

THE MIDDLE WAY

ADVOCATING THE TRUE TEACHINGS OF NICHIREN THE TRUE BUDDHA

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The Middle Way

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26 ADMONITIONS OF NIKKŌ SHONIN REVEREND RAIDŌ HIROTA International Meetings June 2013 – June 2014

On September 12, 1271 Nichiren Daishonin¹ was taken to Tatsunokuchi Beach in Kamakura to be executed. During his arrest at his home in Matsubagayatsu, before he was led off for execution, a government official named Shōfu-bō pulled one of the scrolls—the fifth volume of the Lotus Sutra²—from Daishonin’s robe and struck him in the face. For a second, Nichiren Daishonin had a desire to strike back, but then he remembered what was written in the scroll: “Within all sentient beings, Buddha resides.” That’s how he grounded himself as a practitioner, and not as a man being hit by another man. It’s not about being passive—it’s about acknowledging that you are a practitioner of this teaching and as such, overcome frustration and anger. Refrain from acting out of your emotions (e.g. quitting because you are frustrated.

¹ 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.

² 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, and that the life of Buddha, and all life is eternal.

joining because you feel confused, etc.). I wish all of you will think about the contents of the teachings, and then act accordingly.

After Nichiren Daishonin passed away, of the six priests he had designated as senior priests, all but Nikkō Shonin³ had drifted away from the teachings taught by Nichiren Daishonin. Having observed what had happened after the Daishonin's death, Nikkō Shonin feared that his disciples would also veer away from the True Teachings. Therefore, on January 13, 1333, less than a month before he died on February 7, 1333, he wrote *Nikkō Yuikai Okimon* ("The Twenty-Six Admonitions of Nikkō") as a warning to priests and lay believers in the future to preserve the purity of Nichiren Daishonin's teachings. In later years, 9th high priest Nichiu Shonin, elaborated on what Nikkō had put forth in his Twenty-Six Admonitions, and systematized the True Teachings of Nichiren Daishonin which was later compiled in a 121-article document entitled *Kegi Shō* ("On the Formalities of True Buddhism"). Thus, the practice and formalities of Nichiren Daishonin's religion is explained in these two works by Nikkō Shonin and Nichiu Shonin. The teachings I have been imparting to you over the years are based on these two works as well as the original writings of Nichiren Daishonin. As most of these writings were written during the Kamakura era (1185-1333), and Nichiu Shonin's during the Muromachi era (1336-1573), the language is archaic. So, I convey these teachings to you in a way you can understand.

"The 26 Admonitions" were Nikkō Shonin's last will and testament. In its preface, he wrote:

TWO THOUSAND YEARS AFTER THE BUDDHA PASSED AWAY WE WILL ENTER THE AGE OF THE LATTER DAY OF THE LAW (*MAPPŌ*⁴). DURING THIS TIME, THE SUTRAS PREACHED BY THE BUDDHA WILL REMAIN AS WORDS AND LETTERS BUT, THOUGH PEOPLE WILL PRACTICE THESE TEACHINGS, THEIR POWER TO ENLIGHTEN WILL BE LOST. INSTEAD OF PRACTICING THE LOTUS SUTRA BASED ON THE BUDDHA WHO ATTAINED ENLIGHTENMENT AT BUDH GAYA AS THE CENTER OF FAITH, WHICH IS A PROVISIONAL TEACHING, IN THE LATTER DAY OF THE LAW, IN ORDER TO REALIZE BUDDHAHOOD, WE MUST PRACTICE THE TRUE LAW OF NAMUMYŌHŌRENKYŌ⁵ WHICH IS THE ETERNAL TRUTH REVEALED IN THE JURYŌ (16TH) CHAPTER OF THE LOTUS SUTRA. THE CHANCE OF ENCOUNTERING NAMUMYŌHŌRENKYŌ IS AS RARE AS ENCOUNTERING THE UDUMBARA FLOWER WHICH BLOOMS ONLY ONCE EVERY 3,000 YEARS, OR FOR A ONE-EYED TURTLE TO FIND A FLOATING SANDALWOOD LOG WITH THE RIGHT SIZE HOLLOW THAT FITS ITS BODY. THAT WE HAVE BEEN ABLE TO MEET NAMUMYŌHŌRENKYŌ IS VERY RARE AND VERY PRECIOUS, AND IS DUE TO A KARMIC CONNECTION FROM THE PAST. THIS IS WHAT NICHIREN DAISHONIN TAUGHT. THESE ARTICLES

³ Nikkō Shonin – Byakuren Ajari Nikko Shonin (1246-1333) – 2nd High Priest of Nichiren Shoshu Buddhism who received the transfer of the teachings directly from Nichiren Daishonin.

⁴ Mappō – The Latter Day of the Law. This present time period which began in 1052, about 2000 years after the death of Shakyamuni. It is called the evil age.

⁵ Namumyōhōrenkyō - the Mystic Law which enlightens all Buddhas; the Supreme Law of life and the universe; the Buddha-nature in all things.

OF ADMONITIONS ARE MEANT TO BE SHARED WITH FUTURE GENERATIONS ONLY FOR THE
KOSEN-RUFU ⁶ OF NICHIREN DAISHONIN'S TRUE LAW.

Rev. Hirota (RH): Some of you might have started to practice this religion because somebody recommended it to you, or it made sense to you in some way. That would not have happened unless there was a connection made or a relationship with the Law made in the past. We view this as something special to be cherished. When people hear that all sentient beings have Buddha-nature within, some people think "Yes, I can see that", while others look for the logic in it instead. The latter are the people who have difficulty following this teaching. Logic is of course important, but for understanding this type of teaching, expecting 100% logic makes it difficult. People who, over many life times, have helped others to acknowledge their Buddha nature within will, when they encounter Namumyōhōrengekyō in this lifetime, feel, "Oh! This resonates with me!". But at the same time, even some of those people who have introduced others to this Law in past lives may not even feel that way. And there are times when one wonders, "Why is this person practicing this religion?" And you just can't see it or understand it. But connection or relationship (*en*) also is at play in their actions. In other words, the fact that you are practicing and studying this religion (or have met this path) is something to be taken as an unusual encounter in life.

Nikkō Shonin wrote the 26 Admonitions with the deep hope that all people will be able to realize Buddha within their own lives and in all living things.

1. THE TEACHINGS OF THE FUJI SCHOOL ARE TRUE TO THE TEACHINGS OF NICHIREN DAISHONIN; THEY SHOULD NEVER DIFFER IN THE SLIGHTEST.

RH: Nichiren Shoshu⁷ was called the Fuji School, and the teachings were called the Fuji teachings because it was situated at the base of Mt. Fuji. This distinguished it from the Nichiren sect at Minobu⁸. Here, in #1, Nikkō Shonin is warning disciples and believers of the Fuji School not to drift away from the teachings of Nichiren Daishonin, not even in the slightest amount the size of a single droplet of blood. Stay true to the what the Daishonin taught. Do not distort the teachings, and try to live your life based on the True Teachings.

2. ALL OF THE TEACHINGS OF THE FIVE SENIOR PRIESTS ARE IN OPPOSITION TO NICHIREN DAISHONIN'S TEACHINGS.

RH: For nearly eight years Nichiren Daishonin lived at Mt. Minobu, which was a cold, remote, and inhospitable place in the mountains. Daishonin considered anyone who visited

⁶ Kosen rufu - to widely declare and spread True Buddhism.

⁷ Nichiren Shoshu - 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.

⁸ Nichiren sect at Minobu- Nichiren Shu, whose head temple is located at Mr. Minobu in Japan, and who worships Shakyamuni as the true Buddha.

him to have had strong faith in his teachings because the journey was arduous and the location so uninviting.

At the age of 61, Nichiren established Kuon-ji temple at Minobu. Here he preached to believers, and trained disciples how to practice the teachings. Living under such inhospitable conditions for so long was not easy, nor without consequences. His body was always cold, which contributed to a gastrointestinal disorder with symptoms of chronic diarrhea that worsened over time. Despite the harsh environment, and the worsening health condition, Nichiren Daishonin was determined not to leave Minobu. His disciples, who were gravely concerned about his health, and wanted him to recover and live a long life, eventually convinced him to go to the hot springs of Hitachi in Ibaraki Prefecture for treatment. Unfortunately, on his way to the hot springs his energy began to decline. He stopped at the home of Munenaka Ikegami in Musashi Prefecture to rest so that he could continue his journey. But that was not to be. Nichiren never recovered, and passed away on October 13, 1282.

