

# THE MIDDLE WAY

ADVOCATING THE TRUE TEACHINGS OF NICHIREN THE TRUE BUDDHA

AUTUMN

2012



## IN THIS ISSUE

Exoteric vs. Esoteric Buddhism	1
On Becoming a Follower of Nichiren Shoshu Shoshinkai	3
On Killing, Abortion, Contraception and Euthanasia	6
The Second Silent Prayer	9
“Reply to the Lay Nun, Mother Of Ueno”	11
Oeshiki	12

### *The Middle Way*

Is published by  
Udumbara Foundation  
Website: [www.udumbarafoundation.org](http://www.udumbarafoundation.org)  
E-mail: [ufound@yahoo.com](mailto:ufound@yahoo.com)



Advisor: Reverend Raido Hirota  
Founder and Editor-in-Chief: Peach Pair  
In this issue: Translators: Jun Hokari  
Editor: Art Shapiro

## EXOTERIC vs. ESOTERIC BUDDHISM

Reverend Raidō Hirota  
International Meeting  
August 2011

**QUESTION:** What is the difference between Nichiren Shoshu Buddhism <sup>1</sup> and esoteric Buddhism?

**Reverend Raido Hirota (RH):** Buddhism is classified roughly into “exoteric teachings” (*kengyo*) and “esoteric teachings” (*mikkyo*). There is a Buddhist term called *Kikon*, which is a person’s ability to listen and practice the Buddha’s teachings. It also means great capacity to understand the Buddha’s teachings. In short, it is the ability to accept the faith, and the capacity to understand it.

In the exoteric teachings, the Buddha accommodates all sentient being’s openness to faith and their capacity to understand the teaching. The exoteric teachings are thorough and are expressed in a clear and obvious way in Buddhist scriptures. That’s how exoteric Buddhism teaches and guides the practitioners.

*Mikkyo* literally means Secret teachings. These are the esoteric teachings, which cannot

<sup>1</sup> Nichiren Shoshu Buddhism – the religion that embraces and recites the true Law of Namumyōhōrengekyō as the original cause of enlightenment and believes in Nichiren Daishonin as the true Buddha.

be understood by ordinary people. They advocate that the parts that are not expressed in the scriptures have more depth than the things that are explained. Even though there are Buddhist Scriptures (which are the original texts), if there are variations of interpretations that are not based on the original texts, it would be impossible to have comparative discussions. Because of the lack of unity within esoteric Buddhism, it becomes a religion that “seems like” it advocates selfishness, and there can also be no comparative discussion.

The Lotus Sutra<sup>2</sup> falls under the category of exoteric Buddhism. That is because the Lotus Sutra explicitly teaches us that life exists eternally, there is equality between Buddha and all sentient beings, and that all life possesses the capacity to attain Buddhahood.

The Lotus Sutra that we practice is an exoteric teaching. It is explained in words. There is nothing secret or hidden. You can understand it when you read and study it. But the esoteric teachings are unwritten and are not explained. Shingon teachings in Japan would be an example of esoteric teachings.

**Believer 1 (B1):** So the Lotus Sutra is an exoteric teaching. What other Buddhisms are classified as exoteric teachings? How do they differ from the Lotus Sutra?

**RH:** The most important thing to realize in the teachings of the Lotus Sutra is that all sentient beings have the Buddha nature within, and can therefore realize Buddhahood. That is explained in the Lotus Sutra in words that you can understand. But other exoteric teachings such as Nembutsu<sup>3</sup> say that once you die you will be reborn in a heavenly realm and be united with Amida Buddha<sup>4</sup>. In other words, if you believe in the Buddha you will be saved. That however, is not the point of studying Buddhism. It doesn't explain the teachings of Buddhism. It doesn't tell you how to become enlightened yourself. Whereas, the Lotus Sutra explains what the most important thing is in one's life.

