

Nichiren Shu News

Published by the Head Office of Nichiren Shu & NOPPA

No. 259

December 1, 2023

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STATUE OF NICHIREN SHONIN UNVEILED AND CONSECRATED IN ITALY



By Rev. Shoryo Tarabini

As we began planting 800 cherry trees in the medieval village of Cereseto in 2014, honoring Nichiren Shonin and celebrating 800 years since his birth, I began to feel that we should put up a statue of Nichiren Shonin to help people come to know him, his teachings, and the Lotus Sutra.

One morning in 2019, while on a group pilgrimage to Minobusan Kuonji Temple, Ven. Nichiyu Mochida, the General Administrator of Kuonji

Temple, told us that he intended to donate a two-meter-high bronze statue of Nichiren Shonin. We were filled with emotion and gratitude.

The statue was to be placed in our narrow, but enclosed, temple garden. Although the COVID pandemic hit and we were placed in lockdown, a number of devoted temple members worked for months on the construction of the base. This year on April 29, the statue was finally lifted up and firmly placed on its marble base with the words in our Founder's own handwriting Risho

Ankoku — “a stable and peaceful country through the establishment of the correct and genuine teachings.”

On September 10, Ven. Mochida officiated the Opening of the Eyes Ceremony assisted by many participating priests along with members from Japan, Italy, France, Holland, and the United Kingdom. All participants were deeply moved, and many were brought to tears by the beauty and spirituality experienced during the Opening of the Eyes Ceremony and the interaction with Ven. Mochida.

This was an important event and will remain deeply engraved in the hearts and faith of all those present. We are profoundly grateful to Ven. Mochida, Ven. Nissho Watanabe, and the other priests and countless others who helped us create a home for this precious statue in Italy. Putting up this statue is not our final goal. It is instead, a new starting point for us. We can never forget our gratitude to all of you. We pledge to further spread the teachings of Shakyamuni Buddha and Nichiren Shonin throughout Italy and Europe.

BRAZIL SANGHA HOLDS ITS EIGHTH WORKSHOP

By Rev. Shinkyō Warner
and Rev. Yotatsu Chiamulera

On the weekend of August 26 and 27, the Nichiren Shu Sangha of South America held its eighth semi-annual workshop in São Paulo, Brazil. Members came from all over Brazil to participate. One member came from Huni Kuin, an indigenous village in Boa Vista, Acra, in the northern part of Brazil. Members also came from Rio de Janeiro, Minas Gerais, Santa Catarina, and other areas.

Rev. Yuko Sakata, head priest of Kenshouji Temple in Osaka, Japan was invited by Rev. Yodo Okuda, the minister in charge of the Sangha. Rev. Sakata gave a thoughtful talk on the first day of the workshop on Bodhisattvas and how we

can learn to recognize the people who are helping us in our lives.

Rev. Okuda had also invited Rev. Shinkyō Warner to attend and give talks on the Mandala Gohonzon and Eye-Opening Ceremonies. This was done to help support the three Sangha members who were receiving Gohonzon during the workshop.

On Sunday, Rev. Okuda led a “brainstorming” session for the participants to think about how to achieve peace. This led to many interesting discussions about the meaning of peace, and how our practice of the Wonderful Dharma can bring peace to our lives, in our communities, and in the world at large. It also helped us focus our intention on what specifically we who practice the

Wonderful Dharma can do to benefit ourselves and others.

In addition to the Eye-Opening Ceremony held on Sunday, a Segaki Ceremony to benefit and remember the families and ancestors of all of the Sangha members was held at the end of the day on Saturday.

Following up on this marvelous event, many of the attendees participated in the monthly Facebook Live stream of

“24 Hours of Chanting the Odaimoku Offering to Heal the World.”

The entire atmosphere of the workshop was warm and welcoming, like a family reunion. Those of us who came from outside Brazil to participate were treated like long-lost cousins. Even though we had never met before, everyone acted like we had always been part of their group. We are all looking forward to the next workshop this coming January.



