

THE MIDDLE WAY

ADVOCATING THE TRUE TEACHINGS OF NICHIREN THE TRUE BUDDHA

AUTUMN

OESHIKI SPECIAL

2020

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¹ Nanmyōhōrengekyō – the Odaimoku, or invocation of the ultimate, Mystic Law of life.

ACHIEVING PEACE IN A WORLD IN DISARRAY

Reverend Raidō Hirota

International Meeting

September 23/24, 2020

QUESTION: There are countless associations and foundations in the world with more or less noble and reformative intentions but, as proof of their ineffectiveness, the world is increasingly in disarray. All this fragmentation in my opinion reflects the fragmentation in the Buddhist world, especially regarding the Nichiren² traditional schools. However, these Buddhist schools are similar in a negative way: there is no protest or grievance against the diabolical power. The traditional Nichiren schools remain deafeningly silent, as if the Founder had taught that one must remain silent and prone to established power. This silence is a shame for Buddhists.

In accordance with Nichiren's behavior, demonic leaders, who want to poison the world with their vaccines, their masks and all their other protocols, should be admonished, both in Italy and abroad. Therefore, the various Nichiren tradition schools, in order to honor Shakyamuni Buddha³ and



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The Middle Way

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² Nichiren, Nichiren Daishonin - (1222-1282) the true Buddha who realized the Law of Namumyōhōrengekyō imbedded in the Lotus Sutra and established the Law as the means by which all living beings can become enlightened.

³ Shakyamuni Buddha - Siddhartha Gautama Buddha (1029 BCE-949 BCE), the historical founder of Buddhism on this earth.

the Bodhisattva Nichiren, and in order not to betray the spirit of the Lotus Sutra, it would be necessary to protest and admonish the devils in power and those doctors in white coats that cause harm to the world.

I have, through social media, admonished Bill Gates, some WHO leaders, and Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte, to abandon their evil intent to poison the population with their vaccines, and instead recite Namumyōhōrengekyō⁴. Perhaps if the various Nichiren schools present grievances to the authorities as Nichiren did, they would avoid betraying the spirit of the Lotus Sutra and by fighting for a common social purpose, they would reunite. What is your opinion?

REVEREND RAIDŌ HIROTA (RH): Nichiren Daishonin declined or refused to participate in social movements, political movements, revolutions, group protests to appeal for changing the world.

Societies and nations are made up of the connections between human beings. That is how the world is structured. It is human connections that create the world. However, the important thing is not just the framework or structure of a government, or the enforcement of the laws that a country creates. The most important thing is having the principles of the Lotus Sutra as the basis of society, and having faith in the principles of the Lotus Sutra.

The world will never be better or at peace if we act selfishly – thinking only about oneself, and only about one’s own happiness. Unless we care about the happiness and wellbeing of everyone, the world will not be at peace. If you think that the world can be changed by accumulating wealth, power, decree, or military might, then you are wrong. It cannot. It will not. Even though you punish a person who has broken a law and is imprisoned, unless you realize that that life and every life has the Ten Worlds⁵, including the life of Buddha, and unless we believe it and practice it, the world will not change.

3 Namumyōhōrengekyō - The Mystic Law, which enlightens all Buddhas; the Supreme Law of life and the universe; the Buddha-nature in all things.

⁵ Ten Worlds - potential conditions of life inherent in each individual. They are: Hell, Hunger, Animality, Anger, Humanity, Heaven or Rapture, Learning, Realization, Bodhisattva, and Buddhahood.

Nichiren Daishonin's was exiled to Sado Island as punishment for being accused of attempting to subvert or overthrow the Shogunate government⁶. The charges were completely false, and yet he was exiled. The government's intent was to have him killed because they believed his criticism of their beliefs and their support of heretical religions was about destroying them rather than changing the beliefs. Because of his continuous criticism, they wanted him dead. But to overthrow the government was never Nichiren Daishonin's intent. Nor did he ever attempt to, or encourage others to subvert the government. His intent was to save the country.

He was innocent, and his followers knew he was innocent. His followers didn't want Nichiren to die on Sado Island, a very harsh and inhospitable place. If he died, they would be lost without a religious leader to teach them and guide them in life. So, they fervently wanted him to return to them. Among his followers were several samurai warriors. In the class system of Japan at that time, the samurai, known as the Bushi, were a most respected and powerful class. Some Bushi believers got together and decided they would rescue Nichiren Daishonin and save him from further suffering and hardship. Through their connections with those having influence with the ruling class, they worked behind the scenes to prove the Daishonin's innocence. Soon many other believers joined them in a movement to save Nichiren. The believers were so motivated and committed to this movement, they wrote Nichiren to inform him of the actions they were taking to rescue him.