On October 8, 1282, five days before he passed away, Nichiren Daishonin designated six disciples, whose faith he thought was strong enough to independently carry the faith and teach the True Teachings. It turned out that five of the senior priests, Nisshō, Nichirō, Nikō, Nitchō and Nichiji, turned away from Nichiren's teachings. Nikkō Shonin was the only one of the six who strictly adhered to the True Teachings of Nichiren, and he advised believers not to follow the other five priests.

This was during the Kamakura period (1185-1333). During that time the Shogunate government⁹ instigated a witch hunt against Nichiren's followers, and tried to eliminate the teachings and anyone who practiced his teachings. To say that you were a practitioner of Nichiren's teachings was to risk your life. To save their lives, these five priests, rather than adhering to the teachings as they were taught, declared that they were followers of the Tendai sect¹⁰, which worshipped images of Shakyamuni Buddha. Nikkō Shonin and his disciples repeatedly pointed out to these five senior priests that what they were doing was wrong, and that their actions and teachings were the opposite of what Nichiren Daishonin taught.

- 3. THERE ARE THOSE WHO SLANDER THIS SCHOOL, CASTING DOUBT UPON THE GOSHO BY CALLING THEM FORGERIES. THESE PEOPLE WILL ALSO TRY TO DISRUPT TRUE BUDDHISM. IF SUCH EVIL PRIESTS APPROACH YOU, YOU ARE NOT TO FOLLOW THEM.**

RH: As mentioned, the five senior priests declared to the government that they were members of the Tendai sect and not a part of the Nichiren sect. Yet, to their followers they said they were the true Nichiren adherents. Clearly, there is a discrepancy. To make sense of what they were doing and saying to both the outside world and within their own movements, each of the five senior priests wrote their own doctrinal writings to justify the contradictions. Though their writings were faulty, each of the priests declared that they were the authentic

⁹ Shogunate government – the hereditary military dictatorship that governed Japan from 1192 – 1867.

¹⁰ Tendai sect – founded by Dengyo the Great, it followed in the tradition of the Chinese T'ient'ai Buddhism which revered the Lotus Sutra and Shakyamuni as the true Buddha.

followers of Nichiren Daishonin, and each asserted their legitimacy and claimed that their teachings were what Nichiren had taught, when in reality they were their own ideas. Because all five senior priests wrote doctrinal writings professing their authenticity, and because these teachings conflicted with each other, confusion ensued. Since there was a discrepancy between what was said publicly and what was said privately, and because they digressed from the Daishonin's teachings, Nikkō Shonin warned believers not to go near those teachings for they were false and dangerous.

4. THOSE WHO CREATE FORGED DOCUMENTS, CLAIMING THAT THEY ARE THE AUTHENTIC GOSHO, AND THOSE WHO PERFORM THE PRACTICE OF THE ONENESS OF THE TRUE AND THE PROVISIONAL TEACHINGS ARE LIKE PARASITES IN THE BODY OF THE OTHERWISE INVINCIBLE LION.

RH: The five senior priests said Nichiren Daishonin taught that we should return to the teachings of the Buddha and worship the Buddha. Actually, Nichiren Daishonin taught that we must not worship the Buddha. He said we must worship the Law of Namumyōhōrengekyō and if you practice Namumyōhōrengekyō as Nichiren does you will reach Buddhahood. Whereas, if you worship the Buddha, you cannot attain Buddhahood, for Namumyōhōrengekyō is the Law that enlightened the Buddha. That is the message contained in the Lotus Sutra.

As explained earlier, it was dangerous to practice the Daishonin's teachings during the Kamakura era. If the government was informed of your practice, you could very well lose your life. As such was the case, people were afraid to practice. That is why the five priests decided to return to the teachings that worshipped Shakyamuni and not embrace the Lotus Sutra.

The Lotus Sutra has 28 chapters. The first 14 chapters are Buddha-centered. The latter 14 chapters are Law (Namumyōhōrengekyō)-centered. Nichiren Daishonin taught that the last 14 chapters are the most important, and are therefore the teachings we should focus on as these chapters emphasize that it is the Law of Namumyōhōrengekyō that leads to enlightenment and not the Buddha. Notwithstanding, the five senior priests said that Shakyamuni and the Law were of equal importance—the Buddha and the Law carried the same weight. Nikkō Shonin, objected, and pointed out that that was not at all what Nichiren Daishonin taught. And he insisted that the Law is superior to the Buddha.

Using the metaphor of a lion, Nikkō Shonin explained the position of the senior priests. A lion is the king of the jungle. However, as Nikkō Shonin explained, parasites living in the lion can devour the lion's flesh, and eventually kill the lion. If the lion didn't exist, neither would the parasites, because they would not have its flesh to feed upon. The parasites are the five priests who are living off the lion and killing it. The lion is Nichiren.

The reason there are so many Nichiren sects today is because these divisions began with the five senior priests who modified Nichiren's teachings and branched out across Japan and even into Siberia. The object of worship of these so-called Nichiren sects is Shakyamuni

Buddha, along with worshipping Taishaku¹¹, Kishibojin¹² and other bodhisattvas, while also placing Namumyōhōrengekyō into the mix. By contrast, Nikkō Shonin's object of worship is only Namumyōhōrengekyō. The others, as is obvious, are not at all Nichiren sects.

5. DO NOT ENGAGE IN FRIVOLOUS PURSUITS AND AIMLESS CONVERSATION – SUCH AS SECULAR WRITING, POETRY COMPOSITION, GOSSIP, AND ENTERTAINMENT—WITHOUT FIRST CHALLENGING SLANDER.

RH: In response to the actions of these five priests, Nikkō Shonin said if you see someone practicing the wrong way, you must correct wrong views. You must speak out and tell them they are wrong. Don't ignore slander and waste your life on frivolous things. You must decide how you are going to spend your time constructively in this lifetime based on the teachings.

6. DO NOT VISIT TEMPLES OR SHRINES OF OTHER RELIGIONS OR SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES. BELIEVERS MAY CLAIM TO GO OUT OF CURIOSITY, BUT THE CONSEQUENCES OF VISITING PLACES WHERE SLANDER RESIDES WOULD BE DEVASTATING. THIS IS NOT MY OWN OPINION. I AM RELYING UPON THE GOSHO¹³ AND THE SUTRAS.

RH: We cannot participate in the maintenance, management, restoration, religious events, etc. of other religions, nor cooperate, collaborate or support, etc. other religions. If the incorrect faith grows and flourishes, then the faith of those who believe in the correct teachings of Nichiren Daishonin will weaken and diminish. If you do go to other temples and sanctuaries that are not related to Nichiren Shoshu, try not to admire these places. You can go to visit ancient sanctuaries, but you should approach them with critical thinking: admire the architecture, or observe the way people worship. But do not pray there or feel any spiritual connection to the place.

Question: Can we attend weddings and funerals of other religions, or visit gravesites in a cemetery of other religions?

RH: Each country has a main religion. In the United States, it is Christianity in many forms. In Italy, it is probably Catholicism. I have a temple in Japan where believers can come for all ceremonies: weddings, funerals, *gojukai*¹⁴. But for believers outside Japan, in the U.S., Europe and elsewhere, you do not have a temple where you can gather. So, for a funeral or Oeshiki¹⁵,

¹¹ Taishaku – one of two tutelary and protective gods of Buddhism.

¹² Kishibojin – (Kishimojin) – female demon who, along with her 10 demon daughters, appears in the 26th chapter of the Lotus Sutra, and pledges to protect children and the votaries of the Lotus Sutra.

¹³ Gosho – the letters and treatises of Nichiren Daishonin.

¹⁴ Gojukai – a conversion ceremony whereby people accept the precept of taking faith and practicing true Buddhism.

¹⁵ Oeshiki - Founder's Day" - October 13, the highest holiday in Nichiren Shoshu Buddhism, is a celebration of Daishonin's true, eternal Law, his eternal lie and our eternal life.

believers hold a ceremony in their homes. And when I travel to the U.S., I will hold a memorial service for a deceased believer, or conduct a wedding, *gojukai* and *Oeshiki*.

Let's say a believer in Japan has an adult child who wants to get married. If the person the child is marrying is not a Buddhist, then, if possible, they try not to have the wedding in a church, a temple of another Buddhist sect, or a Shinto shrine. Instead, they choose a place that is entirely secular—having no religious affiliation. It is common in Japan for couples to take their vows in their parent's home, or the home of a friend. If possible, that is the way to do it, and it allows for Buddhist believers to attend the ceremony without feeling uneasy, or that they must sideline their beliefs just to attend the wedding.

