of incorporating healthy Zen cuisine in their lives.

Rev. Takanashi not only showed participants how to make delicious Zen cuisine, he also explained the Buddhist practice and spirit of devotion behind it. Feedback from participants showed that they learned more from the program than just a new recipe.

One participant marveled, "I learned how small actions can have a big impact." Another said, "I felt the passion and love towards Buddhist cuisine from Rev. Takanashi, it was a great experience."

Even so, there are still many challenges. The online format might seem easy to do, but there are some rough spots to address in the future to make sure everyone feels that they are truly engaged and not just watching an online video.

One participant went so far as to suggest, "This was completely different from the previous study tours I've been involved in. It's hard to feel like we are really participating."



Rev. Shoshi Takanashi from Eifukuji Temple led an online study tour on the theme of Buddhist cuisine.

Scholarship for International Exchange Student Is Bearing Fruit

International Section

The International Section has a scholarship for international exchange students who are studying Buddhism at Japanese universities.

"At first, climbing the mountain was really hard, but I felt I was energized by Shichimen Daimyōjin," says Jung Yong Hyun. He is a disciple of Rev. Renkei Suzuki of Myogyoji Temple in Kanagawa Prefecture, and is now in his fourth year at Minobusan University living and practicing at the Gyogaku Dormitory.

He first came to Minobusan for the 2017 Study Tour, and then he entered the university. At the time he said, "I

wish to build on this experience and enter Minobusan University's Gyogaku Dormitory program!"

Not only did he enter the program, he is nearly finished and ready to enter Shingyo Dojo. Congratulations!



Jung Yong Hyun during the Study Tour in 2017 (in the left image) and now (to the left in the image above) as he prepares to finish the program and enter Shingyo Dojo.



Nichiren Mission of Hawaii

Rev. Shokai Kanai

Even You Can Become a Nichiren Shu Minister

This will be my third year since I was installed as Head Priest of the Nichiren Mission of Hawaii. As I mentioned in my installation message on December 8, 2018, my goal at this temple is to educate and raise Dharma teachers, lay leaders, substitutes for Nichiren Shu priests, and part-time ministers as well as full-time ministers. These Dharma teachers should be born in America, especially born and raised in Hawaii.

Since then, Shami Shougou, Mr. Kalei Kini, vowed to be trained as a priest on February 16, 2020. He missed *Docho-Kofu*, the official recognition ceremony, which is held at Seichoji Temple in Japan, two years in a row because of COVID-19 travel restrictions. Since December 2020, he has been coming to the temple every morning to chant together with me and helps keep our temple clean and neat for everyone.



There is another person who became fully retired at the end of 2021. Ms. Claire Ariyoshi is taking the oath to be trained as an assistant minister on January 22, 2022. Another candidate is Mr. Mikio Tomioka, an immigrant from Japan, who has lived in Hawaii for many years. Both have been training to assist me together with Shougou Kini.

Now I am looking for a college student who wishes to become a Nichiren Shu priest, and I am hoping that our temple directors will financially invest in such a candidate after the 800th Anniversary of Nichiren Shonin's Birth. The young candidate will need to overcome many hardships physically, mentally and financially. They must go to a Japanese language school in Japan for a year and be trained at a temple like Minobusan Kuonji in Japan for three to four years.

If you know of anyone who is interested, please notify Rev. Kanai. The good news is that the female candidates do not have to cut their hair!

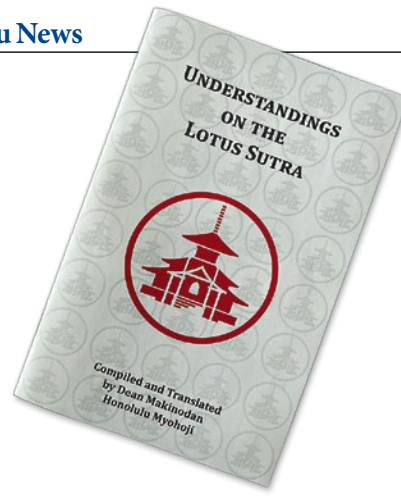
Honolulu Myohoji Temple

Rev. Josho Yamamura

New Booklet

For several years now, Honolulu Myohoji Temple has offered timely knowledge to our followers, friends and the general public. In Buddhist circles, these publications are known as *Sehon*, or materials that are offered to the living beings for their edification and enlightenment. Our newest such publication is "Understandings on the Lotus Sutra."