Sangha members converged on São Paulo for the workshop, and three members received their Gohonzon.

FIRST FOREIGN LANGUAGE NICHIREN SHU SHINGYO DOJO

Shingyo Dojo is the educational institution that, upon completion, marks when a person becomes officially recognized as a Nichiren Shu priest. Eight students from America, England, Italy, and Brazil participated in the first English Language Shingyo Dojo at Minobusan. It started on September 26 and ran for a total of 35 days, with all of the eight participants successfully graduating on October 30.

Rev. Keiji Oshima, manager of the International Section, Nichiren Shu Head Office, explained the effort, “Even though this Shingyo Dojo was conducted in English, the curriculum is no different from the regular Shingyo Dojo, which is held three times a year (May, June, and August). Our aim was

not to hold a Shingyo Dojo specifically tailored for non-Japanese students but rather a regular Shingyo Dojo that removes the gaps that can arise from misunderstanding and miscommunication. The true value of doing it in English comes when all the teachers, from the top down, can convey the spirit of Shingyo Dojo in the same language.”

Creating the English Language Shingyo Dojo was actually a rather complicated

decade-long effort that required re-creating the entire Nichiren Shu priest training program in English. Of course, the program includes many components (textbooks, recorded course lectures, Sodo Rin training at Seicho-ji Temple, and more) all of which incorporate the combined work and resources of many people and organizations within Nichiren Shu (The Nichiren Buddhist International Center, the Nichiren

Shu Overseas Propagation Promotion Association, and all of the departments and staff of Nichiren Shu Head Office), and the full teaching staff assembled for the English Language Shingyo Dojo, which included Revs. Chiryo Moriwaki, Josho Yoshida, Keiji Oshima, Koyu Koyama, Bunshin Narikawa, Myofu Ervinna, and Yuon Ito.

In addition, there were also many people working diligently behind the scenes who may never receive proper credit for their contributions and guidance over the years. We are deeply grateful for all your time and efforts. You deserve our heartfelt thanks and congratulations for transforming this English Language Shingyo Dojo from an aspiration into a successful reality.



The first English Language Shingyo Dojo was successfully completed with all eight shami becoming priests.



EIGHT PEOPLE FROM OVERSEAS DIVE INTO THE GATE AND EXPERIENCE SHINGYO DOJO



KANSE CAPON
NICHIREN SANGHA OF U.K., (ENGLAND)

The best thing for me was getting the chance to spend time and to really focus on practicing together with the other students. It was a very powerful experience on so many levels. What was the most difficult thing? Oh, that's easy, it was (always sitting in) seiza.



YOTATSU CHIAMULERA
SANGHA OF BRAZIL

The best thing about Shingyo Dojo was the environment of Minobusan. It is so unique and special. Being there with this group of very special friends and being so close to Nichiren Shonin. The most difficult thing? The hardest thing for me was being away from my daughter for so long.



RYUMON GROHMAN
MYOKEN-JI TEMPLE NICHIREN BUDDHIST SANGHA OF TEXAS

The best thing for me was climbing up to Shishin Kaku Temple (on top of Minobusan) and chanting in the hermitage of Nichiren Shonin. The hardest thing was the constant change and trying to keep up and do things correctly. We'd learn something, then it switched, and we'd have to learn it a new way. It was the hardest thing I've ever done.



KEISHO ADAMI
L'ASSOCIAZIONE BUDDHISTA DEL SUTRA DEL LOTO (ITALY)

The most difficult thing for me about Shingyo Dojo was getting into the daily life routine with people who are not used to it. The most beautiful thing was everything, sharing all of these experiences with the other shami and doing everything together. Plus learning from our masters.

NOPPA Presenting Graduates with the Gift of WONS

By Rev. Shinkyō Warner

In honor of successfully completing the English Language Shingyo Dojo, the Nichiren Shu Overseas Propagation Promotion Association (NOPPA) in cooperation with NBIC is presenting a complete set of the recently completed *Writings of Nichiren Shonin* (WONS), Volumes 1 to 7, and the new electronic edition, which includes all content from the seven printed volumes, to each of the graduates.