When Nichiren Daishonin read their letter, he was outraged. He wrote them back and said, "Those people who are a part of this movement to save me are no longer my disciples and followers. You are not a part of me. You have to end the movement immediately." In his letter, Nichiren made three important points. These points are related to the Eight Phases of a Buddha's Existence⁷:

- 1.) The Buddhist gods, or *shoten zenjin*⁸ are supposed to protect the believers of the Lotus Sutra. But Nichiren Daishonin realized his exile to Sado Island was

⁶ Japanese government during the 12th and 13th centuries ruled by Shoguns or warrior leaders.

⁷ Eight Phases of a Buddha's Existence – there are eight phases of a Buddha's existence. They are: 1) descending from Heaven; 2) entering the mother's body; 3) coming out of the mother's body; 4) renouncing secular life; 5) conquering devils; 6) attaining enlightenment; 7) preaching the Law; and 8) entering nirvana.

⁸ Shoten zenjin - Buddhist gods – forces of nature that are not explicable, can't be seen and are not scientifically proven.

a challenge from the Buddhist gods. There was something for him to learn, something for him to gain from this experience of enduring the hardships and life-threatening experiences of life on this remote and inhospitable island.

- 2.) The Lotus Sutra ⁹ teaches that believers of the True Law of Namumyōhōrengekyō will encounter unbelievable challenges. By having been sent to Sado, Nichiren was living the great hardships predicted in the Lotus Sutra.

- 3.) Nichiren Daishonin also wrote that probably in a previous life he had surely looked down on people who believed in the Lotus Sutra – in the Law of Namumyōhōrengekyō. And Nichiren was sure he had treated them very badly. “So,” he explained, “what I am experiencing now is retribution for my past actions.”

He further stated, “For these three reasons I am here on Sado Island. It is wrong for you believers to go behind the government’s back to save me. It is very wrong.”

In Nichiren Daishonin’s religion, if a believer, on his or her own, had gone directly to the government to explain Nichiren Daishonin’s innocence, or appealed to a court, even if the person is rejected or denied a hearing to address the issue, it is important that this person act in a direct and straightforward manner, face to face, and not in an underhanded way. Nichiren, himself, tried on many occasions to directly address the issues he had with the government. What Nichiren is saying is it is not right to work to try to reverse or overturn something with the power of a group.

At this time, there are many movements arising all over the world. Most of these movements began as a good cause with good intentions. But day by day things begin to erode, and gradually turn into looting, violence and destruction. So, while these movements begin well-intended, in a short time, sometimes in a matter of days, they devolve into an opportunity for people (often attracting outsiders) to express their grievances and discontent, which is expressed destructively. Their original message

⁹ Lotus Sutra – the highest teaching that Shakyamuni Buddha taught in the last eight years of his life. It reveals that all life has Buddha nature, and that the life of Buddha and all life is eternal

gets lost in the mayhem, and their appeal for positive change is subverted. That is wrong. It shouldn't be this way.

To you, the questioner, I don't know what you are reading, what your religious discipline is, or where you are getting your information. In your question, you write, "Shakyamuni Buddha and Bodhisattva Nichiren." However, in Nichiren Shoshu Buddhism¹⁰ we honor Nichiren Daishonin as the True Buddha. We do not honor Nichiren Daishonin and Shakyamuni on the same level. There is a distinction. And we also do not work together with other groups.

With regard to vaccinations, you say the leaders are trying to poison the world with vaccines. I don't understand your premise that vaccines are poison. Vaccines are created to prevent illness. I don't understand your logic. From a faith point of view, to say vaccinations are bad, really does not make a lot of sense.

I've had several conversations in the past with Jehovah Witnesses. They believe that the Bible says that there are unclean things in the blood. Therefore, according to their belief, Jehovah Witnesses are not allowed to have blood transfusions. But at the time the Bible was written, I don't believe medical technology had developed enough to perform blood transfusions. So, I don't think what was said in the Bible means you cannot have a blood transfusion. Prohibiting blood transfusions is their interpretation of the Biblical phrase, "there are unclean things in the blood." I think, to decline a technology that saves lives is the wrong emphasis.

I explained to the Jehovah Witnesses at the time that although a head of cabbage does not have red blood, it has a fluid that circulates throughout it for its survival. It is not only cabbages, but all fruits and vegetables have a fluid which is their blood. Though it is not red, their fluid is the life blood of a plant – each fruit and vegetable that we eat. Is it dirty or clean? Can you really decide which is dirty and which is clean? Likewise, to think that vaccines are completely evil is not right. Medicine is a technology designed to save people's lives. It is wrong to blanketly refuse that

¹⁰ Nichiren Shoshu Buddhism - the sect of Buddhism that embraces and recites the true Law of Namumyōhōrengekyō as the original cause of enlightenment and believes in Nichiren Daishonin of the true Buddha.

technology does not make sense at all. Having a vaccination is not going against our religion.