Most people think that all Buddhisms are the same: that all Buddhists believe in Buddha. That is not so. Buddhism branches out from the main tree depending on how each school perceived the Buddha's teachings. For example, in Shingon, which is an esoteric teaching, it is taught that Buddha picked a lotus flower, smiled, and then broke off the stem of the flower. At that point, it is taught, that Buddha understood the laws and teachings of Buddhism. For some reason human beings become so readily enamored of a chosen person, whatever or whom ever that may be. Even though the story doesn't convey much of anything, just because the Buddha had a flower, smiled and broke the stem, he inexplicably gained this great wisdom. How does that make sense? Shingon is a Buddhism. And every other school of Buddhism will have a different interpretation of the teachings of Buddhism.



---

<sup>2</sup> Lotus Sutra – the highest teaching of Shakyamuni Buddha taught in the last eight years of his life. It reveals that all life has Buddha nature, all beings can realize Buddhahood, and that the life of Buddha and all life is eternal.

<sup>3</sup> Nembutsu – those sects which worship Amida Buddha and seek to attain rebirth in the “Pure Land.”

<sup>4</sup> Amida Buddha – infinite life or infinite light Buddha who is said to reside in the Pure Land of Perfect Bliss in the Western region. Followers worship him for their salvation.

# ON BECOMING A FOLLOWER OF NICHIREN SHOSHU SHOSHINKAI

Reverend Raidō Hirota

International Meeting

August 2011

**QUESTION:** How does one convert to Nichiren Shoshu Shoshinkai<sup>5</sup> Buddhism?

**RH:** Anyone can be a member of the religion if they learn the basic principles of Nichiren Daishonin's<sup>6</sup> teachings, have the faith to live the rest of their lives with these teachings as the root source of guidance for their lives, and are prepared to forsake their previous religions and all other religions in this world.

**B1:** What if someone continues to practice, reads the goshō, but interprets the teachings differently than the priest who is the teacher, is he still a member of this religion?

**RH:** No, they are not. They shouldn't be calling themselves Nichiren Shoshu believers. There are people who are reading the same goshō, chant the same Namumyōhōrengekyō<sup>7</sup>, but they believe that Gohonzon<sup>8</sup> is the Buddha. That is different from what the Daishonin teaches.

**Believer 2 (B2):** What about people who read the goshō<sup>9</sup> but think the English translation is not quite right, so they assign their own personal interpretation to the goshō? Do they still qualify as Nichiren Shoshu Shoshinkai practitioners?

**RH:** Nichiren became a priest at the age of 12, and he passed away at the age of 61. So from the age of 12 to the age of 61 his understanding of the teachings deepened. As he grew in understanding, he gained more wisdom. While the process of his development from age 12 to 61 is of course important, it is the climax of his life—what he realized at the end of his life—that is the culmination of his journey. That is what we believers are to learn from. In other words, where Nichiren Daishonin reached at the age of 61 is the conclusion of his learning of the teachings. So for believers, we should start our study from that point, and then go backwards. But if you get caught up in the middle of the Daishonin's development process, you will lose sight of the bigger picture, and his final teaching will not enter into

---

<sup>5</sup> Nichiren Shoshu Shoshinkai – the organization of Nichiren Shoshu priests dedicated to the protection and dissemination of Nichiren Daishonin's true teachings.

<sup>6</sup> 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.

<sup>7</sup> Namumyōhōrengekyō – the Mystic Law which enlightens all Buddhas; the Supreme Law of life and the universe; the Buddha-nature in all things.

<sup>8</sup> Gohonzon – the scroll that is the object of worship of Nichiren Shoshu Buddhism, representing the universal Law of Namumyōhōrengekyō and the Buddha nature in all things.

<sup>9</sup> Goshō – the individual and collected writings of Nichiren Daishonin.

your hearts or minds. That would not be the same belief that you are practicing here. There are people who take the parts of Nichiren's teachings that agree with their thinking and fit best with their lifestyle.

**B2:** Does that happen with organizations, or individual practitioners?

**RH:** Both. The Soka Gakkai<sup>10</sup> is a good example of that. They say that if you practice with us you'll get rich, you won't get sick, or your sickness will be cured and you'll become healthy. Especially in Japan after World War II that kind of materialism—those desires were especially appealing and energized the nation to rebuild itself and rebuild the lives of the population. Because of their promises so many people joined the organization. It does say in the teachings that abundance will come to you. But to use that to build an organization or to emphasize personal gain is far removed from what these teachings are all about.