After nearly eight years of work, the electronic edition of the *Writings of Nichiren Shonin* is now available. This edition includes all 281 writings from the seven volumes of the English translations of the *Nichiren Shonin Zenshu*, Complete

Writings of Nichiren Shonin, organized by Rev. Kyōtsu Hori. The electronic edition has a glossary with nearly 1,000 terms from the writings, and nearly 4,000 links from text to the glossary.

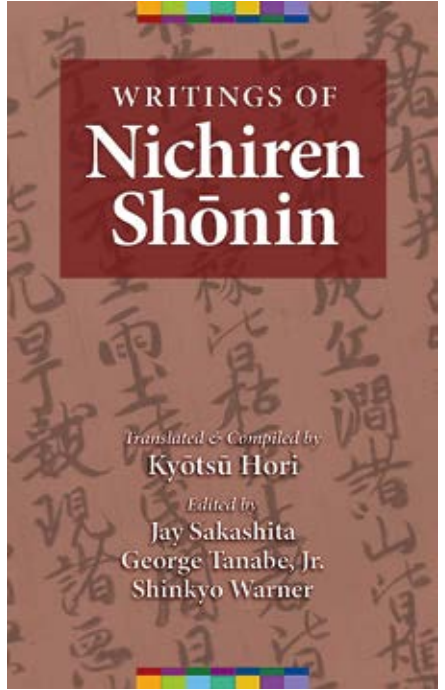
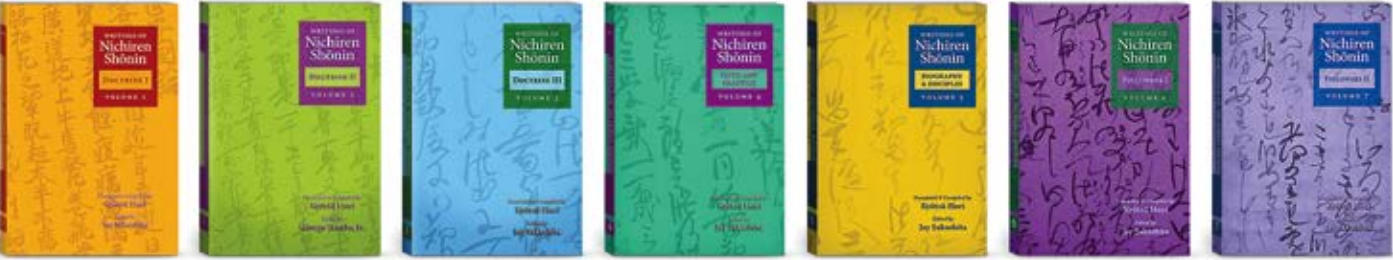
Anyone already familiar with eBooks knows not only how much easier it is to transport many books in a single reader, but also how easy it is to search for terms in an eBook. Having all seven volumes together in one place means that it is now possible to search across all of Nichiren’s verified writings. We hope that these capabilities in the electronic format will provide more background and meaning to Nichiren’s writings.

That being said, it is necessary to present some cautionary and likely unsolicited advice on how to use this

edition. Having such advanced electronic capabilities, such as searching and linking, is no more a substitute for reading the writings than having calculators is a substitute for people learning arithmetic. While editing these editions, I have been fortunate to read through each of these volumes more than a dozen times. While my main purpose was looking for copy errors and inconsistencies, I also found myself gaining a greater appreciation for Nichiren’s life and spirit. Even a short thank-you note that he sent for a donation from a follower could not be fully appreciated without familiarity with his other writings about the difficulty of living on Minobusan, the hardships he faced in his life, and his determination

to spread the Wonderful Dharma despite those hardships. So please: read this, all of it, many times.

Lastly, we want to thank NOPPA for their patient and unwavering support for this project, and for their generous gift to the Shingyo Dojo graduates. Congratulations to all. Thank you!