Question: From the Buddhist perspective, how do we deal with the current state of the world. What is your outlook? How do you go about your daily life conscious of what is going on globally?

RH: At the end of World War II, people all over the world reflected on what had happened—what they experienced and went through. To achieve peace, the world had to experience cruelty, endure hardship, kill others, and watch as others were killed during the war. The United Nations was created as a result of each nation's reflection on their contribution to the horrors that took place. And after the war, the nations tried to keep peace. But now, only 75 years after WW II ended and the United Nations was established, the worst in human nature has once again become dominant. Now the predominant attitude is to selfishly care only about benefitting oneself and/or one's country. That is the prevailing spirit of the world today.

In the past, the world had experienced other very cruel wars. But people have forgotten what they went through. In recent years, the possibility of another war has been hanging in the air. As that has been at the center of the world's current state of mind, the corona virus suddenly appeared. When the corona virus started to spread all over the world, the world suddenly realized the interconnectedness of all of us. The whole world is infected with this virus. So, we really need to understand on a more profound level that everyone in this world is connected. For instance, in the United States, over 200,000 people have died, which is more than have died in the wars since World War II. And globally the death rate has surpassed one million. Thus, this is not the time to be concerned about which country is the strongest, which is the most powerful, which is richer, which is more productive, which is better. We really need to come to an understanding of this because what stands in the balance is a very unsettled peace. This peace is built on a foundation of strong countries dominating small, weak countries, while the small, weak countries stay quiet, trying to endure for their very survival. So, what we have here is a peaceful-looking, unpeaceful world.

As I said earlier, if everyone cannot be happy, then true happiness will not be achieved. It is not a peaceful world if only you are peaceful. Or only one person selfishly

wants to be at peace. If everyone only thinks of their peace, inevitably discrimination, war, conflicts, violence, uprising will occur.

For this basic reason, everyone must encounter Namumyōhōhōrengekyō. For it teaches that we cannot be happy if everyone is not happy. We must care about the happiness of all in this world.

Question: In the world there are many scientists and researchers, biologists and nanopathologists who have analyzed different vaccines and many have found traces of human DNA obtained from the DNA of aborted fetuses. The Catholic Church deliberately ignores this. But isn't it an inhumane thing from an ethical point of view and from a Buddhist point of view? I am referring to various vaccines, not just that of Covid19. The use of aborted fetuses in vaccine production has been a practice since the 1950s.

RH: This is the first time I have heard this. As I mentioned, over 200,000 have died from Covid-19 in the United States, and over a million in the world. This is the current reality of the corona virus. I heard on the Japan news that it normally takes 7 to 8 years to produce an effective and safe vaccine. For Covid-19, the whole world is trying to compress the time to produce a vaccine into 1 or 1 ½ years, and some countries have even mentioned skipping some clinical trials that would determine side effects and contraindications. Everyone is rushing in the same direction. They say they will check side effects after they have produced the vaccine. The process, therefore, is backwards. And to be honest, it is not only this issue, but all kinds of problems are arising.

So as to your question, what is my point of view as a Buddhist? I can't say it is because I am a Buddhist, but I can tell you how I feel. The whole world is trying to solve this major issue – solving the Covid-19 threat. For that reason, they are trying to come up with all kinds of ways, including vaccines, to save the world. That is how the world is progressing. There is this issue of aborted fetuses, as well as other issues that cause problems, such as: We don't know if all the food we eat has been genetically modified. There are all kinds of issues of concern happening that we are unaware of. Things we just don't know about.

Placenta from after birth is also used in medicine. From a Buddhist point of view, there is no mention of medicine or science in the Lotus Sutra. So, I cannot really

comment on that. But one thing I can say is, anything related to fighting or killing is absolutely not acceptable from the Buddhist perspective. The basic Buddhist attitude is not to deny the existence of others, or discriminate against others in anyway. Just think of this as the principles of Buddhism, and view the world through this lens.

Question: From the point of view of someone who has worked in Infectious Diseases and done Infectious Disease Research at University level, events like COVID happen about every 100 years or so. We humans are usually focused on our own time, and it would seem to me, as a Buddhist, that we all need to have the opportunity to learn compassion each time a plague-like event happens to humanity. Should we look at COVID as a poison that we can use by our practice and compassionate actions into medicine by showing others how to respect all life?