Regarding funerals, within a family not everyone practices the same religion. While you are alive, you can have relationships with people of other religions without conflict. But once someone dies, their religion has more influence over that person. When you go to a funeral that is conducted in a religion other than Nichiren Daishonin's True Buddhism, you are not going there to pay respect to the religion. You attend to pay respect to the person who you cared about and who cared for you while the person was alive. While you are at the service, do not participate in the service. Instead, chant *Namumyōhōrengekyō* in your heart, and try not to be influenced by the religion that the deceased person believed in.

A Nichiren Shoshu gravesite has an upright tombstone which has *Namumyōhōrengekyō* engraved at the top, the person's name in the center, and at the bottom of the tombstone is a chamber where the urn is placed. The chamber is large enough to hold two urns for a husband and wife, or for other family relations. (The chamber can only be opened by an officer at the cemetery.) The concern is, if family members do not have the same religion, then they should not be buried together in this way. Religions should not be intermixed after one dies.

If you have a conversation with a family member or friend before they pass away to explain to them that you would be uncomfortable attending their funeral due to differences in religious belief, then it would be okay not to attend their funeral. But if you do not have such a conversation before a person dies, then you will be criticized for not attending the funeral.

As for where a believer who does not live in Japan, that person can be buried in a public cemetery that is without any religious affiliation. That would be a suitable place to be buried. It will not conflict with Nichiren Daishonin's teachings. But do not have a tombstone that is engraved with a symbol of another religion, such as a cross, a star of David, or a star and crescent, etc. You have to make your wishes known before you die.

Regarding attending a Soka Gakkai¹⁶ funeral or wedding, you have to tell your friends or family clearly that you cannot attend the service because their beliefs are slanderous and you disagree with them, and you don't want to participate in slander.

¹⁶ Soka Gakkai – SGI—a lay organization that wrongly incorporates some of the doctrine of Nichiren Shoshu Buddhism into its own philosophy and practice.

7. **DISCIPLES WITH AN APTITUDE FOR THIS BUDDHISM SHOULD BE EXCUSED FROM ATTENDING TO THE DAILY CARES OF THEIR TEACHERS, AND INSTEAD BE GIVEN TIME TO STUDY THE GOSHO AND OTHER SACRED WRITINGS OF THIS FAITH.**

RH: Young priests who show exceptional skills in their practice and understanding must be encouraged to study the Gosho and other sacred texts, and not run errands for their teachers and other priests. And those who are teachers must keep their disciples' education foremost in their minds.

8. **PRIESTS WHO MAKE LITTLE EFFORT, ARE UNDEVELOPED IN THEIR STUDY OF THIS BUDDHISM, AND THIRST FOR FAME AND FORTUNE ARE NOT MY DISCIPLES.**

RH: Many people try to make themselves look bigger than they are, lie about the university they attended, or their family status. You should never use this religion to try to make yourself look bigger or to gain fame or fortune, or to outdo anyone. This is true for priests and lay believers.

9. **MY DISCIPLES WHO CANNOT DISTINGUISH BETWEEN PROVISIONAL TEACHINGS AND TRUE TEACHINGS SHOULD LEAVE THEIR PARENTS, THEIR TEACHERS, AND THEIR WORLDLY AFFAIRS, TAKE UP RESIDENCE IN THE TEMPLE AND DEVOTE THEMSELVES TO THE STUDY OF THIS BUDDHISM UNTIL THEY ACHIEVE A REALIZATION OF THE ULTIMATE REALITY--BUDDHAHOOD.**

RH: This admonition is specifically for priests. To become proficient in True Buddhism, understanding the difference between the True Teachings and provisional teachings, priests must reside in the temple and devote themselves to the study and mastery of the teachings without thinking to take care of their parents or teachers. This is how they repay their debt of gratitude owed to their parents and teachers.

10. **DO NOT STUDY T' IEN-T' AI'S¹⁷ TEACHINGS UNLESS YOU FULLY UNDERSTAND NICHIREN DAISHONIN'S TEACHINGS.**

RH: There are many of books on religion. Before you begin to read them, you must first understand the basic concepts of the teachings of Nichiren Daishonin. If you do not have that understanding in your core, you may adopt other teachings, mix these teachings with the teachings of other religions and get confused and lose your faith. Therefore, you must have the fundamental teachings of Nichiren's True Buddhism well-planted in your life before reading other teachings.

¹⁷ T'ien-t'ai – (538 – 597) – founder of the T'ien-T'ai sect, who expounded the doctrine of *ichinen sanzen* (a single life moment contains the entire universe), classified all of Shakyamuni Buddha's teachings.

11. **AS DISCIPLES AND FOLLOWERS OF THIS SECT, WE MUST ETCH NICHIREN DAISHONIN'S WRITINGS IN OUR HEARTS AND UNDERSTAND THEIR TRUE MEANING. THEN, IF WE HAVE TIME, WE CAN STUDY T' IEN-T' AI' S WORKS.**

RH: Firmly plant the gosho of Nichiren Nichiren in your heart. Truly understand what the teachings are. Then teach others. But the teachings must first be firmly planted in your heart.

12. **DO NOT MIX ANY OF YOUR OWN IDEAS WITH NICHIREN DAISHONIN'S TEACHINGS.**

RH: Some people like to argue, debate, write critical doctrinal theses, inserting their own opinions, saying, "Nichiren said this about this, but I think this," etc. You should not engage in such orations, or arguments with the teachings. And you should not use the teachings in such critiques.

Try to understand the true meaning of Nichiren Daishonin's teachings, and teach the teachings from the point of view of Nichiren, and not your own.

13. **UNTIL *KOSEN-RUFU* IS FULLY ACHIEVED, ONE SHOULD GIVE UP ONE'S LIFE TO PROPAGATE THIS BUDDHISM. WE SHOULD EXERT OURSELVES FOR *KOSEN-RUFU*.**

RH: *Kosen-rufu* means, like water flowing in a river, communicate what Namumyōhōrengekyō is broadly, to many people. It suggests unfolding a bedsheet and spreading it out. In *kanji* characters *ko* = spread; *sen* = communicate or explain; *ru* = flowing like water; *fu* = a piece of cloth.

The Lotus Sutra instructs us to practice or execute *kosen-rufu*. This teaching states that all sentient beings possess the innate Law of Namumyōhōrengekyō. Thus, all sentient beings have the potential to realize Buddhahood. When it says practice, or execute *kosen-rufu*, it means to spread the teachings to all beings, no matter who they are, because all life has the potential to reach Buddhahood.

The Soka Gakkai defines *kosen-rufu* in a different way. To them, it means to increase membership in their organization. They tell people if they practice, their sickness will be cured, or their finances will improve. In other words, their teaching is, "if you do this, you'll get that." But this is not what *kosen-rufu* means. The Gakkai exploits the true meaning of this teaching.

What Nichiren Daishonin says is that propagation or communicating these teachings to others is not about increasing membership. Propagation is about creating a connection or relationship between others and Namumyōhōrengekyō. Though everyone's ability to communicate these teachings is different, all that is required is that you practice the correct *kosen-rufu* to the best of your ability.

As a practitioner, practicing *kosen-rufu*, is your core practice throughout your life. There might be other things you might want to go out drinking, play sports, go shopping, gossip, etc., which Nichiren Daishonin says he understands. But he added, before you do these things, wherever you are, whenever it is, to whomever you are with, the first thing you should do is

communicate the teaching of Namumyōhōrengekyō. By doing so, some people might find you annoying, might not like you, or may even hate you. But if you are a practitioner of this Buddhism, this is the first thing you should put your effort into.

14. EVEN THOUGH A PERSON MAY BE OF INFERIOR STATUS IN SOCIETY, IF HE PRACTICES THE TEACHINGS OF THE TRUE LAW DILIGENTLY, WE MUST RESPECT HIM AS A GREAT TEACHER.

RH: If there is a practitioner (priest or lay believer) who is not impressive in appearance, or of high social standing, but practices and speaks of Buddhism correctly, then you should take that person as a teacher.