**B3:** I originally started practicing with SGI over 20 years ago. We quickly realized that we were picking and choosing what we wanted out of Nichiren's Buddhism. It wasn't pure; it wasn't true. That's why I came to this group, because you are following the teachings. But a friend of mine, whom I gave *The Language of the Heart*<sup>11</sup> and who is very interested in joining, recently sent me an email from the Soka Gakkai about "Soka Spirit." Soka Spirit is basically their anti-temple effort whereby individuals sneak around gathering information on Nichiren Shoshu temples. The message in the email which disturbed me was that they encouraged the believers to chant for temples to close, and that the members of the temple would join their organization. Based on the Lotus Sutra and Nichiren's teachings, I would think that the karmic retribution from what they are doing would be so great that they would start to be destroyed from within. But it seems like they've been propagating this and nothing is happening to them. They are strong as an organization, but they are going against the Daishonin's teachings, and they're going against the Lotus Sutra. I'm a little baffled by this. How can they continue to go on so strongly when they are trying to create disharmony among Nichiren's believers? We know that the Law of cause and effect is strict. Then why haven't they been destroyed yet by their negative karma?<sup>12</sup> According to Nichiren, in the goshu it says there is to be unity between my believers. They're not following the goshu. Their not following Nichiren, and they're sure not following the Lotus Sutra. So how are they able to remain strong and not be destroyed by the negative causes that they're making?

**RH:** Firstly, the Soka Gakkai is using people's desires like superglue. That's one reason they're still around. Secondly, it is the job of some of the leaders to determine and analyze how to hold on to their power. That is the focus of some of the leadership. Rather than studying the teachings, this is a specific position or job within the organization. So that is why they do not disappear. It's like the inner workings of the mafia. The inner part of the

---

<sup>10</sup> Soka Gakkai – SGI – a lay organization that wrongly incorporates some of the doctrine of Nichiren Shoshu Buddhism into its own philosophy and practice.

<sup>11</sup> *The Language of the Heart* – an introductory book of the true teachings of Nichiren Daishonin published by Udumbara Foundation and Sanbo-in Temple.

<sup>12</sup> Karma – thoughts, words and deeds which determine a person's reality. Past thoughts, words and deeds influence the outcome in the present, just as present thoughts, words and deeds influence the outcome in the future.

organization—the thinking part; the brain part—is dedicated to keeping the organization running; surviving; keeping it alive. That’s why it doesn’t go away.

**B3:** So Buddhism is a job for them. It’s not something that they practice. They see it as their job. It’s part of their machine. It’s part of their organization. But I would still want to know where the karmic retribution is for what they’re doing. Shouldn’t it come down on them and just crush them? That’s what I find so discouraging. I see them leading people astray, and getting them to do things in the name of Buddhism that is not Buddhism. Like having people read *The Human Revolution*<sup>13</sup> which is about what Ikeda<sup>14</sup> has done, instead of focusing on the Lotus Sutra or the gosho of Nichiren Shoshu. And when those people die and they realize they have wasted a huge amount of time on something that really wasn’t Buddhism that is going to be very sad.

**RH:** Gangsters live in beautiful big houses, they drive gorgeous luxury cars. Do you envy them? Do want to be like them?

**B3:** No. That’s why I left the organization. I realized a long time ago there was something wrong with them, and that they were not preaching Buddhism. But I understand what you’re saying. From outside appearances it looks really good, but eventually they’re going to get the karmic payback.

**RH:** I don’t envy them because there’s nothing to envy. It may look like the Soka Gakkai is doing great, but they’re not. They’re just like mold growing on a wall. The point is, the organization is made up of individuals with individual practices. Yes, it’s an organization. But each one of the individuals within the organization has their own practice. This is true for any group. So you here can spread the wisdom that you are learning to other individuals who do not believe in it or who do not know about it. Let them know that they can live their lives in a way that accords with the Daishonin’s teachings.