RH: I totally agree with the first part of your question. I really feel that the majority of human beings haven't stopped to reflect on their behavior. We have just keep focusing on development and progress. Now, because of this pandemic, we are forced to reflect on our actions. We are now questioning whether we have been right or wrong. And those who have not stopped to reflect, and those who don't want to stop and reflect have to, because this is the time or era for self-reflection.

When I read Nichiren Daishonin's gosho, it seems to me there were four occasions when there was epidemic spread of deadly disease during his advent of forty years. That means there was an epidemic every ten years during which many people died. At that time, most people traveled on foot. Today, by contrast, the world has high speed connections. And high speed transportation connects us all. This is very different from Nichiren Daishonin's time. But for him and others during his time, to become infected by one of those diseases was of high probability. And though devastating, it was expected. Because this kind of epidemic is so infrequent in the modern era, some may have known it could happen, but the world did not anticipate it and was unprepared for an epidemic of this scale. Maybe what we are experiencing right now could be the new normal. The fact that the whole world is driven to mass produce, exploit, cut costs, reduce labor for greater profit, these actions are not sustainable and have to change. The world has to go in a different direction.



NICHIU SHONIN'S¹¹ LETTER OF PETITION

Nikko¹² was the disciple of Nichiren, and I am Nichiu, the disciple of Nikko. I, Nichiu, respectfully appeal to you. I am privileged to receive the sovereign's favor. Please accept these words I submit for they are the words of the True Law¹³ to which all Buddhas have agreed. Moreover, the order of transmission of Buddhism was from India, to China, to Japan during the Former and Middle Day of the Law after the Buddha's passing, and before the rise of the Lotus Sutra. The teachings of those eras are evil and must be discarded. If you believe in the true Law of the Lotus Sutra during the Latter Day of the Law, then the world will be ordered and at peace. To have peace on earth you must have faith in the Lotus Sutra. The purpose of this letter is to petition you to take faith in the Lotus Sutra.

With my letter, I am also submitting the following accompanying letters:

- One volume of the Rissho Ankoku-Ron¹⁴ written by Nichiren in 1260 - a letter concerned with the conversion of the government to True Buddhism.
- One letter of appeal by Nikko Shonin written in 1330

¹¹ Nichiu Shoshin – (1409-1482) 9th High Priest of Nichiren Shoshu.

¹²Nikko – Nikko Shonin (1246-1333) 2nd High Priest of Nichiren Shoshu who received the transfer of the teachings directly from Nichiren Daishonin.

¹³ True Law - of Namumyōhōrengekyō

¹⁴ Rissho Ankoku Ron – “Securing the Peace of Land through the Propagation of True Buddhism”. One of the major writings of Nichiren Daishonin in which he explains to the ruling clan that in order for the country to be peaceful and secure, the people need to abandon their faith in erroneous teachings and embrace the True Law of Namumyōhōrengekyō.

- One letter of appeal by Nichimoku Shonin¹⁵ written in 1333
- One letter of appeal by Nichido Shonin¹⁶ written in 1336
- One letter of appeal by Nichigyō Shonin¹⁷ written in 1342
- After respectfully putting forward the above-mentioned letters, I will discuss the three time periods of the Former, Middle and Latter Days of the Law¹⁸ as a means to explain how Buddhism was introduced to Japan.

First, you must consider the importance of the difference between the role of the ordained priesthood and the role of the laity, since governing the country and having a public policy that is beneficial to the people has its origins in Buddhism. To become a ruler of a country, one must have had a connection to the Buddha and made offerings to the Buddha in past existences. However, the reality of the world today is that countries are ruined, and people have become lost and unhappy because the prevailing spirit drives them to discard the Lotus Sutra, and insists upon the teaching of many, varied Buddhist scriptures. This is the wrong teaching, and it shows contempt for Bodhisattva Jōgyō¹⁹, whose heritage is to propagate the Lotus Sutra in the Latter Day of the Law.

The Buddha decided that the Lotus Sutra is the one and only true Law in the Latter Day. If priests and lay believers are sincerely seeking the true Law, they will grieve when they look at the situation today. After all, Shakyamuni taught for fifty years. Clearly some of his teachings can be employed and some cannot. The time for propagating a teaching is determined by the differences in people's capacity and their ability to understand and believe in Buddhism. In other words, once Hinayana²⁰

¹⁵ Nichimoku Shonin - 1260-1333) – 3rd high priest of Nichiren Shoshu Buddhism who inherited the teachings of Nichiren Daishonin from Nikko Shonin.