The story of Sessen Doji is an example of this. *Ses* = snow; *sen* = mountain; *doji* = child. Thus, child of the Snow Mountains. Sessen Doji was a previous incarnation of Shakyamuni Buddha. He traveled around the country living a solitary life like a hermit in search of someone who would teach the truth of life. But alas, he could not find anyone. One day while searching in the mountains, he heard the utterance of some phrases: "All is changeable, nothing is constant. This is the law of birth and death." Sessen Doji looked around to see who spoke these words, and all he saw was a grotesque monster. Since there was no one else, he asked the monster if he had uttered the words, and if so, could he please complete the teaching because there must be more to it. The monster spoke again, saying, "I'm starving. I don't have the strength to say more. But if you feed me, I'll be able to speak." Sessen Doji, eager to hear more, said, "Well then, I'll go find food for you. What do you eat?" The monster replied, "I only eat live human beings." Sessen Doji looked around and realized he was the only live human in the forest. He thought, "Oh, I've been searching for the truth for so long, traveling around and searching everywhere, trying to find it. So, I am going to die now. But, if I hear the truth, even if I die afterwards, I will be satisfied." Sessen Doji then said to the monster, "Okay. You can eat me. But first you must tell me the remainder of the teaching." The monster agreed to the conditions, and spoke these words: "Extinguishing the cycle of birth and death, one enters the joy of nirvana." After hearing these words, Sessen Doji climbed upon a large boulder and jumped into the monster's open mouth. But just before he entered the gaping mouth the monster transformed himself into the Buddhist god Taishaku and caught Sessen Doji in his arms. He sat Sessen Doji on the ground and said, "I wanted to test your faith. I am very sorry. From now on, I'll make sure you'll be safe when you practice and seek the truth."

The point of this story is that even if a person looks evil, or like someone you don't want to deal with, if that person understands the truth of the teaching, then learn from him.

15. THE PRIEST WHO PROPAGATES THIS BUDDHISM WITHOUT REGARD FOR HIS OWN LIFE, SHOULD BE LOOKED UPON AS A SENIOR PRIEST EVEN IF THIS PERSON IS YOUNG, OR IS A NOVICE.

RH: If a person is truly sincere and devoted to this practice, the practice of *kosen-rufu*, then you have to respect such a person, even if the person started practicing true Buddhism long

after you did. It's not about age. It's not about length of practice. The criteria for judging in this circumstance is how pure is this person's heart when they are practicing to spread the word of Namumyōhōrengekyō.

This admonition is pointing out and warning practitioners that in society and in organizations of any sort, the deference paid to the elder over the young sometimes crushes the potential of the young. So try not to do that.

16. THE PERSON WHO HAS GREATER WISDOM THAN ONE'S SELF, EVEN THOUGH HE MAY BE BASE OR OF LOWER RANK OR STATUS, SHOULD BE REGARDED AS A TEACHER.

RH: Sometimes, or maybe often, people have a negative side to their personality or way of life. And perhaps that side is dominant. In such a case, don't overlook the good side of such a person if this person has a good understanding of the True teachings of Namumyōhōrengekyō. If you see such a person, then regard that person as a teacher, and learn from them instead of thinking that the person is so terrible and you don't want to deal with him or her.

An example of this is the life of some artists. Their lifestyle may be terrible and not one to emulate. But their creations are sublime. Some people might hate the way the artist lives his or her life, and on that basis dislike or can't appreciate the artist's work, even though the art is exceptional. That is not the approach to take. Be able to see the good in the person. The lifestyle may not agree with you, but appreciate what the person is able to create as an artist. Be able to recognize the difference. It is human to have a good side to our identity as well as a bad side. Everyone has Buddha-nature, and therefore the potential to reach Buddhahood. This crazy artist might be killing himself, but the beautiful creations that he produces reflect the potential of that person to reach and touch the goodness in his life—the highest aspect of himself. In this religion that would be Buddhahood. Right now, we may be good and noble, what we never know what will happen in the future.

17. SHOULD THE HIGH PRIEST DISTORT THE BUDDHIST LAW, HIS TEACHING SHOULD NEVER BE FOLLOWED.

RH: The highest ranking priest at Taisekiji is called *kanzu* in Japanese. The *kanji* character of *kan* = pass through like a conduit. And *zu* = the master or head person. In other words, *kanzu* means high priest.

Each generation has a high priest. They are called *kanzu* because the teachings should, like water and air flow through a pipe unaltered, flow through the high priest unaltered. So if a high priest departs from the True Teachings of Namumyōhōrengekyō, and instead preaches his own version of the teachings, then priests and lay believers should not follow him or accept what he is teaching, even if the person is highly regarded, because his teachings are false. And if this happens, his credentials are not legitimate.

When you put your hands together to pray to Gohonzon, the Gohonzon cannot be any piece of paper which someone with beautiful calligraphy has written Namumyōhōrengekyō

on. For a practitioner who believes in Namumyōhōrengekyō and the teachings of this religion, the meaning would be lost. The person who inscribes Gohonzon, and the person who prays to that Gohonzon have to come from the same place. Otherwise, the Gohonzon doesn't have its full value, meaning or potency. For example, if a Gohonzon that was inscribed by Nichiren Daishonin is enshrined in a temple where the True Teaching of Nichiren Daishonin is not practiced, even though the Gohonzon is a true Gohonzon, we believers of Nichiren Daishonin's True Teachings would not be able to practice there and gain enlightenment. Similarly, if a high priest teaches by stating, "This is what I believe; or this is the teaching as I see it. Therefore, you should believe in this way too," such a priest is using the mantle of Nichiren Daishonin and Nichiren Daishonin's teachings, but deviating from what Nichiren Daishonin taught. If such a high priest inscribes Gohonzon, then his Gohonzons would not be considered true Gohonzons.

18. IF THERE IS A DISTORTION OF THE TRUE LAW ACCEPTED BY BROAD OPINION [ESPECIALLY WITHIN THE PRIESTHOOD], THE HIGH PRIEST MUST ERADICATE IT.

RH: This is the reverse of #17. If a wrong interpretation of the teachings is accepted and practiced by the priesthood and/or believers, the high priest must defend and promote the correct teachings of Nichiren Daishonin, as well as admonish the offenders for their errors, even if he stands alone in his effort. He must never bend to the wishes of those with wrong views, and must always adhere to the True Teachings of Namumyōhōrengekyō.

19. PRIESTS, DO NOT DYE YOUR ROBES BLACK.

RH: In the teachings of Nichiren Daishonin it states that the priest will only wear a gray robe and a white surplice. These are the only two colors acceptable.

Originally, the gray robes were dyed using writing ink, which all priests had and could therefore easily do. In former days, priests of other sects wore colorful robes such as purple, red, green, yellow and such to mainly designate their rank. In previous eras, the emperor exercised control over religions. It was he who determined what color a priest wore based on his rank. When the emperor assigned a color to the priesthood, that color could not be worn by laity or non-priests. By contrast, Nichiren Shoshu limited the colors of their robes to gray and white so as not to indicate rank, status or affluence.

The white surplice worn over the gray robe is called a *kesa*. *Kesas* come in three sizes: small, medium and large. The Dalai Lama of Tibetan Buddhism wears a large *kesa*. In Buddhist terms, the small *kesa* is called *gojo*; the medium is called *nanajo*; and the large is called *kujo*. *Go* means 5. *Nana* means 7. And *ku* means 9. These three indicate the level or rank of a priest. In Nichiren Shoshu all priests are instructed to wear a white *gojo*, or small *kesa* (small white surplice).

The lotus flower grows in a muddy pond. Their colors can be white, pink or blue. The beautiful white lotus springing forth from the murky waters has special significance in

Buddhism. Nichiren Daishonin explained that the muddy or murky pond is like the world we live in. There are many difficulties in this world that makes life challenging and arduous. So much so that sometimes we don't want to carry on living. But this practice of the True Teachings of Buddhism is like the white lotus flower that, despite its origins, does not become muddy in color, but grows pure white. That is why the Nichiren Shoshu surplice (*kesa*) is white.

20. DO NOT WEAR FLAMBOYANT ROBES (JIKITOTSU STYLE).

RH: *Hohi* is the style of attire that Nichiren Shoshu priests wear – gray robe and white *kesa*. This attire symbolizes simplicity and humility: stating, “I’m not a super dude.” I’m not special. However, priests of other sects wear various colored robes, which display their rank as a priest, but do not indicate what they believe in or practice. In Nichiren Shoshu, the tradition is to wear something that represents the teaching we practice, and not what rank, level of power, or affluence a priest may have. That is why the *hohi* attire of Nichiren Shoshu is simple and unassuming. The color gray is also between black and white. Black is the uncertainty that we all feel or face. White is enlightenment. The awareness of this while wearing the robe indicates representing the teaching that we practice.

Jikitatsu are luxurious priest's robes, which are not worn by Nichiren Shoshu priests. For the most part, Nichiren Shoshu priests are the only sect that wear gray robes. It's a trademark of our religion, which distinguishes Nichiren Shoshu priests from all other sects. However, there are some Nichiren sects where gray robes are worn by the lowest ranking priests. While in Nichiren Shoshu, all priests wear gray.