To the Soka Gakkai, people who do not believe in what they believe in are their enemies. That is not the way we want to practice. Some people may feel that because the Gakkai is doing something wrong, they should be punished or have bad karma. It’s natural to feel that way. But you shouldn’t feel that way. There’s no reason for you to feel that way, because they are not that great. There’s no reason to envy them. Focus on your own practice, and spread the true teachings of Nichiren Daishonin.

**B4:** It’s so difficult for people to realize that your life is your own responsibility. So many people want to abdicate the responsibility of their own life and give it over to someone else. So they’re not able to get out of the smell that they live in, and are just continually recreating the bad karma that they have. People remain in organizations like the Gakkai because it’s feeding the way of life that they have accepted. The Gakkai is fulfilling something that its members have a wrong view of. Whereas what is so great about true Nichiren Shoshu is that it teaches that your life is your responsibility, and your thoughts and actions, and the way

---

<sup>13</sup> *The Human Revolution* – a multi volume biography of Daisaku Ikeda, President of SGI.

<sup>14</sup> Daisaku Ikeda – president of Soka Gakkai International (SGI).

you behave has to do with you and not anyone else. So many people want to give that up and let the Gakkai take over their lives for them.

**RH:** When you feel anger towards the Soka Gakkai—that they really get on your nerves, and you hate them—that feeling indicates that they got you. They got your weak point. You opposed that kind of energy that’s why you joined this group.

---

---

## **ON KILLING, ABORTION, CONTRACEPTION & EUTHANASIA**

**Reverend Raidō Hirota**

**International Meeting**

**August 2011**

**QUESTION: Does Nichiren Shoshu Shoshinkai support conscientious objection?**

**RH:** As an organization, the Shoshinkai will not make a determination in either support of force or the act of “conscientious objection”. It is the individual’s responsibility to make that decision.

Killing is a duty of a soldier. One could reason that they are fighting for justice or for their country. But justice changes depending on one’s perspective. You could say that it’s for their country, but from their enemy’s point of view, it would be the opposite. Killing people because they don’t believe in your religion is called religious war, and that is absolutely wrong.

There was a Japanese writer whose name was Hitomi Yamaguchi. He was drafted during World War II. In one of his writings he wrote, “If a war starts again, I’d choose the suffering of being killed than to live with the agony of killing the enemy.” I see it in the same light.

Fights, murders, wars only produce suffering, hatred and discrimination. Happiness doesn’t spring out of them. We were not born in this world to kill others and live.

But because there are many thoughts and viewpoints amongst believers on this issue, as an organization, the Shoshinkai does not force or press this matter.

**QUESTION: What is the Buddhist view of abortion, contraception, and euthanasia?**

**RH:** In Japan, we used to consider that we are already a year old at the time of birth because we thought that your life started when you were conceived in your mother’s womb. Your life starts at conception. Humans are animals that have sex not just for creating

offspring but also for the moment of ecstasy. If the sex was consensual, it's a private matter. However, if the new life is being killed because that life was not desired, because it was the result of the desire for the moment of ecstasy, it would be the same as murder. Using contraception is an important responsibility to avoid committing such a crime.

Who makes a decision that this is the time for a person to die when the person is bed-bound, just breathing, unconscious and unable to communicate? Euthanasia. Who has the right to decide?

I have an acquaintance who used to say when he saw people who were physically disabled, "I wouldn't want to be alive in that state". But when he became old, he said "no matter what happens to this body, I want to live long". I was surprised to hear that. Even though a person may want euthanasia when he is healthy, when he comes to the point when that choice could be made, his mind could change.

All life is connected. Your life is not just for yourself. Your life is a borrowed life that came together by various fates. It's a life you received.

I think there is a difference between the person accepting death by denying the use of life support systems, and the doctor or family and relatives turning off the switch because they want euthanasia. (What does "comfortable" mean?)

It's also important to not look away from old age and sickness. Learn from the elderly and infirmed, and recognize that you will someday be like that.

