

# Nichiren Shu News

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## Bowing in Gassho to All Life

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

At the beginning of 2023, I truly wish peace of mind to all the Nichiren Shu followers and devotees all over the world. For three years, we have experienced unforgettable epidemics and disasters. Nowadays, however, it seems that people have become obsessed with the idea that we would never fall seriously ill, because the COVID-19 virus was brought under control. In reality, it is the other way around. As winter came on, the number of coronavirus patients increased. Do not forget that we are not assured that everything is all right.

We have to be aware of the danger of another kind of epidemic. For selfish reasons, we catch small animals to use them for experimental drugs or for luxury food. We should know by now that this can result in the occurrence of another epidemic. Under our slogan, “*Inochi ni Gassho*,” Bowing in Gassho to All Life, we have to keep in mind that the lives of animals and plants are no less valuable than human life.

We are now faced with another danger. There have been aggressive wars caused by absolute rulers, not only in Ukraine, but in Africa, the Mideast, and Asia as well. Though the wars took a heavy loss of lives and created huge numbers



of refugees, people in the belligerent nations never try to stop their fighting. As a result of overvaluing the merits of our own country and undervaluing the importance of life, Japanese people experienced the bitterness of war leading to a miserable life.

I am now 85 years old. Looking back on my younger days in wartime, I went through harsh pain, desperate poverty, and bitter sorrow as a child. Any war will take life and only bring unhappiness and misery. Nichiren Shonin appealed to autocrats and influential political leaders in his time, because he wanted them to take the reins of government and place great importance on the lives of all living beings.

Even though it is more than 700 years since then, human beings have made no progress. Indeed, lives with such self-centered activity are more dominant than before. Do not think that your area is safe. Let us make efforts to make more places where we can live safe and peaceful lives.

In this early spring, I hereby offer my New Year Greetings, wishing for each of us to try hard to establish a nation where lives of all living beings will be respected as a great treasure. With Gassho.

## SPIN THE THREAD OF ODAIMOKU WITH ONE MIND

Rev. Eshin Tanaka,  
Chief Administrator of Nichiren Shu

I would like to extend my New Year Greetings, wishing all of you to have a happy year in excellent health. The new coronavirus which broke out three years ago has completely changed the whole world. At the beginning, we were at a loss for what to do. Today, we have learned to adapt ourselves to the new circumstances by coexisting with the coronavirus. In Nichiren Shu, more events and activities took place last year. We can say we have finally restarted our lifestyle.

To improve the situation, the whole world seemed to be united fighting against the unprecedented virus. Even so, lingering conflicts in various parts of the world still cast a shadow over establishing

a spirit of mutual help on a global scale. Although we saw many precious lives taken away by the raging coronavirus before our very eyes, it is extremely regrettable to find that so much conflict has still been taking place. We have been tossed around in this time of confusion. With the public peace disturbed, we try to escape from distress so desperately that we seem to lose sight of the true essence of the matter.

Our Founder Nichiren Shonin, who formed a clear view of the Latter Age of Degeneration, preached to us that we should completely rely on the Lotus Sutra as the ultimate teaching to live as decent human beings. We, as His youngest brothers and sisters, have to transmit the invaluable teachings passed along from the previous generation to the

next generation and to stake our lives on making the world better as did our Founder. Nichiren Shu will continue to do everything possible to ensure that our Founder's message and the teachings of the Lotus Sutra are spread widely to help people all around the world discover the Wonderful Dharma.

Though the environment surrounding us is constantly changing, what we should learn is always invariable and universal. We truly hope that both ministers and devotees will devote themselves to keep our faith and pray in *gassho* to all living beings to realize the true Dharma through the Odaimoku. Hopefully, our precious teachings, transmitted from over 700 years ago, will be handed over to the next generation, and we will continue to spin the thread of Odaimoku with one mind.

Finally, I sincerely wish you to go forward to establish a peaceful society with a magnanimous spirit. With Gassho.