21. DO NOT ASSOCIATE WITH SLANDERERS OF THIS BUDDHISM, FOR FEAR THAT YOU BECOME A SLANDERER YOURSELF, JUST AS THEY ARE.

RH: Do not associate with people who practice the wrong teaching. For example, do not go to temples, shrines or festivals associated with other sects or religions, because if you do, your heart will be influenced by the atmosphere of those religions, which in turn will alter your belief in true Buddhism. If this happens, there will be repercussions. This is something to fear.

It's okay to socialize – shopping, movies, parties – with people of other faiths. But do not have anything to do with activities involving other religious beliefs.

In Japan, when many people see a temple or shrine, they go in and pray regardless of the sect or belief. In Nichiren Shoshu, you cannot go to temples or shrines of other faiths to pray or attend ceremonies. Doing so would be committing slander of the Law. Other religions say if you are that strict, you can't enjoy life. So, they permit their believers to pray where ever they want, and join in festivals and ceremonies and the like. Thus, for a lot of people it is difficult to practice Nichiren Shoshu Buddhism because of its strictness. For example, during early summer, Shinto temples have a festival in which the majority of Japanese attend. But Nichiren Shoshu believers do not attend. We do not celebrate that holiday. Since Japan as a whole is community oriented, if you do not participate in activities within your community,

people will consider you unsociable and not a part of the community. Being a part of a community is an important part of Japanese culture, so it is difficult for Japanese to differentiate between what they practice as a religion and how they conduct their lives in their community apart from their religion. Nichiren Shoshu religious practice is a way of life. It is important to differentiate between religious activity and secular activity, and not participate in any activity that celebrates another religion. And do not give contributions to other religions or organizations with religious affiliation. But by all means, enjoy activities that are non-religious with people of all kinds.

22. DO NOT ACCEPT ALMS FROM SLANDERERS.

RH: It is slander to receive contributions from people of other religions. Do not have people of other religions pray for you. Do not accept gifts with religious significance or for a religious occasion other than this religion. But of course, you can receive gifts or other assistance from family and friends for daily life for everyday reasons, even if they are not of the same religion.

23. PRIESTS, CARRY A SWORD ONLY TO DEFEND THE *KOSEN-RUFU* OF THIS BUDDHISM, BUT DO NOT CARRY A SWORD WHEN YOU ENTER A BUDDHIST SHRINE OR TEMPLE. LAY BELIEVERS ARE ALLOWED TO CARRY ONE FOR YOU.

RH: The Kamakura era (1185-1333), when Nichiren Daishonin and Nikkō Shonin were alive, was the era of the Shogun, when the military ruled, and was not a peaceful time. Because it was a dangerous period, even monks carried swords when they traveled. But when they prayed they had to put their swords aside and be completely vulnerable.

Nowadays in Japan, it is extremely difficult to own a sword or weapons of any kind. They are prohibited by very strict laws, laws that are more severe than the liberal gun laws in the United States. It is better not to own a sword or a gun. In a terrible situation, if you don't own these weapons, things might not escalate to the worst-case scenario. Often I hear news of shootings in the United States, whether intentional or accidental. People say they have guns for self-defense, but how often have guns been the cause of accidental deaths of a friend, a child or a baby, not to mention the mass shootings that are shocking, but almost a regular occurrence? In Japan, it has also happened in the past that someone while admiring his beautiful sword and waving it about accidentally killed someone. So, it is better not to own weapons.

24. EVEN IF YOU ARE A YOUNG, INEXPERIENCED PRIEST, DO NOT TAKE SECOND PLACE TO LAY BELIEVERS EVEN OF HIGH STATUS.

RH: In Nichiren Shoshu there are three pillars of the religion: 1) Nichiren Daishonin. 2) Nikkō Shonin. 3) Nichimoku Shonin¹⁸. These three are called *sanso* in Buddhism. *San* = three. *So* = founders. Thus, these are the three founders of this religion. The suffix *so* (founder) is not used for any other high priests. From Nichido Shoshin onward, the high priests are referred to by their number. Thus 4th High Priest Nichido Shonin; 5th High Priest Nichigyo Shonin, etc.

In any case, in times of trouble, it is Nichimoku Shonin who is looked to in Nichiren Shoshu to keep the faith going. At the time Nichimoku Shonin passed away, he was on his way to the Imperial court in Kyoto to persuade the government to take faith in Namumyōhōrengekyō. His final words before dying were, “When I am reborn, I will deliver this message again in my next life.” This means, “If someone is spreading these teachings with the same sprit as me, then that is me reincarnated.” Due to this statement, there are people in this religion who believe that any young acolyte could be the reincarnation of Nichimoku Shonin. So, each child is nurtured and raised with care, because anyone of them could be the person who leads believers on the correct path of the true teachings.

Why people look to Nichimoku Shonin to lead this religion is because Nichiren Daishonin was the founder; Nikkō Shonin learned the teachings directly from Nichiren; and years later, Nichimoku learned the teachings from Nikkō. In other words, Nichimoku was the third-generation practitioner, removed from Nichiren Daishonin, and thereby the model to follow in how to practice this teaching. Nichiren Daishonin represents the father, Nikkō, the mother, and Nichimoku the, child.

Since it is believed that any young child could be the reincarnation of Nichimoku Shonin, each child should be nurtured because, whether or not it is true, or whether it happens or not, it is important to provide fertile ground for leaders of True Buddhism.

The message has changed over the years. Some people say someone with the same spirit as Nichimoku Shonin will appear at the time of *Kosen-rufu*. I believe that that would be too late. Now is the time when we need someone like Nichimoku Shonin.

There may be a cultural difference between the Japanese understanding of reincarnation and the Western understanding. The understanding in Nichiren Shoshu is that when we say Nichimoku Shonin will be reincarnated, it does not mean his physical self. It means that his spirit and understanding of the teachings will appear in another. People who live their lives based on Nichiren Daishonin, Nikkō Shonin and Nichimoku are the ones who carry on the essence of the soul of Nichimoku. Everyone has that potential. If it is a child who has that potential, then parents and teachers around the child must also have the potential to recognize it in that child and help that child achieve his/her potential.

25. MY [NIKKŌ SHONIN’S] LIFE IS AS CHASTE AS MY TEACHER’S [NICHIREN DAISHONIN’S]. THIS IS THE MODEL WHICH PRIESTS MUST FOLLOW. HOWEVER, IN THE COURSE OF STUDYING THE DOCTRINE OF THIS BUDDHISM, AT ONE TIME OR ANOTHER, TEACHERS OR ACOLYTES MAY

¹⁸ Nichimoku Shonin – Niidakyo Ajari Nichimoku (1260-1333) – 3rd High Priest of Nichiren Shoshu Buddhism who inherited the teachings of Nichiren Daishonin from Nikkō Shonin.

MAKE MISTAKES IN THEIR DAILY LIVES. STILL, THESE INDIVIDUALS SHOULD REMAIN AS PRIESTS.

RH: Nichiren, Nikkō and Nichimoku Shonins are the models on which your practice should be based, and their example should be followed. But because we are human beings, we make mistakes. Some religions order clerics who made mistakes to leave their religion. But this religion believes that if someone has made mistakes, they can still continue to practice, starting over from that point. And believers and clerics who practice and have not made mistakes, should not treat the person who has done wrong with any kind of contempt, but instead accept the person's willingness to change and do the right thing. They must accept the individual back and help them get on the right track.

If it is a priest who is involved in some scandal, then believers should not condemn him for his transgressions. It would be good for the priest to continue practicing the religion, and to be considered a cleric. But it would not be good for him to be a teacher, or a leader, because the image he created is the wrong example. If the image created by his past actions is so strong that believers are leaving the temple, then he is not doing any good for the teachings. He should resign from his duties as a priest, but not as a practitioner.

Base your life, your heart and your mind on Nichiren Daishonin, Nikkō Shonin, and Nichimoku Shonin and strive to live your life based on their teachings. As a human being (not just as a practitioner), try to be a good person. But we are human and as such we mess up now and then in life. I'm not staying that is good, but in Nichiren Shoshu, one can continue to practice the religion, and as with *repechage*, can go back to the starting line and try to do it right.

26. IF THERE IS A PERSON WHO IS TALENTED AT DISCOURSE IN THIS BUDDHISM, HE SHOULD BE RESPECTED AS A GREAT LEADER.

RH: If there is a person who is good at discussing these teachings—communicating and spreading this teaching—you must respect that person as you would respect Nichiren Daishonin.

In some religions, believers are encouraged to rebuke, criticize, and sometimes even kill people who believe in religions other than their own. This is not allowed in Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism. Nichiren Daishonin says that even people who believe in other faiths have Buddha-nature, and therefore they cannot be slighted or rebuffed.