¹⁶ Nichido Shonin – (1283-1341) 4th High Priest of Nichiren Shoshu.

¹⁷ Nichigyō Shonin – (d. 1369) 5th High Priest of Nichiren Shoshu.

¹⁸ The Former, Middle and Latter Days of the Law – the three time periods after Shakyamuni Buddha passed away. The Former Day began after Shakyamuni died and lasted 1,000 years. The Middle Day was the next 1000 years. And the Latter Day is the present time period which began in 1052. It is also called the evil age.

¹⁹ ¹⁹ Bodhisattva Jōgyō – meaning true self, he is one of the four bodhisattvas and the leader of the Bodhisattvas of the Earth who appeared in the 15th chapter of the Lotus Sutra. Nichiren Daishonin is identified as being the reincarnation of Bodhisattva Jōgyō.

²⁰ Hinayana – Lesser Vehicle. One of the two major streams of Buddhism focused on individual enlightenment rather than the enlightenment of all.

teachings appear, the Outer Way will be destroyed and no longer have value. When Mahayana²¹ teachings begin, Hinayana is destroyed and loses its value. When true Mahayana teachings begin, provisional Mahayana is destroyed and loses its value. When the essential teaching of the Lotus Sutra²² appears, the theoretical teaching of the Lotus Sutra²³ is destroyed. Who, other than Shakyamuni, can comment on this?

In order to introduce this religion to Japan sages kept and protected the Buddha's teachings during the Former, Middle and Latter Day of the Law. Not one of them was ever negligent. To explain, in India in the age of the Former Day of the Law (the first 1000 years after the Buddha's demise), Mahakashyapa²⁴ and Ananda²⁵ initially spread Hinayana Buddhism. Then Nagarjuna²⁶ and Vasubandhu²⁷ spread provisional Mahayana²⁸, and Hinayana lost its value. Next, in China, during the Middle Day of the Law (the age of the imitative Law) T'ien-t'ai²⁹ appeared. He was the reincarnation of Bodhisattva Yakuo³⁰. T'ien-t'ai refuted and thoroughly destroyed the evil teachings of the three sects of Buddhism in the south, and the seven sects of Buddhism in the north, totaling ten schools in all, and established the theoretical teachings of the Lotus Sutra. Moreover, the same life of Bodhisattva Yakuo was later reborn as Dengyo³¹ in Japan. Dengyo destroyed the teachings of the

²¹ Mahayana- Greater Vehicle. The second of the major streams of Buddhism which expounds bodhisattva practices as the means to achieve enlightenment for oneself and others.

²² The essential teachings of the Lotus Sutra – the last fourteen chapters of the Lotus Sutra (chapters 15 – 28), where Shakyamuni reveals his true identity as the Buddha attained enlightenment in the remote past.

²³ The theoretical teachings of the Lotus Sutra – the first fourteen chapters of the Lotus Sutra in which Shakyamuni teaches as the historical Buddha who attained enlightenment in India.

²⁴ Mahakashyapa – one of Shakyamuni's ten major disciples. He propagated Hinayana Buddhism.

²⁵ Ananda – a cousin of Shakyamuni and one his ten major disciples who personally attended Shakyamuni for many years, and because of his extraordinary memory, played a central role in compiling the Buddha's teachings.

²⁶ Nagarjuna – an Indian Mahayana scholar who lived between 150 and 250 C.E. He is counted as the 14th of Shakyamuni's 24 successors.

²⁷ Vasubandhu – living in the 4th or 5th century C.E., he was originally a Hinayana Buddhist who converted to Mahayana Buddhism of which he became a scholar and is counted as the 21st of Shakyamuni's 24 successors.

²⁸ Provisional Mahayana – these teachings reveal only partial truths and are intended to lead practitioners to the true Mahayana teachings.

²⁹ T'ien-t'ai- also known as Chih-i in Japanese) (538-597) was the founder of the T'ien-t'ai school of Buddhism in China.

³⁰ Bodhisattva Yakuo – “Medicine King” – a bodhisattva who it is said had the power to cure all mental and physical illnesses.

³¹ Dengyo - (767-822) – also known as Saichō – introduced and established in Japan the true teaching of the Lotus Sutra taught by T'ien-t'ai of China.

six flourishing sects centered in and around Nara, and converted the people by introducing them to the Lotus Sutra, and teaching them that all people can become enlightened.