**B5:** Your phrase, "the moment of ecstasy" is poignant to me because so many Nichiren Shoshu and Soka Gakkai methods are based on selling that idea of "the moment of ecstasy," not just in what you are specifically addressing, but in all aspects of life. It feels to me that so much of Buddhism and so much of human life is driven by "the moment of ecstasy." For me, I'm so weak, but we all want to be happy. We all want to have that feeling. But obviously you're talking about it from a sexual perspective. But in life in general we all want to make lots of money, etc. It's in the culture in which we live in this country. We are so driven by that moment of ecstasy. It is difficult for me to understand that happiness is not the moment of ecstasy. On some level I have to let go of that desire or that drive that we are inundated with every single day—fame, fortune, success in our jobs. We're controlled by all this. Just to live here in the Northeast costs so much money that I have to be driven just to keep us afloat.

**RH:** As long as you have human life you cannot deny the moment of ecstasy. But when you pursue it what follows is emptiness in your heart. To fill this emptiness you will seek a longer lasting, constant, peaceful feeling. For example, if you're thinking of you or your family's happiness ten, twenty years from now, and you're face to face with whatever brings you to the moment of ecstasy, and if you realize that that's not going to lead you or your family to a lasting happiness ten, twenty years from now, then you have to say, okay, I want this, but I'll have to pass on it. I'll let it go.

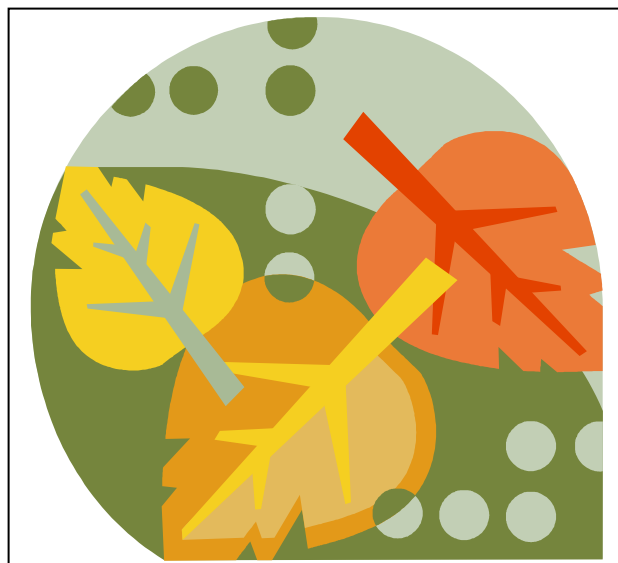
When I was reading this question and considering the answer, I was thinking about Christianity and how many Christians are anti-abortion, and yet some don't even believe in contraception. I thought there is a fundamental belief or attitude that people who are alive right now are placed higher or are more important, and those who have not yet started their lives are lower and insignificant. I feel there is a great discrimination between lives.

**B2:** Aren't Christians pro-life (anti-abortion) because they believe that the life in the womb is alive?

**RH:** Humans get confused: they are anti-abortion, but also anti-contraception. When I think about these kinds of issues, I feel that people are just looking at what is going on right now, right in front of their faces. They say this is for the future of our planet; this is for our children. But in reality, they aren't really thinking about posterity. Look at the nuclear plants in Japan and what has happened after the tsunami and what is happening (as of July 2012 all nuclear power plants have reopened in Japan). If you are really thinking about the future, how could you use nuclear energy? So we really need to not only think about our lives right now, but we need to truly think about other people's lives. At the same time we have to deal with the moment of ecstasy, because we are all just human.

**B1:** This goes to this question and the previous question. With the pro-life movement—the anti-abortion movement—there are people who shoot people who go to abortion clinics, or kill doctors who perform abortions. They say they are performing a service to protect the unborn life. But they are not only killing another life, they are also killing the unborn life that is inside the woman they killed. These people have determined that unborn life is more significant than someone who is physically here, but at the same time they have killed that unborn life too. What are your thoughts on this?