When you talk to others about the teaching, you have a discussion with them. You do not make it into a shouting match or criticize each other. To hear each other's point of view and come to mutual understanding is important, even if it is to agree to disagree.

Question: What do you do when you are in a discussion that is out of control?

RH: Nichiren Daishonin experienced that, too. Some people threw stones at him, ignored him, attempted to murder him when he tried to explain that we all have Namumyōhōrengekyō

in us. You should try to communicate these teachings to someone three (3) times. If you quit trying to tell others that they too have Buddha-nature, you carry the responsibility in some way when the life of those people end without them knowing that they have Buddha-nature in them. It's important to keep trying (or not ignore the chance to tell them) no matter what their reaction might be. You can't control how they will react, and you can't tell them forcefully. If you can't tell someone face to face, you could write them letters or emails. The most important thing is that you try to introduce the chance for others to connect to Namumyōhōrengekyō.

NIKKŌ SHONIN'S LAST WORDS:

THE FOREGOING IS AS I STATED: I LEAVE THESE 26 ADMONITIONS FOR 10,000 YEARS OF ETERNAL SALVATION. FUTURE DISCIPLES SHOULD NEVER DOUBT THESE ADMONITIONS. IF THERE IS A PERSON WHO DISTORTS EVEN ONE ADMONITION HE DOES NOT FLOW IN THE STREAM OF NIKKŌ SHONIN. THIS IS MY WILL, WORD FOR WORD.

THE 13TH DAY OF THE FIRST MONTH IN THE THIRD YEAR OF GENKO (1333)

RH: Nikkō Shonin wrote the 26 Admonitions to spread the correct teaching of Nichiren Daishonin. If a person breaks or ignores one of these warnings, it would be the same as abandoning the teachings. Nikkō wrote these based on his observations from living with Nichiren Daishonin—observing how he lived his life, and how he behaved as a human being.

These 26 Admonitions were completed on January 13, 1333. Nikkō Shonin passed away at the age of 88 on February 7, 1333—only a month after the 26 Admonitions were completed. Hence, this document was effectively Nikkō Shonin's last word. Nine months later, within the same year, Nichimoku Shonin passed away on November 15, 1333, at the age of 74.



SANJIN
REVEREND RAIDŌ HIROTA
International Meeting
July 2013

In Japanese, *san* = three; *jin* = body. Thus, three bodies—Three Bodies of the Buddha. The reason there are three ways to express Buddha is, for example, like a mirror with three panels. One panel shows your front; another shows you your right profile; and the third panels shows your left profile. So, when a woman stands in front of a mirror to put on her make, or a man to shave, she/he can see these three different aspects of the face. In other words, at one time one can see three different dimensions of one's self. From this example it is easier to understand the three bodies of the Buddha, and get a more complete picture of what the Buddha is.

The three bodies are *hōsshin*, *hōshin* (or *hojin*), and *ōjin*.

1. *Hōsshin* is the Law aspect. This is to understand the Buddha as something you can neither see nor grasp. It is a principle of life. The *kanji* character *hō* of *hōsshin* is the same as *Hō* (Law) of *Myohō*. *Sshin* = body.
2. *Hōshin* (also *hōjin*) is the wisdom body. This is Buddha realizing Buddhahood and structuring his knowledge so that he can best teach or relay it to the people. The *kanji* character for *hō* in this word means information, news, to communicate, to tell. *Shin* = body.
3. *Ōjin* is manifested body. This is the Buddha as a human being. 3000 years ago, this body actually existed. It was born as Shakyamuni, experienced life, and died as a human being. And while alive, it helped other human beings, and all living things by communicating his wisdom. The *kanji* character for *ō* in this word means, "Here I am."

These are the three bodies (*sanjin*) of the Buddha. The three bodies can also be described as follows:

1. *Hōsshin* is like the sun.
2. *Hōshin* is light – sunlight or shining.
3. *Ōjin* is being blessed by numbers 1 and 2, or the blessing you received from numbers 1 and 2.

Nichiren Daishonin said *sanjin* is three in one, but also one in three. Expressed in Japanese these phrases are *sanjin soku isshin*, *isshin soku sanjin*. Daishonin said these three bodies are equal. One is not superior to the others. That said, the center of the three is *Hōshin*, the light: or enlightenment: the wisdom to perceive the truth and the knowledge to know how to teach the truth to others. The reason Nichiren Daishonin said *hōshin* is the axis of the three is like this:

(1) *Hōsshin*, the Law, is equated with the sun. If you were to stand directly in front of the sun, you would be incinerated. The sun is too bright and too hot. You could not survive. And (3) *Ōjin* is the actual physical body. The body lives and dies. Say for example, there is a doctor whom you go to when you get sick. While he or she is alive or in town, he/she can treat you and prescribe medicine. But if he/she leaves town, retires, or dies, you have no one to treat you or help you. (2) *Hōshin* is a bridge between *hōsshin*—the Law—and *ōjin*—physical existence. That is why Nichiren Daishonin instructed us to make *hōshin* the axis to explain what *sanjin* is.

Sanjin is also referred to as *musa sanjin*. *Mu* means nothingness. *Sa* means to create something. For example, when you are alive, living as a human being, you want other people to view you as someone who is good, or respectable. Or perhaps you want to project strength. These are based on self-conceit. Nichiren Daishonin said that *musa sanjin* is how you are—your true self, and the three bodies, *hōsshin*, *hōshin*, and *ōjin* are all *musa*. This means you are not contriving an image of how you want to be perceived, or pretending to be something you are not naturally. The message is: be as natural as you can be, and don't pretend to be something you are not to garner praise or to flatter. More than just meaning, "be your natural self," *musa sanjin* means taking off the armor that we cloak ourselves in, or whatever image we try to project, and accept ourselves as we are. Nichiren Daishonin said: (1)*hōsshin* is Namumyōhōrengekyō; (2)*hōshin* is Namumyōhōrengekyō, and (3)*ōjin* is Namumyōhōrengekyō. In *musa sanjin* they are all one. They are connected. They are completely integrated. Other Buddhisms worship and pray to a Buddha, because of the Buddha's magnificence and great wisdom. But the physical person should not be the axis or the central object. As it is with *sanjin*, the Law comes first, then the wisdom, then the body or physical being. Reverence should be given to the Law and the wisdom. That should be the focus. The focus and reverence should not be given to the person.

One of the reasons Nichiren Daishonin said *hōshin* (wisdom) should be the axis of understanding the three bodies (*sanjin*) is because the teachers and the students are equal. The student can be the teacher, and the teacher can be the student. You will learn from each other.

I hope you employ critical thinking when you practice this religion. SGI tells its believers not to question anything. In contrast, I want you to look at these teachings critically. By putting effort into questioning, you will clear out any doubts you may have. In this way, you will grow from the knowledge and wisdom you gain.

Musa—to be natural just as you are—is a Buddhist term. But in a secular sense, it means freedom and equality. Everyone wants freedom and equality. But when you live by the Law of Namumyōhōrengekyō, the principle of the Lotus Sutra, you have the knowledge that you and all living things have the Buddha-nature. Social status, or the so-called natural order or hierarchy in nature—humans at the top, ants or slugs at the bottom—are rankings and concepts contrived by man out of desire and self-conceit, bestowing upon ourselves a higher status. This is an example of making ourselves something that we are not. To be who you truly are is one of the core messages of the Lotus Sutra.

WORDS AND PHRASES OF THE LOTUS SUTRA
REVEREND RAIDŌ HIROTA
International Meeting
August 2014

Fujishaku Shinmyo (不自惜身命) *Not caring for their own lives*

Forge ahead in your faith. Be willing to give up your body and your life for the sake of the Lotus Sutra.

Isshin Yokken Butsu¹⁹ (一心欲見仏) *Wholeheartedly wishing to see the Buddha.*

Live life not based on your personal values or desires, but from the essence of your Buddha-nature.

RH: The Lotus Sutra explains the core and essence of what life is. It does not talk about how wonderful any gods are. It encourages us to forge ahead in our faith. The concept is like working hard, getting paid, and using the fruit of our labor on something we enjoy. This is how we polish our Buddha-nature. We do this for ourselves, not for Buddha.

QUESTION: "Letter to Gijo-bo" states, "The teaching of the Juryō chapter bears special significance for me, Nichiren." What does "special significance" mean?