The Shingyo Dojo graduates are each being given a complete set of the seven volumes of the *Writings of Nichiren Shonin* and the recently completed electronic edition, which contains all of the writings from the print editions and also has a number of useful new features, including searchability and thousands of links to glossary entries.



At graduation, we took the opportunity to ask each of them, “What was the best and what was the most difficult thing about Shingyo Dojo?”

RYUSEI IIZUKA
NICHIREN BUDDHIST SANGHA OF GREATER NEW ENGLAND

I think it's the same answer for both the best and most difficult things about Shingyo Dojo. It is a trying emotional and spiritual time. You have to look deep down inside yourself to find the faith to make it through this intense experience on every level. I'm glad that I had such an amazing group of people to go through this with.

KANE ROSEMAN
SEATTLE CHOEIZAN-ENKYOJI TEMPLE

I think the most difficult thing is trying to get used to the way of living and the structure. It was both great and exhausting at the same time. The best thing was the education and the food. They were outstanding! Nourishment plays a huge part in making sure that we learn the best we can.

RYOEN DREWELLO
NICHIREN BUDDHIST SANGHA OF GREATER NEW ENGLAND

The most difficult thing was worrying about falling down and not be able to complete the training, which would have been devastating. At times, I wondered if I would make it through. The best thing were the little things, like monkeys eating persimmons from the tree in front of Shingyo Dojo. Little things like that lifted our spirits to keep us going.

SHOUGOU KINI
NICHIREN MISSION OF HAWAII

Shingyo Dojo was physically difficult for me, rushing and running around to stay on schedule, and sitting seiza took its toll on my body. On the positive side, there were many times when I had the opportunity to reflect on my vows, to contemplate my heart-felt attitude, and to service the Three Treasures during the morning service each day.



Nichiren Mission of Hawaii

Rev. Shokai Kanai

Lotus Sutra for Children Finally Published

It has been more than 20 years since I started a class on the Lotus Sutra. In Hawaii, I was finally able to complete and publish the English translation of *Minwa-fu Hokekyo Dowa (Lotus Sutra for Children Told as Folk Tales)* by Rev. Koge Matsumoto. Because of the warm financial support of our members in Hawaii, I could self-publish this book and distribute it free of charge.

When I was installed as the head priest of the Los Angeles Nichiren Buddhist Temple in 1996, I saw the 30 volumes of *Minwa-fu Hokekyo Dowa* in the temple library. It was colorful and very attractive. I opened the first page and read the author's motivation to write and publish it. It was Nichiren Shonin's request in her dream. At the time, she was still the wife of a Nichiren Shu priest and did not think much of the dream. However, she had the same dream again a year later. Taking this sign as a sign, she decided to become a Nichiren Shu priest and entered *Shingyo Dojo*. It

took seven years for her to finish writing all 30 volumes. While I was reading the volumes, I was amazed at how skillfully she used simple words to explain difficult Buddhist terms and provided wisdom for children and adults. I started to translate the work into English, volume by volume, and used my translations as a textbook for the Los Angeles temple members.

After moving to the Nichiren Mission of Hawaii in 2018, I started a study class on the Lotus Sutra using the *Lotus Sutra for Children* as one of our textbooks.

With permission from the author, I decided to publish my translation as a book. With the help of Claire Ariyoshi, who changed the format and shrank the illustrations, the entire 30 volumes were finally published as a single book!



Kannon Temple of Nevada

Cindy Campbell, Follower

My Faith in Nichiren Shu

A friend recently asked me how I manage to get through hard days and stay positive. The answer is simple, I have strong faith and have practiced Nichiren Shu for almost 15 years. For me, my practice has opened more peace within my life and an acceptance of what is best for me versus what I think is best for me.

I begin and end each day by chanting the Odaimoku. I chant with gratitude and thanksgiving for what the previous day brought my way, as well as for what's in store for the new day ahead. Chanting brings me peace of mind in a time when peace can be difficult to find. It also brings me comfort knowing I am connecting with something that is far more powerful than I am — and the realization that I am never truly alone.