**RH:** Personally I'm against abortion. But I'm surprised to here about the extremes of the pro-life movement in America. To kill or not, we all have to use our minds to think about the life of others. Just because you want to have sex with this person right now just for a moment of ecstasy, you don't think, well if I do have sex then there's a good possibility that my partner could get pregnant, which will result in another life. But you don't think about that when you are so drawn to the desire of ecstasy. This means that you're not thinking about life—not giving consideration to your own life, your partner's life, or the life that you could be creating with this person. So what it comes down to is that you have to think about life and about your own behavior. You have to be clear minded about it, and compassionate towards other life.





# THE SECOND SILENT PRAYER

Reverend Raidō Hirota

International Meeting

August 2011

**QUESTION:** Please explain the phrase from the 2<sup>nd</sup> Silent Prayer : "the fusion of the realm of the Original Infinite Law and the inherent wisdom within the Buddha of *Kuon Ganjo*".<sup>15</sup> (*kyochi myogo kuon ganjo*).

**RH:** There are many people who interpret and understand *Kuon* as some temporal point in the ancient past, but *Kuon* is the same as foundation (core).

Imagine a spherical shape like the earth. Where you stand might be a different country from where somebody else is standing; or it could be land that you own, or land you lease; it could be natural environmental space where no one can live... there are many differences here. However, the center of the earth is a thing that is common and shared no matter the difference. It's the foundation (core). In other words, this is *Kuon Ganjo*. The Buddha's life that resides in all sentient beings is not existence that is owned by somebody, but it's the same *Namumyōhōrengekyō* in all things.

*Kyochi Myogo*<sup>16</sup> also expresses our individual life (*Chi*), and *Namumyōhōrengekyō* (*kyo*)'s harmony (*Myogo*).

"*Kuon Ganjo*" and "*Kyochi Myogo*" are different words, but they explain the same essence.

**B5:** You're talking about the core existing no matter where people are in the world. For instance someone is in Japan and someone else is in New York. They are in different places, but the core is the same. That's how they're connected. That's the spatial aspect of it, but does it also span time? Also it says "the fusion of the realm of the original Infinite Law and the inherent wisdom of the Buddha..." What is being fused? This always confuses me.

**B1:** What is Rev. Hirota saying here? He says that the harmony is the fusion which is *myogo*. It is the fusion with the original life, which is *Namumyōhōrengekyō*. He says that *kyochi myogo* and *kyon ganjo* are exactly the same. The fusion of the individual with the Law that is the original state of things. It has always been there. It is the infinite. The two things are synonymous – *kyochi myogo* and *kyon ganjo*.

So to clarify this, Rev. Hirota are you saying that the Buddha of *kuon ganjo* is the source in the beginningless past from which all life springs? It's not a person. The wisdom is the same source, and that source is the Law?

---

<sup>15</sup> *Kuon ganjo* – an eternity without beginning

<sup>16</sup> *Kyochi myogo* – the fusion of reality and wisdom (the reality or truth of the Buddha nature inherent within one's life, and the wisdom to realize that truth).

**B5:** When I think of that it is hard to my human mind to visualize or even fathom the idea of infinite past. Is it appropriate to envision such a concept? I sort of think of the Big Bang.

**RH:** If you think that *kuon* (the infinite; the source) is something based on time, then you would be chasing after time, and you would therefore not be able to reach anything. If you happen to have that image or idea of *kuon*, then you need to get rid of it now.

Generally speaking, when you think about the eternal you probably think about the flow of time—where is the starting point and where is the end point? *Kuon* is time. But it is more like the source of all life. It is the one life that contains all the different forms of life that support each other. As I mentioned as an example, imagine a sphere like the earth. The most central part at the core of this sphere is *kuon*, the source of life. That source of life has no beginning and no end. It's a perfect circle with no points of beginning or end. There is a teaching, *kuon soko mappo*. *Mappo* is the age in which we live. It is this age. Now. So *kuon soko mappo* means that *kuon*—the source—is now, in this place, in this age, in this time. For example, if you draw a line from where Believer 5 is standing in the U.S. and a line from where I am standing in Japan to the center of the earth, the lines would go to the same point. Or if you were standing on the hundredth floor of a building or at the bottom of a canyon and you drew lines from each of those places to the center of the earth, the lines would go to the same place in the middle of the earth. That's the core. If you think in this way, this life—the life that you are living now—is the super concentrated version of *kuon*.