Now in the present, it is 380 years since the beginning of the Latter Day. Clearly, in this age, Nichiren Daishonin appeared in Japan as the reincarnation of Bodhisattva Jōgyō and spread the essential teachings of the Lotus Sutra. The time has come for the destruction of the pre-Lotus Sutra teachings as well as the theoretical teachings of the Lotus Sutra; this is written in the Lotus Sutra. The age of the Latter Day is the age when the people's capacity is to understand and believe in the true Law; this is explained in all of the sutras. Yet, one shows contempt for the actual moon when he sees its reflection on the water; and although the sun has come out, one seeks the tiny light of a star. Is this appropriate?

People who believe in religions other than the Lotus Sutra are relying on sutras that are inferior to the Lotus Sutra. Sutras of previous eras, which are not suitable in the Latter Day, are being taught, and various provisional teachings are mixed together. Contempt is shown for the greater sutra, while respect is given to inferior teachings. Such confusion of right and wrong, and having contempt for the true Law are great offenses.

Because you choose to have faith in the wrong religion, you are breaking the Buddha's heart. The sage who knows the true Law and has tried to enlighten the people, will stop propagating true Buddhism. The Buddhist gods, who are supposed to protect believers of the Lotus Sutra, will abandon the country, and instead demons will intrude. Close friends will attack and kill each other. War will break out. Calamities and disasters, such as invasion by another country, will arise. If you are merely thinking of the misfortune of yourself and those around you, this is wrong. Because you do not concern yourself with the enlightenment of all human beings, you will fall into the hell of incessant suffering and summon misery.

In order for me to confront the sects of pre-Lotus Sutra and theoretical teachings, I must receive the sovereign's approval. If you take faith in the object of worship, the invocation and the sanctuary of the True Teachings of the Lotus Sutra, the true Law will

spread throughout the entire country. Then there will be no more evil people and no more confusion. The country will be peaceful, the sovereign will be glorified, the world will be at peace, society will be calm, and the people will live tranquil lives.

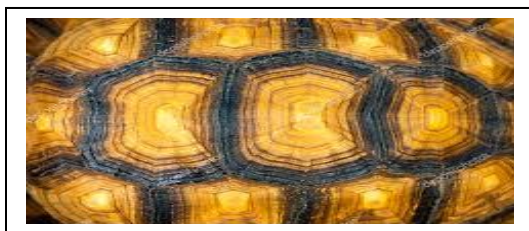
I, Nichiu, inherited the true Law from Nichiren. Because I endeavor for society and for the sake of the Law, I ask the sovereign to hear me.

Please excuse my lack of decorum.

I respectfully submit this letter to you.

Nichiu

March 1432



Nikko Shonin's emblem is a turtle shell, representing protection by indestructible armor.

NIKKO SHONIN'S LETTER OF REMONSTRATION

I, Nikko, disciple of Nichiren, would like to appeal to you once more.

I urge you to cease putting the theoretical teachings ahead of the Lotus Sutra, to practice the essential teaching of the Lotus Sutra and to have correct belief in the true Law. If you do this, then the world will be peaceful and secure.

Along with this letter, I will submit additional letters:

- One scroll of the *Rissho Ankoku Ron* written in the 1st year of Bunno (1260)
- One letter of remonstrations by Daishonin written in the 5th year of Bun'ei (1268)
- One letter by Daishonin written in the 8th year of Bun'ei (1271)
- One principal goshō by Daishonin

So often have I told you all the details contained in these letters. Nevertheless, I say once again, to discard heretical teachings and propagate the true Law in this world is the best way to govern the country. It is the way rulers of high virtue in past eras governed, and those times were the best in history.

In China, T'ien-t'ai refuted the doctrines of the ten major schools of Buddhism, all of which were heretical. He prevailed over these various heretical sects during the Sui Dynasty, and successfully brought peace to the entire country. In Japan, under Emperor Kammu, Dengyo refuted the six heretical sects and freed people from the anxiety of invasion by foreign countries.

To say Shakyamuni's words are ever-abiding is evil. Whether you are looking at the world from within Buddhism or from outside of Buddhism, throw away what is evil and keep what is good to govern the country well, are the words of Shakyamuni. Lately, however, when you see in this country disasters in the heavens and on earth, society declining and confusion growing worse every year, it is proof that the religion the Kamakura Shogunate believes in is not benefiting society or the people.

During the Middle Day of the Law Dengyo propagated the theoretical teachings of the Lotus Sutra, while at the beginning of the Latter Day of the Law Daishonin spread the essential teachings of the Lotus Sutra. This is the sequence of propagation of the Lotus Sutra established by Shakyamuni. Dengyo himself understood his role and his limitations. You must, as soon as possible, wake up and make a resolution in favor of the true Law of Buddhism.