RH: ***Yui Butsu*** (唯仏) ***Yo Butsu*** (与仏) *Only a Buddha together with a Buddha.*

This means only Buddhas can understand each other, or relate to each other. In Nichiren Shoshu Buddhism, Buddha is Nichiren Daishonin. In this phrase, *Yui Butsu*, *Yo Butsu*, the other Buddha is you. When you truly believe in Namumyōhōrengekyō, you can connect with the same spirit of Namumyōhōrengekyō as the Buddha's. In that moment, you are connecting with Buddha as a Buddha. This is an *Ah Ha!* moment in which you realize, "I have the Buddha Nature of Namumyōhōrengekyō inside me!" That realization and conviction also connects you to the essence of *Fujishaku Shinmyo* (Forge ahead in your faith. Be willing to give up your body and your life for the sake of the Lotus Sutra). Believe and act based on this belief - otherwise you won't be able to understand this teaching.

Nichiren Daishonin, the Buddha of Nichiren Shoshu, had the same body and heart as any human being has. He isn't saying that he is perfect and we aren't. Rather, he is requesting that we live like he did. You might think no matter what we do as human beings, we won't be

¹⁹ These phrases can be found on page 56 of the *jigage* section in the *seoge* sutra book.

able to connect with Buddha—or any god for that matter—because they exist in a different realm than we do, but that is not so.

We could interpret Nichiren's message to be that we are Buddhas when we forge ahead in our faith. The Lotus Sutra explains that for us to live our own lives from the spirit of the Buddha-nature of Namumyōhōrengekyō is to be a Buddha.

Nichiren Daishonin was the first person to put this teaching into practice. He didn't just talk about it, he actually did it, demonstrating how to practice this Buddhism. And his message to us was, "Those who declare themselves to be my disciples and practice the Lotus Sutra, should all practice as I do."²⁰

GOSHO SELECTION

Excerpts

THE SELECTION OF THE TIME

....

If that is so, then, in this time of "quarrels and disputes," how can the ruler, the ministers and the common people of Japan hope to escape harm when they vilify and abuse the envoy of the Buddha²¹ who is attempting to spread the teaching of Namumyōhōrengekyō, send him into exile and attack and beat him, or inflict all kinds of trouble upon his disciples and followers? And stupid and ignorant persons must surely think when I say this that I am merely calling down curses upon the people.

A person who spreads the teaching of the Lotus Sutra is father and mother to all the living beings in Japan.²² For, as the Great Teacher Chang-an says, "He makes it possible for the offender to rid himself of evil, and thus he acts like a parent to the offender."²³ If so, then I, Nichiren, am the father and mother of the present emperor of Japan, and the teacher and lord of the Nembutsu believers, the Zen followers and the Shingon priests.

²⁰ "Establishing the Four Bodhisattvas as the Object of Worship," *The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, Vol. Three, p.298

²¹ Envoy of the Buddha – Nichiren Daishonin.

²² This and the next two sentences indicate that Nichiren Daishonin is the Buddha of who possesses the three virtues of sovereign, teacher and parent.

²³ *Nehangō Sho*.

And yet, from the ruler on down to the common people, all treat me with enmity. How, then, can the sun and moon go on shining down on their heads, and how can the gods of the earth continue to bear up their feet? When Devadatta attacked the Buddha, the earth shook and trembled and flames shot out of it. When King Dammira²⁴ cut off the head of the Venerable Aryasimha, his own right hand that held the sword dropped off and fell to the ground. Emperor Hui-tsung branded the face of the priest Fa-tao²⁵ and exiled him south of the Yangtze, but before half a year had passed, the emperor was taken prisoner and carried off by the barbarians. And these attacks of the Mongols are occurring for the same reason. Though one may gather together as many soldiers as there are in the five regions of India and build one's fortress in the Iron-wheel Mountain,²⁶ it will do no good. The people of Japan are certain to encounter the calamity of war.

....

Answer: As I have explained in my earlier discussion, a great truth that was not spread abroad by Mahakashyapa or Ananda was in time propagated by Ashvaghosha, Nagarjuna, Aryadeva and Vasubandhu. And as I have also explained in my discussion, there was a great truth that was not fully made known by Nagarjuna, Vasubandhu and the others but was propagated by the Great Teacher T'ien-t'ai. And, as I have further explained, it remained for the Great Teacher Dengyō to establish an ordination platform of the great precepts of perfect and immediate enlightenment which were not spread abroad by the Great Teacher T'ien-t'ai Chih-che.

And, unbelievable as it may seem, there clearly appears in the text of the Lotus Sutra a True Law that is supremely profound and secret,²⁷ one which, though expounded in full by the Buddha, in the time since his passing has never yet been propagated by Mahakashyapa, Ananda, Ashvaghosha, Nagarjuna, Asanga or Vasubandhu, nor even by T'ien-t'ai or Dengyo. And the most difficult and perplexing question is whether or not this profound Law can be broadly proclaimed and propagated throughout the world now at the beginning of the Latter Day of the Law, the fifth of the five five-hundred-year periods following the Buddha's death.

....

In all the seven hundred and more years from the time of Emperor Kimmei to the present emperor,²⁸ such a thing has never been seen or heard of, namely, a wise man who says let us chant Namumyōhōrengekyō, who urges others to chant it and chants it himself.

²⁴Dammira – a king of Kashmir in norther India who destroyed the Buddhist temples and stupas in his kingdom. It is said when he killed the Buddhist teacher Aryasimha, he lost his right hand and died 7 days later.

²⁵Fa-tao – (1086-1147) a priest of Sung, China. When the Taoist emperor acted to suppress Buddhism, Fa-tao remonstrated with him. As a result, Fa-tao was branded on the face, and exiled to Tao-chou. Later, he was pardoned. But in 1125 the capital of Sung China was invaded by the Chin state in the north, and the emperor was taken captive.

²⁶Iron-Wheel Mountain – The outermost of eight circular mountain ranges said to surround Mt. Sumeru. Mentioned here to indicate impregnability.

²⁷This means that the Three Great Secret Laws are apparent in the passages of the Lotus Sutra when the sutra is read in light of its essential truth.

²⁸Present emperor: The ninety-first emperor Go'uda.

When the sun rises, the stars go into hiding. When a wise king appears, foolish kings perish. When the true sutra is spread abroad, the provisional sutras will cease to circulate, and when a man of wisdom chants Namumyōhōrengekyō, those ignorant of it will follow after him as shadows follow a form and echoes follow a sound.

There can be no room to doubt that I, Nichiren, am the foremost votary of the Lotus Sutra in all of Japan. Indeed, from this we may assume that, even in China and India and throughout the entire world, there is no one who can stand side by side with me.

Question: The great earthquake of the Shoka era, the huge comet of the Bun'ei era--what caused these to appear?

Answer: In the Tendai teachings it is said, "Wise men can see omens and what they foretell, as snakes know the way of snakes."²⁹

Question: What do you mean by that?

Answer: When Bodhisattva Jōgyō appeared from beneath the earth, the other bodhisattvas such as Miroku, Monjushiri, Kanzeon and Yakuō, though they had severed themselves from the first forty-one of the forty-two levels of ignorance,³⁰ had not yet severed themselves from the last one, or fundamental darkness. Hence, they were in effect ignorant persons, and consequently failed to understand that this bodhisattva, Jōgyō, had been summoned so that he might widely propagate Namumyōhōrengekyō of the Juryō chapter in the Latter Day of the Law.

Question: Is there anyone in Japan, China or India who understands this matter?

Answer: Even the great bodhisattvas who have eradicated the illusions of thought and desire³¹ and severed themselves from the forty-one levels of ignorance cannot understand such a thing. How then could persons who have not rid themselves of even one iota of delusion be expected to do so?

Question: But if there is no wise man who understands why these calamities have arisen, then how can proper steps be taken to deal with them? If one does not understand the origin of an illness, though he may try to treat the sick person, the treatment will surely fail and the patient will die. Now if the people resort to prayers without understanding the basic cause of these disasters, can there be any doubt that the nation will in time face ruin? Ah, how dreadful to think of it!

Answer: They say that snakes know seven days in advance when a heavy rain is going to occur, and that crows know what lucky or unlucky events are going to take place in the course of a whole year. This must be because snakes are followers of the great dragons who make the rains fall, and crows have for a long time studied such matters of divination. Now I,

²⁹ Miao-lo's *Hokke Mongu Ki*, vol. 9.

³⁰ Forty-two levels of ignorance: The third of the "three categories of illusion" set forth by T'ien-t'ai. They are illusions about the true nature of life, illusions that prevent bodhisattvas from attaining enlightenment. The last and most deeply rooted of the forty-two is called fundamental darkness. According to T'ien-t'ai's teachings, one attains enlightenment by eradicating these successive levels of ignorance and finally freeing himself from fundamental darkness.