### THE YEAR OF THE RABBIT

2023 is the Year of the Rabbit, according to the Chinese Zodiac. The Rabbit is the fourth of the twelve zodiac signs in the cycle. All the signs are paired with one of the Five Elements of Nature: Earth, Water, Fire, Wind and Void.

This year is the Year of the Water Rabbit in the 60-year sexagenary cycle, which has not occurred since 1963. The sign symbolizes peace, patience, and luck. The year begins on January 22,

2023, and ends on February 9, 2024, based on the Chinese lunar calendar.

People who are born under this sign tend to be soft and tender in personality with a modest attitude. They prefer peace and quiet and are likely to avoid arguments and confrontation as



much as possible. They may appear soft on the outside, but they are stubborn in the inside. Rabbits are alert to strangers and outsiders and are unlikely to be easily fooled. Rabbits have courteous manners in social settings.

Some of the best jobs for people who

are born in the Year of the Rabbit are: breeders, gardeners, teachers, priests, police officers, judges, musicians, artists, and architects.

Rabbits are those born in the following years: 1915, 1927, 1939, 1951, 1963, 1975, 1987, 1999, 2011, and 2023.

May this new year bring to each and every one of you the very best — good health, peace, and happiness!

—Compiled by Sandra Seki



# RELAUNCHING INTERNATIONAL ACTIVITIES IN PREPARATION FOR ENGLISH-LANGUAGE SHINGYO DOJO IN 2023

In November 2022, Nichiren Shu finally relaunched sponsored International activities after a hiatus of more than two years due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The most important event among the canceled 2020 programs was our very first English-language

Shingyo Dojo. The conference and training programs were arranged to help the shami enter the English-language Shingyo Dojo as soon as possible. We deeply thank all who attended, especially the Kokusai Fukyoshi and shami who traveled to Japan.



**SHOMYO TRAINING:** The Kokusai Fukyoshi trained with Shomyo priests to prepare for a memorial service honoring all of the late overseas ministers held at Nichiren-do Hall in Kamakura. Despite their extensive practice, the Kokusai Fukyoshi still appeared nervous, but the service was held without mishap. One of the Shomyo masters remarked, "This is not an end but rather just a start of learning ceremonial manners. After you go back to your assigned places, we expect that you will continue to devote yourself to your studies based on this training. We sincerely hope that you will be able to hold good services for your devoted members."



**SHAMI TRAINING:** Six shami came to Japan from North America, South America, Britain, and Italy. The shami participated as observers in the Kokusai Fukyoshi Shomyo training sessions and also in the memorial service for all of the late overseas missionaries conducted by the Kokusai Fukyoshi. They visited Myohonji Temple, where they were given a precious opportunity to see the Most Venerable One that was put up when our Founder was about to enter into Parinirvana. They marched to Ankokuonji Temple while chanting the Odaimoku, and they viewed the cave in which Nichiren Shonin wrote the *Rissho Ankoku-ron*.



**OESHIKI MEMORIAL SERVICE:** Afterwards, the shami went to the Nichiren-do Hall to hold an Oeshiki Memorial Service. Because it may have been their first time conducting a service with so many people, they were somewhat stiff in their movements. But their chanting manners and dignified presence impressed the Japanese priests who were there. Those priests were deeply moved, and one of the priests even commented, "Imagining how hard they practiced, I was moved to tears. Recognizing their efforts, I shared the following thought with them: 'Never forget the ideals with which you started out.'"



# LIVING IN THE ODAIMOKU (2)

Every morning, Sadayo Usui comes to pray at Ryukoji Temple in Fujisawa, the place of the Tatsunokuchi Persecution. “My pet dog, P-Chan, led me to this temple. I think he was a personification of the Buddha,” she says. P-Chan loved coming to the temple, especially receiving the New Year’s Kito blessing ceremony from the Shuhosshi priest.