We followers of the Honolulu Myohoji Temple are very blessed by having the



Lotus Sutra, the so-called "King of Sutras," as our primary scripture. It is so central to our faith that our primary religious practice is the chanting of its sacred title. Yet, what is the Lotus Sutra? This question cannot be easily answered in a word.

"Understandings on the Lotus Sutra" provides various important insights into not only the Lotus Sutra but also the nature of the sutras of Great Vehicle Buddhism. If you would take the time to read it, we are sure that your appreciation of our scripture and Buddhism itself will be greatly enhanced. You will also acquire a mindset that will help you understand the unique structure of the Lotus Sutra as opposed to scriptures of other religions, and you will understand why it is called the "King of Sutras." The Lotus Sutra is such an important sutra that it has even been called the 'milk that fosters life,' and the milk of the Dharma has nurtured the founders of the various denominations and high priests. Among these founders is Nichiren Shonin, who discovered the centrality of the Lotus Sutra and the Life of the Eternal Buddha that shines forth from within it.

Kannon Temple of Nevada

By Rev. Shoda Kanai

New Year's Eve Ceremony

The year-end service for 2021 was held on December 31. The service was held to show our gratitude to the Buddha, Dharma, Sangha, Gohonzon, deities, ancestors and all those around us in the past year.

We hit the *hansho* bell 108 times, symbolizing our 108 attachments and illusions. All negative feelings, hopefully have gone away with the sound of the bell welcoming a Happy New Year, 2022!

Renkoji Temple, Italy

By Rev. Shoryo Tarabini

Cherry Tree Planting

On November 28th, after Sunday activities at the temple, we planted some cherry trees in Cereseto Park in honor of children born in 2020 and 2021.

Some members and neighbors attended this event along with their children. After the planting, Christian and Buddhist prayers were offered for the growth and good health of the children as well as for the well-being and prosperity of all the citizens of Cereseto.



SHARING MY EXPERIENCE AS AN OVERSEAS MINISTER

By Rev. Ekou Murakami,
Myoryuji Temple, Chiba

In 2014, I went to the U.S. to train as a Kaikyoshi. I first studied at the Los Angeles Betsuin. There, the majority of members were of Japanese ancestry and I felt it was necessary to understand the history of the Japanese-Americans. How they had toiled to make a living but how their assets were taken away and they were sent to internment camps during World War II. I visited the former camp sites in Manzanar, Tule Lake, and Minidoka and felt the hardship and sadness the people must have experienced. Buddhist services held by different denominations take place every year, commemorating the deceased at these sites.

During my training, I also went to the Kannon Temple of Nevada in Las Vegas

where although the temple was still ten years old, many of the members were local Americans who knew nothing about Nichiren Shu.

Then I moved to the Nichiren Mission of Hawaii in Honolulu and was surprised at the history of the Japanese-Americans there, since it was much longer and deeper than in the mainland U.S. The first immigrants came to the Hawaiian Islands in the 19th century and though the present day services are mostly conducted in English, the tradition of the Japanese culture is carried out just as they were in the past. The Bon Dances that start in June move to different Buddhist temples throughout the summer months and then end in late August at the Nichiren Mission.

I officially became the resident minister of the Seattle Nichiren Shu Church in November 2014. The temple had not had



Rev. Murakami at the Shumuin in 2014 getting her official assignment for her work as a Kaikyoshi, or overseas minister. She served in California, Hawaii, and Nevada before becoming resident minister for the Seattle Nichiren Buddhist Church.

a resident minister for more than four years, and it was going to celebrate its centennial in 2018. One of the things that really amazed me was the fundraisers. The chow mein, teriyaki chicken, and

mochi sales carried out annually funded many of the activities for the temple. The cooperation and hard work of the members is an asset to the temple.

Another thing I was blessed with was the LGBTQ, gender friendly atmosphere of Capitol Hill, where I lived. Since I have four young children, we regularly mingled with the community through pre-school activities. Some children had two fathers, and others had two mothers. Some children would come out and say that they were transgender, and it all seemed natural.

Through my precious experience as an overseas minister, I was fortunate to experience not only the work as a Nichiren Shu missionary but also to actually live and intermingle with American society. The experience was well worth it!

—Translated by Sandra Seki

Calendar for February 2022 – March 2022

FEB 3 Setsubun (last day of winter in the traditional Chinese calendar)
FEB 7 Nikko Shonin Memorial Day
FEB 15 Nirvana Day

FEB 16 Commemoration Day of the Birth of Nichiren Shonin
MAR 18-24 Spring Higan

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Art Director Alan Rowe

日蓮宗
Nichiren Shu

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