In conclusion, because it is the age of the Latter Day of the Law, you must practice the essential teachings of the Lotus Sutra. Day after day there will be increasing disasters in the country, relatives and friends will kill each other and invasions from foreign countries will intensify. All of this is detailed in the Daishonin's *Rissho Ankoku Ron* and the goshō, and it has come true. That is why you have to stop practicing the theoretical teachings of the Lotus Sutra and take faith in and practice the true Law of the essential teachings of the Lotus Sutra. The world will then be peaceful and secure. For the sake of the country and the true Law I repeat this again.

3rd month of the 2nd year of Gentoku (1330)



OESHIKI

October 13, 1282

Reverend Raidō Hirota
Fukuyama, City Japan

Nichiren Daishonin passed away at 8:00am on the 13th day of the 10th month in the year 1282 at the age of 61. While it is the day the Daishonin died, it is not a day of mourning. October 13 is *Oeshiki*. It is a holiday; a day of great celebration, and the most important ceremony in Nichiren Shoshu Buddhism.

Oeshiki, or “Founder’s Day” is a celebration of Daishonin’s true, eternal Law, which was revealed through his endurance of the austere practices and persecutions described in the Lotus Sutra. Even though the Daishonin died, the Buddha nature – the life of Namumyōhōrengekyō itself – never dies; it is eternal. That is why we celebrate *Oeshiki*, to affirm the eternal life of the Buddha.

Oeshiki is also an affirmation of the treatise “Rissho Ankoku Ron.” In this treatise Nichiren Daishonin makes clear that we must practice the Mystic Law and perceive enlightenment for ourselves, and also warns that we must believe in Namumyōhōrengekyō, or we will never achieve peace.

The *Oeshiki* ceremony is performed during Gongyo. Just after the *Nī-setsu-gē-gon* passage of the *Juryo* chapter, and just before the *Jiga-gē*³², stop the recitation of the sutra and read in a loud voice the passage of the “Risshō Ankoku Ron” from, “*The host exclaimed with delight: As the proverb says, the dove has changed into a hawk, the sparrow into a clam!*” to the end of the goshō. (All *Oeshiki* letters can be found at www.udumbarafoundation.org)

Before the ceremony, you should make paper cherry blossoms and decorate the left and right sides of the Gohonzon, expressly because even though it was autumn at the time of Nichiren Daishōnin’s death—the 13th day of the 10th month—the cherry blossoms bloomed throughout the entire country. The lotus flower symbolizes the teachings of Shakyamuni of India. 2000 years after Shakyamuni’s passing, during the Latter Day of the Law, Buddhism came to Japan where the essence of Buddhism was elucidated by Nichiren Daishōnin. The cherry blossom, a flower emblematic of Japan, signifies the passage of true Buddhism to Japan.

Getting together to do gongyo and Ōdaimoku and read the letters of Nichiren Daishonin and the various high priests on this day, is both sacred and blessed.

Please Note: In Nichiren Shōshū Buddhism we do not offer colorful flowers to Gohonzon, except at *Oeshiki*. You may leave the flowers adorning the altar until the end of the year. Then, in order to avoid the misunderstanding that Nichiren Shōshū decorates the Gohonzon with colorful flowers, please destroy the cherry blossoms by throwing them away or burning them.



³² Jiga-ge – the verse section of the 16th chapter of the Lotus Sutra that begins *Jiga toku burrai* , , ,



OESHIKI

Reverend Raidō Hirota
Sanbo-in Temple
Fukuyama City, Japan

The Ōeshiki ceremony is the most important Buddhist service, for it celebrates Nichiren Daishonin’s eternal life as well as the eternal Law of Namumyōhōrengekyō. Having an Ōeshiki service deepens our faith.

During Gongyo, just after the *Nī-setsu-gē-gon* passage of the *Juryo* chapter, and just before the *Jiga-gē*, stop the recitation of the sutra and read in a loud voice a passage of the Risshō Ankoku Ron³³ from, “*The host exclaimed with delight: As the proverb says, the dove has changed into a hawk, the sparrow into a clam!*” to the end of the gosho.

In a formal Ōeshiki ceremony the shakubuku³⁴ letter written to the Kamakura government by ninth High Priest Nichiū Shōnin, Nichiren Daishonin’s Risshō Ankoku Ron, Daishōnin’s shakubuku letter to the Kamakura government, the shakubuku letter of second High Priest Nikkō Shōnin to the Kamakura government, the shakubuku letter of third High Priest Nichimoku Shōnin to the Kamakura government, the shakubuku letter of fourth High Priest Nichidō Shōnin to the Kamakura government, and the

³³ Rissho Ankoku Ron – “Securing the Peace of Land through the Propagation of True Buddhism”. One of the major writings of Nichiren Daishonin in which he explains to the ruling clan that in order for the country to be peaceful and secure, the people need to abandon their faith in erroneous teachings and embrace the True Law of Namumyōhōrengekyō.