Usui’s deep sadness at the death of P-Chan was a transformative event that strengthened her connection to the temple. Sensing that P-Chan was with the Buddha, she went to the Shakyamuni Stupa to pray and make offerings, but the flower-offering vessels were placed low to the ground and difficult to use. Because of this and her desire to help the

temple, she donated new flower-offering and incense-offering vessels.

When the temple asked if she wanted to help build a pet cemetery, she donated keystones to pave the earthen trail to the stupa along with many other beautification improvements, including planting a new garden so that other people could more easily visit graves and make offerings in pleasant surroundings. She also relocated her father’s grave to Ryukoji Temple.

When Usui was pregnant with her daughter, she experienced three days of intense abdominal pains, and she feared that she would lose the pregnancy. Her husband devoted himself to chanting the Odaimoku with her until their daughter



Sadayo Usui grew up in a household of firm believers in Nichiren Shu Buddhism, and it has had a profound influence on her life and that of her entire family.



*My mind is replete with delusion of the three poisons while my body is one of an ordinary being. However, since I chant Namu Myoho Renge-kyo, do I not resemble the Buddha’s messenger?*

—Nichiren Shonin, A Reply to Lord Shijo Kingo, Shijo Kingo-dono Gohenji (ST 340)

Despite his accomplishments and the persecutions he endured, Nichiren never considered himself to be capable of anything more than the most humble of his followers. Like him, all of us who chant Namu Myoho Renge-kyo can be confident in our ability to stand beside him as a messenger of the Buddha to lead all beings to Enlightenment.

—Rev. Shinkyō Warner

was born. The head priest of Ryukoji Temple, Rev. Kanshu Homma, said the child would not have been born in this world without their efforts.

Usui’s mother, Miyo Hirose, is a fervent follower of Nichiren Shu who took her daughter often to visit Minobusan and made monthly pilgrimages to Shichimensan for decades. Even though she is now 101 years old, she still visits the temple with her daughter and grandchildren. They also help tend the garden that they helped plant around the Shakyamuni Stupa. She says, “I’m so thankful for our connection with Ryukoji Temple, and I hope to keep lending a hand here.”

—Translated by Kanjo Bassett



At Ryukoji Temple with her daughter, marking the 750th anniversary of the Tatsunokuchi Persecution.

## Writings of Nichiren Shonin

VOLUME SIX  
NEW SECOND EDITION

By Rev. Shinkyō Warner

As part of the Nichiren Overseas Propagation and Promotion Association (NOPPA) project to revise the Writings of Nichiren Shonin (WONS), Volume 6 was released in December of 2022. It is now available on Amazon.

This is the first of the two “Followers” volumes and contains 56 writings to many people to whom we have already been introduced in the previous five volumes. These include Toki Jonin, Shijo Kingo, and the Ikegami brothers: Munenaga and Munenaka.

Toki Jonin was one of Nichiren Shonin’s earliest and most devoted followers. We have him to thank not only for preserving all the letters he received from Nichiren, but also for gathering as many other letters as he could so that we

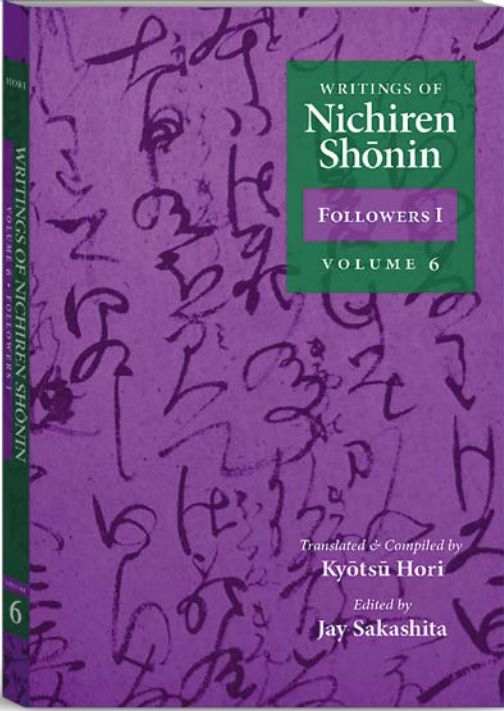
can benefit from them even today. There is one letter in particular, *Bojikyō Ji* (ST 212) in which Nichiren playfully chides Jonin for leaving behind his personal copy of the Lotus Sutra after making the long and dangerous trip to Minobusan to hold a memorial service for his late mother. It shows us that even though Nichiren was strict in his practice, he was tender with his followers.