³¹ Illusions of thought and desire: The first of the three categories of illusion formulated by T'ien-t'ai. The illusions of thought are distorted perceptions of the truth. The illusions of desire mean base inclinations such as greed and anger which arise from the contact of the five sense organs with their respective objects.

Nichiren, am only a common mortal, and therefore have no understanding of the cause of these disasters. Nevertheless, I believe I can generally instruct you concerning this matter.

In the time of King P'ing of the Chou dynasty, persons appeared who let their hair hang down and went about naked. A court official named Hsin Yu divined on the basis of this and said, "Within a hundred years, this dynasty will come to an end." In the time of King Yu of the Chou, the mountains and rivers collapsed and were destroyed and the earth shook. A courtier named Po Yang, observing this, said, "Within twelve years our great ruler will meet with some dire happening."

Now the great earthquake and the huge comet that have appeared are calamities brought about by Heaven, which is enraged because the ruler of our country hates Nichiren and sides with the Zen, Nembutsu and Shingon priests who preach doctrines that will destroy the nation!

....

The *Rengemen* Sutra says, "The Buddha said to Ananda, 'It is like the case of a lion who has died. No creature that lives in the air, in the soil, in water or on land will venture to eat the flesh of the dead lion. Only the worms that are born from the body of the lion itself will feed on the lion's flesh. In the same way, Ananda, the Buddha's Law cannot be destroyed by outside forces. But the evil monks who exist within the body of my Law--they are the ones who will destroy this Law that the Buddha has labored over and worked to establish for a period of three asogi kalpas!'"

What do these passages from the sutras mean? In the past, the Buddha Kasho described to King Kiriki the Latter Day of the Law of the Buddha Shakyamuni and revealed what sort of people would destroy Shakyamuni's teachings.³² Evil men might appear such as King Mihirakula,³³ who burned all the Buddhist halls and monasteries of the five regions of India and murdered all the monks and nuns of the sixteen major states,³⁴ or Emperor Wu-tsung³⁵ of China, who destroyed more than 4,600 temples and pagodas in the nine provinces of China and forced 260,500 priests and nuns to return to lay life. But such men could not destroy the Law preached by Shakyamuni Buddha. It is the priests themselves, who wrap their bodies in the three robes permitted to them, hang a single begging bowl about their necks, store up in their minds the eighty thousand teachings and with their mouths recite the twelve divisions of the sutras--they are the ones who will destroy the Buddha's Law.

....

³² The story of the Buddha Kasho's predictions to King Kiriki appears in the Shugo Sutra. Kasho Buddha is the sixth of seven Buddhas of the past, the last of whom is Shakyamuni.

³³ Mihirakula: A king of the ancient kingdom of Cheka in India. According to the Daito Saiki Ki, he attacked Baladitya, a king of Magadha who was a Buddhist, but was instead captured by him. Released through the intercession of Baladitya's merciful mother, Mihirakula then fled to Kashmir and later killed its king. He went on to attack Gandhara where he destroyed temples and stupas. As a result, when he was about to die, the earth trembled and a storm arose, and he fell into the hell of incessant suffering.

³⁴ Sixteen major states: The countries in ancient India--Anga, Magadha, Kashi, Kosala, Vriji, Malla, Chedi, Vatsa, Kuru, Panchala, Ashmaka, Avanti, Matsya, Shurasena, Gandhara and Kamboja.

³⁵ Wu-tsung (814-846): The fifteenth emperor of the T'ang dynasty. In 845 he initiated a nationwide persecution of Buddhism.

The Great Teacher Dengyō in his writings described the eminent scholars of the Sanron, Hosso, Kegon and other sects of Japanese Buddhism as six kinds of worms.³⁶ I, Nichiren, would dub the founders of the Shingon, Zen and Jodo sects the three worms, and Jikaku, Annen and Eshin of the Tendai sect the three worms who devoured the lion-body of the Lotus Sutra and the Great Teacher Dengyō!

So long as Nichiren, who is working to expose the root of these great slanders against the Law, is treated with animosity, the heavenly deities will withhold their light, the gods of the earth will be angered, and omens and calamities will appear in great numbers. You must understand that, because I speak concerning the most important matter in the entire world, my words are accompanied by portents of the first magnitude. How tragic, how pitiful, that all the people of this nation of Japan should fall into the great citadel of the hell of incessant suffering! But how fortunate, how joyous, to think that, with this unworthy body, I have received in my heart the seed of Buddhahood!

....

Therefore I say to you, my disciples, try practicing as the Lotus Sutra teaches, exerting yourselves without begrudging your lives! Test the truth of Buddhism! Namumyōhōrengekyō, Namumyōhōrengekyō!

....



³⁶ The Kenkai Ron likens the scholars of the six Nara sects to six kinds of worms who devour and destroy the Buddha's teachings.

TRIBUTE TO A FRIEND

REMEMBERING

KINUE “KAY” DUBITSKY

MARCH 30, 1930 – NOVEMBER 9, 2017



Bucks County, Pennsylvania

June 2012

Through Kay, who had helped us through Skype translations, I was able to talk to Reverend Hirota on March 1, 2013 for the first time. I remember her warmth, and her consideration towards us in 2015 in N.J. I also remember Kay's willingness to host us at her home. We will always remember her, especially because she has contributed greatly helping the Buddhist teachings be spread. "Ciao Kay"! **VV and NM, Milan, Italy**

Mrs. Dubitsky used to come to our house when I was a teenager, I am now in my 60s. Mrs. Dubitsky will be sorely missed. Peace **KE, Sandy Spring, Maryland**

In my heart, I'm thankful to Kay for her services to this community of believers, helping to keep it going long enough so that others like myself, could benefit. I am shocked and sad to hear of her passing, I send my condolences to all those who have been a part of her life.

CJH- Atlanta, Georgia

I did not know Kay well but have been happy to share with her this past year the wonderful Law. I have just dedicated my gongyo and one hour of Odaimoku that her beautiful spirit be greeted and hailed by the Buddhist gods as one who really struggled and lived her life with devotion to the Gohonzon till her dying moment. She struggled to her last moment as the Daishonin did to keep the Law alive, and I am moved by her spirit.

MD, Brussels, Belgium

I'm sorry to hear about Kay. I will offer prayers for her enlightenment for the 49 days.

DW, Merrick, New York

I will remember Kay in the Fifth Prayer of Gongyo. She was a real pioneer for Nichiren Shoshu, and such a sweet and loving person. I know that we will all miss her greatly.

MP, Norwalk, CT

I will remember Kay in my diamoku and gongyo.

RS, Pasadena, CA

So sad. I will be there for Kay.

DP, Silver Spring, MD





Bleeding Hearts

I met Kay in 1983, and visited her and Ray in their home with the priests a number of times between then and 1990. But it wasn't until 1999 that our true connection became evident. That was when I joined Rev. Hirota's temple.

In 2000, while on a visit to the United States, Reverend Hirota, Kay and I were sitting in Kay's living room, when Rev. Hirota said, "this is not by coincidence that we are sitting here. It is because we have a connection from a past life when we made a commitment to be here now." Since then, for the past 17 years, Kay and I worked on translating the writings of Reverend Hirota, as well as those of former high priests of Nichiren Shoshu. She also made possible communication between me and Reverend Hirota. Hers was no small effort or consequence. Kay was conscientious, working tirelessly to understand a concept, a correct meaning, find a correct word. The significance of this is that her effort made the correct teachings of Nichiren Daishonin accessible to English-speakers around the world. Within our small, devout community, which has broad outreach and making a profound impact, Kay was our pillar. Her absence has created a void, which will be difficult, if not impossible to fill.

Over the past two years, while chanting for Kay, I cried many times because her suffering was so great. Yet I find solace in the words of the Buddha who said, "Illness occurs when evil karma is about to be dissipated." And, "The entity of human life throughout its cycle of birth and death, is neither born nor destroyed." It's hard to imagine that Kay, who was so tolerant, open, generous and kind, could have had evil karma. But since we cannot know what we did in past lives, it is somewhat gratifying to know that she was able to eradicate whatever it was she must have done in the past. Even more wonderful is knowing that life is eternal. Though she has left us for now, and I pray that she is in the loving embrace of many Buddhas, we will see each other again, just as we were able to do in this lifetime. We are praying for Kay for 49 days. For, just as it takes a human being 9 months to be born, it takes 49 days for a soul to be settled. And at that time, I pray she will be experiencing the warm tranquility of Buddhahood.

I thank Kay's family for sharing such a wonderful and remarkable person, and my dearest friend.

Peach Pair, Westport, CT