**B1:** When you talk about the harmony or the fusion, does that mean it's the fusion of this moment? Is it the fusion of ourselves—the individual—with this moment? If we are concentrated, then it comes down to moment by moment. In other word, it's not out there. It is now in each isolated moment.

**RH:** Yes. That is *kuon soko mappo*. Nichiren Daishonin says, don't seek the source of Namumyōhōrengekyō in the past. It actually exists right here, right now.



# GOSHO SELECTION

## “Reply to the Lay Nun, Mother of Ueno”<sup>17</sup>

I **HAVE** duly received the horseload of unpolished rice, the bamboo container of clear sake, probably twenty decanters worth, and the paper bag of dried betony you sent.

Things here are as I have described them in the past. I came to this mountain in the eleventh year of the Bun’ei era [1274], the seventeenth day of the sixth month, and since then, up to the present day, the eighth day of the twelfth month, I have never set foot outside the mountain. But during these past eight years, what with a wasting illness and advancing age, I have grown weaker and weaker in body with each year, and my mind has become increasingly distracted. I have been particularly troubled by illness since the spring of this year, and as autumn passed and we entered into winter, I have grown feebler each day and each night seem to be in graver condition.

For the last ten days or more I have barely eaten, while the snow piles up and the cold air assaults me. My body is cold as a stone, my chest as frozen as ice. But now when I warm up some of the clear sake and drink it, or eat some of the betony, my chest is aglow with fire, it is as though I were in a hot bath. Sweat washes away the grime and my legs are bathed in moisture. How can I thank you for your kindness in sending these things? I am so overjoyed that tears pour from my eyes.

Indeed, indeed, it was the ninth month of last year, the fifth day, that your son, the late Goro,<sup>18</sup> passed away. In consternation I count on my fingers and find that already a year and more have passed, sixteen months, over four hundred days! You are his mother—perhaps you have had some word of him. Could you let me know if you have?

The fallen snow will fall another time, the blossoms, scattered, will bloom again. Why is it that people alone, once gone, never come back again? How hateful, how hateful! Mere onlooker though I am, I know he was a splendid young man, a splendid young man, a jewel of a son—how happy you must have been to have such a son.

But, like the full moon that clouds cover and goes behind the mountain, like the shining blossoms that are heartlessly scattered by the wind—ah, how grievous is his loss!

Because of my illness, I do not ordinarily write answers myself to the letters I receive from others. But in your case the events are so sad that I have taken up my brush to write this. I do not feel that I will be in this world much longer. If that is the case, I will no doubt soon be meeting with Goro. If I should meet him before you do, I will tell him how much you grieve for him. I will write more at another time.

---

<sup>17</sup> *The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, Vol. II, p. 973

<sup>18</sup> Nanjō Shichirō Gorō, the youngest of Nanjō Hyōe Shichirō’s five sons and four daughters. His father, Hyō Shichirō, died before he was born. In the sixth month of 1280, he and his brother Tokimitsu visited the Daishonin at Minobu, but about three months later he died suddenly at the age of sixteen.

With my deep respect  
Nichiren

The eighth day of the twelfth month {1281}  
Reply to the mother of Ueno



## Oeshiki

October 13, 1282

Oeshiki is the most important ceremony in Nichiren Shoshu. On the 12<sup>th</sup> day of the 10<sup>th</sup> month in the 5<sup>th</sup> year of *Koan* (1282), Daishonin's body, which was the same as our bodies, passed away at the age of 61. However, 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.

At the time the Daishonin passed away, the 12<sup>th</sup> day of the 10<sup>th</sup> month would have actually fallen at the end of November rather than October. It was winter, yet the cherry blossoms bloomed throughout Japan. Thus, for Oeshiki we make paper cherry blossoms and place them on either side of Gohonzon.

Oeshiki should be celebrated as a joyous occasion, with much fanfare and festivity.

**Congratulations!**