Shijo Kingo was both a skilled physician and a hot-tempered samurai. We see this both in the letters Nichiren wrote thanking Kingo for the medicine and other donations he received and letters guiding him through conflicts with his lord and fellow samurai.

It is especially interesting to read events unfolding over time, such as when the elder Ikegami brother, Munenaka, was disowned by his father, Yasumitsu,

because he would not renounce faith in the Lotus Sutra. Nichiren expresses his encouragement to both brothers to hold fast to their faith, comparing them to the brothers Pure-Store and Pure-Eyes in Chapter 27 of the Lotus Sutra and telling them stories from ancient China of brothers who faced similar difficulties. In the end, the brothers hold true to their faith. Munenaka reconciles with his father, and Yasumitsu finds his own faith in the Lotus Sutra. Nichiren’s joy can hardly be contained, and he expresses it generously in his letters.

We hope these new editions will help more people to see the life of Nichiren Shonin as a gift for us and for the entire world.





## TEMPLE EVENTS

### Honolulu Myohoji Temple

Rev. Josho Yamamura

### Shrine Built for the Water Deity, Suijin Myo-O

As one of several projects commemorating the 90th anniversary of the founding of our temple, a shrine for the water deity, Suijin Myo-O, was built on the temple premises. The shrine was blessed by Shuho Master, Rev. Kyoshun Kageyama of Shakaji Temple in Chiba prefecture, Japan.



Myohoji Temple's grounds face the Nuuanu Stream where beautiful clear water flows. It rains almost daily adding clarity and purity to the stream. We appreciate the blessing of water and worship the water deity at the temple.

### Nichiren Mission of Hawaii

Rev. Shokai Kanai

### Preparing for the New Year

*Mochitsuki*, rice-cake pounding, is a traditional Japanese year-end event. At our mission, the mochi-making was held on December 28th in our social hall. It started with cooking rice starting from 8:00 a.m. and pounding it at 9:00 a.m. We observed the proper health precautions due to COVID-19. Many members and their family and friends helped making mochi, wearing masks and maintaining social distance.

The New Year's Eve service began at 11:30 p.m. on December 31, and the participants welcomed the New Year by ringing the temple bell 108 times at midnight.

After that, Toshi-koshi Soba, New Year's Eve noodles, was served in hopes that 2023 would bring us health, unity and prosperity. Members joined us in welcoming the Year of the Rabbit!

### 2023 Pilgrimage to Our Founder's Memorial Sites

Traveling to Japan is no longer restricted, so our pilgrimage dates have been set from June 14 to June 22. The anticipated cost

will be 246,000 yen; 16,000 yen extra if you would like single accommodations. The cost covers the tour in Japan from June 14 to June 22. You will need to purchase your own airfare tickets. You may also extend the trip before or after the pilgrimage at your own expense.

Please contact Rev. Kanai for the application form and itinerary.

### Kannon Temple of Nevada

Rev. Shoda Kanai

### Irei-cho and Stone Inscriptions

*Irei* means, "consoling the spirits of the deceased" and *cho* means book or register. I was invited to participate in the installation ceremony of the *irei-cho*, held in late September, at the Japanese American National Museum (JANM) in Little Tokyo, Los Angeles. This was a powerful experience recognizing all of those who were incarcerated just for being Japanese or of Japanese descent during World War II.