Often, when I am feeling stressed or concerned about something not working out for me, I realize that things will work out for my best and highest good. My role is to believe and stay faithful that things will work out exactly as they are intended.

This realization has allowed me to reduce my worries and remain secure in the knowledge that everything will be alright.



It is my opinion that my practice has saved my life. I was struggling when I first walked into the Kannon Temple of Nevada. However, through the teachings and kindness I received there, my life has made a positive turn. I focus more on the positive, remove myself as much as possible from the negative and remain in a state of gratitude.

"When you are ready to learn, the teacher will appear," is a phrase I have heard often. I was ready to learn when I walked into the Kannon Temple of Nevada. I remain a dedicated follower of Nichiren Shu practice. My sincere thanks go out to all who have helped me along my path.

Sandra Seki Says, "It's Time for Me to Step Down"

By Sensho Komukai

Sandra Seki has decided to retire as a Staff Writer and Advisor for Nichiren Shu News. Sandra has had a long history with the paper, which was first released as a quarterly publication in October of 1976. From the beginning, she helped translate articles and managed the Temple Events section. She collected information from temples and sanghas around the world to introduce events, happenings, and the activities of ministers for the paper. In 2010, Sandra became the Editor of Nichiren Shu News, a post that she held until she stepped down in 2020. Here, Sandra relates her wonderful experience over the years:

"I married into a Nichiren Shu temple in Tokyo in 1975. The following year, I became involved with the order's new newspaper, Nichiren Shu News, though I knew very little about Nichiren Shu teachings. I had to devote myself to doing studies and research on Nichiren Shu day after day. Meanwhile, I had good opportunities to visit many Nichiren Shu temples abroad to cover stories for the paper, such as Sarnath in India,



SINCE THE BEGINNING: Sandra Seki has played a key role in Nichiren Shu News since its very first issue in 1976.

Hawaii, Los Angeles, and Penang in Malaysia, where I was anguished by the disparity between rich and poor, and I was shocked by some of the differences between Japanese and foreign temples.

"I am particularly impressed by the sincere devotion of the Nichiren Shu followers in Southeast Asia. They serve

faithfully for temple activities, sparing neither pain nor expense to liven up regular services and commemorative ceremonies. The relationships between temples in Southeast Asia are very strong, and people are delighted to visit other temples when there is a big gathering to offer congratulatory words

as well as to chant *Namu Myoho Renge Kyo* together. It is lamentable, however, that some of these temples do not have resident ministers. I am afraid that a temple without a minister will fall into decline. Hopefully, with such matters resolved one way or another, a flower will bloom from the ripe seed of Odaimoku.

"I am sure that Nichiren Shu News will continue to help people around the world know what is going on with Nichiren Shu. Sharing information online over the internet is important, but that alone is not enough. People are happier to see the news and articles printed on paper and to have something they can actually hold in their hands.

"It has been 47 years since our first issue was published. It's time for me to step down. I truly hope that Nichiren Shu News will continue to provide information for people around the world. I have great hopes for the paper's future and its ongoing development."

Thank you so much, Sandra Seki! Your contributions to this paper over all these years have been immeasurably great. Take good care of yourself. We will all miss you and wish you all the best.

Calendar for December 2023 – January 2024

- DEC 8** Jodo-e (Enlightenment Day) commemorating the day when the Buddha attained Enlightenment
- DEC 31** New Year's Eve Service; Bell Ringing Ceremony held throughout Japan

- JAN 1** Memorial Service for Nichiji Shonin, one of the six main disciples of Nichiren Shonin
- JAN 13** Minobusan Opening Ceremony for the New Year at Kuonji Temple.
- JAN 21** Memorial Service for Nichiro Shonin, one of the six main disciples of Nichiren Shonin

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Editorial Board Sensho Komukai, *Editor*; Shoda Kanai, *Assistant Editor*; Kosei Uchida, *Staff Writer*; Sandra Seki, *Advisor*.

Art Director Alan Rowe

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Nichiren Shu

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