³⁴ Shakubuku - a method of propagating Buddhism by directly leading a person to the True Law and refuting erroneous views.

shakubuku letter to the Kamakura government by fifth High Priest Nichigyō Shōnin are read in front of the Gohonzon by the priests one after another in this order. This is done so that we do not change this faith after Nichiren Daishōnin's death. No matter what the time period, it must be paramount that we work for the sake of *kōsen-rūfū*³⁵ and the enlightenment of all living beings.

You should make paper cherry blossoms and decorate the left and right sides □ the altar, specifically because even though Nichiren Daishōnin died in autumn—the 13th day of the 10th month—cherry blossoms bloomed throughout the country. The lotus flower symbolizes the teachings of Shakyamuni of India. 2000 years after his death, during the Latter Day of the Law Buddhism came to Japan where the essence of Buddhism was elucidated by Nichiren Daishōnin. The cherry blossom symbolizes the passage of true Buddhism to Japan.



The photograph to the left shows vases of paper cherry blossoms on the altar at Sanbo-in Temple in Fukuyama City, Japan. From the Buddhist perspective, the body of the vase in which the flowers are placed symbolize the Law of Buddhism and is representative of Mt. Sumeru.³⁶ The height of Mt. Sumeru is 84,000 *yojana*³⁷ above sea level, and 84,000 *yojana* below sea level. One of the decorations on the vase (not clearly visible) illustrates the stars in the heavens. Another decoration represents the waves which surround Mt. Sumeru. And a third symbol represents the mountains. These three symbols surround the flowers in the cone of the vase. The three colorful belts encircling the vase which support Mt. Sumeru represent the gold wheel, the water wheel, and the wind wheel. The white mountain-shaped papers surrounding the base of the vase symbolize Mt. Sumeru's seven surrounding mountains and seven oceans. In the sea surrounding the seventh gold mountain there are 4 continents. The southernmost continent is Jambudvīpa³⁸ where humans live. If you are not born into this world of

³⁵ Kosen-rufu - to widely declare and spread True Buddhism.

³⁶ Mt. Sumeru – in ancient Indian cosmology Sumeru was the highest mountain in the center of the world.

³⁷ Yojana - 1 *yojana* (an Indian measurement) is 7-9 miles

³⁸ Jambudvīpa – in ancient Indian cosmology it is one of the four continents surrounding Mt. Sumeru.

Jambudvīpa, you cannot connect with Buddhist teachings. The cherry blossoms decorating the summit of Mt. Sumeru symbolize *kōsen rūfū*³⁹ and the enlightenment of all living beings.

In Nichiren Shōshū Buddhism, we do not offer colorful flowers to Gohonzon, except at Oeshiki. You may leave the flowers decorating the altar until the end of the year. Then, in order to avoid the misunderstanding that Nichiren Shōshū decorates the Gohonzon with colorful flowers, at the end of the year please destroy and throw the cherry blossoms away.



Celebrate
It's Oeshiki

³⁹ *Kōsen rūfū* – to widely declare and spread True Buddhism.

How to Make Simple Cherry Blossoms

Reprinted from "DIY Cherry Blossoms" by Kara

At creationsbykara.com

SUPPLIES:

- Tissue paper
- Scissors
- Glue
- Branches or dowels

INSTRUCTIONS:

1-Stack several pieces of tissue on top of each other and cut out a flower shape. It does not need to be perfect! Mine were about 2 1/2" across and had five petals, but it doesn't really matter that much. I wanted to do two colors, but you can just do one. And because I know a few of you are bound to notice. . . yes, my light pink paper has words on it. But it's all I had and I knew once it was all scrunched up they wouldn't show. Which they don't. Thank goodness.



2-For two-toned cherry blossoms, stack two flowers on top of each other with the petals not matched up.



3-Now just scrunch the flower petals up and twist the whole thing together at the bottom.



I thought it would be more realistic if there were variations in the blossoms, so I made some light pink, some dark pink, and some with the two colors together. To make smaller blossoms like the two on the left, just scrunch up one flower at a time.



4-Now it's time to glue them to your branches. I used branches that I pruned from our apple tree. If you don't have your own tree, check with your neighbors. You should be able to find some unwanted branches this time of year.

I think it looks best to apply the blossoms to the natural buds of the branch. Just add a tiny dab of hot glue, and press your blossom on.



Continue adding blossoms to all sides of your branches.



5-When you are all finished, just stick them in the container of your choice. I added some wheat at the bottom to hold them in place.