At the museum, I had the opportunity to view their current exhibit, "Sutra and Bible." This exhibit showcased many of the religious items from both Buddhism and Christianity. There were hand-carved *butsudans*, crosses, translated bibles, artwork, some special stones with *kanji* written on them, and a special *taiko*, the Honolulu Drum. The stones were donated to JANM after a farmer in Heart Mountain Camp, Wyoming dug them up in 1956. It was not until a scholar of Indian Buddhism from Japan saw these stones and realized that they could spell out Buddhist scriptures. He contacted Prof. Kenryo Minowa at Tokyo University to assist in figuring out the jumbled characters.

Using a special algorithm, the professor determined that the stones matched up with the first six fascicles of the Lotus Sutra! Though it is not definitely certain who wrote on these stones, it was assumed that Rev. Nichikan Morita, who taught calligraphy at the camp, was the inscriber. He was also the only ordained Nichiren Shu priest at the camp until he was



deported in 1943.

Even during such difficult times when use of *kanji* was banned, one could still create their own book by copying the sutra from memory. There are 69,384 characters in the Lotus Sutra. This must have taken a long time, but with a strong faith in the Odaimoku, one can bring forth Buddha Land anywhere under any circumstances, even in an internment camp.



### Shingyo Zan Kosenji Temple Haverhill, Massachusetts

Shami Ryusei Iizuka

### Saijo Inari Establishes First Overseas Branch Temple

In the closing days of November, Shingyo Zan Kosenji in Haverhill, Massachusetts became the first overseas branch temple of Okayama's Saijo Inari Zan Myokyoji, which is one of Japan's Three Great Inari along with Fushimi Inari in Kyoto and Toyokawa Inari in Aichi.

Saijo Inari's fabled and 1200 year-long history makes it unique among Nichiren Shu temples in many ways - one of them being the variety of practices based in Buddhist-Shinto syncretism. Many of these practices, such as Enmusubi, a practice of praying to cut away bad relationships and creating new positive ones, were lost across Buddhist temples in Japan during the Meiji Government's forced separation of Buddhism and Shinto in the late 19th century. However at Saijo Inari these practices have remained through the fierce advocacy and practice of its ministers. Buddhism came to Japan from China, and the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas were introduced to Japan through the lens of Shinto, resulting in their being regarded as the kami (deities) of a foreign land. This is why much of Japanese Buddhism is inextricable from Shinto, Japan's indigenous religion.

The main deities enshrined at Saijo Inari are Saijo-i Kyo-o Dai Bosatsu (also known as Inari), Hachi Dai Ryuoh, and

Sanmen (Three-faced) Daikokuten. As part of becoming a branch temple, these three deities are now enshrined at the temple in Massachusetts, and statues of them were eye-opened by Shami Iizuka during his ongoing residential training at Saijo Inari. In becoming the Saijo Inari Massachusetts Shu-in (state-level branch temple), Kosenji will now receive a level of support and collaboration previously unseen with an overseas mission in propagating Lotus Sutra-based Inari worship. Kosenji Temple is also making history as the first overseas branch of any of Japan's Three Great Inari. The collaboration will bring about new teaching materials, access to special *ofuda* and *omamori* that are only available at Saijo Inari and its branch temples, and a new form of practice not before seen in the United States.

### Ro-O-Zan Enkyoji Nichiren Buddhist Temple Buffalo, New York

Rev. Kanjin Cederman

### Buffalo-Kanazawa Sister Cities' 60th Anniversary Celebration

On October 1, we had the privilege of being part of the 60th anniversary of the Buffalo-Kanazawa Sister Cities relationship, organized by the Japanese Culture Center of Western New York. This was a very big event. The Mayor of Kanazawa, Buffalo's sister city since 1962, attended and participated in the event and activities. Mayor Takashi Murayama greeted us personally and was happy that we had established a temple in Buffalo. Members from his group shared wonderful memories of visiting Minobusan and Yamanashi prefecture. It was also magnificent that three professional Japanese gardeners spent a month to repair and update the garden to its original state for this special event. Rev. Kanjin Cederman performed a tea ceremony for the audience and explained its connection to Buddhism as "life in each moment."



## Calendar for February 2023 – March 2023

**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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Nichiren Shu

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