



OESHIKI

By Reverend Ryodo Okamoto

When Nichiren Daishonin died on the 13th day of the 10th month it was his human life that ceased to exist. The Buddha nature within his life and in all life lives on, demonstrating that this Buddhism is eternal. We celebrate *Oeshiki* to honor Nichiren Daishonin, the eternal Buddha, the human manifestation of the eternal Law of Myoho-renge-kyo.

Because Nichiren passed away on the 13th day of the month, we express our appreciation to him with the *Oko* ceremony (recitation of the liturgy of Nichiren Shoshu (the 2nd and 16th chapters of the Lotus Sutra) and chanting Namumyohorengkyo) on the 13th day of every month to remind us that the eternal Buddha is always present. In addition to this, it is of great importance that once a year on October 13th all believers gather together for a great celebration to honor this occasion. If you do not have time to get together on this day make the time! Make the effort, no matter what. Let your children, your whole family and all others know how important this day is. Explain to them that we are celebrating the eternity of true Buddhism and the true Buddha. Make it a festive day -- a holiday! Exchange

gifts, enjoy special foods, get together with other believers and discuss Buddhism. For *Oeshiki* is as important to us as Christmas is to Christians.

When people have a temple they take it for granted and do not attend often. It's human nature. But what I urge is that at least one day a year you attend temple [or convene in a home if you do not have a temple]. That day should be on *Oeshiki*. On this day you should make offerings to the Gohonzon of paper lotus flower lanterns and paper cherry blossoms, placing them decoratively around the altar. [This is done because, although the thirteenth day of the tenth month, the day Nichiren Daishonin died, was in late autumn/early winter, upon his death the cherry blossoms on Mount Minobu bloomed miraculously, indicating that it was not the end of the Buddha's life but the beginning of the advent on this earth of the teaching of the true Law of the true Buddha. The lanterns signify "the light the true Law imparts to dispel the darkness of all mankind."] When you assemble in this place and chant, you will experience the oneness of -- Nichiren Daishonin -- and disciples -- us -- chanting Namu-myoho-renge-kyo together. In that single moment you will be aware of being enlightened. To experience this is of great importance.

As human beings living in the mundane world we tend to only seek results and rarely give a thought to what we are doing. It is the nature of the human condition to always look toward the future. Contrary to this way of thinking, Nichiren Daishonin teaches that the present is more important than the future [as both the past and future are contained within this moment]. Our practice is not for receiving benefits one month hence, one year hence or ten years hence. The reward of this practice lies within a single moment of time. Within this isolated moment we should feel both joy and peace [which springs forth from the same Buddha nature inherent in all human life]. This is what is known as the Buddhism of original cause or *hon'inmyo*.

This Buddhism of Nichiren Daishonin is based on the doctrine of original cause (*hon'inmyo*) and not on *hon'gamyō* (the effect or harvesting, which is Shakyamuni's Buddhism). [The doctrine of *hon'inmyo* "teaches that the nine worlds are all present in the beginningless Buddhahood, and that Buddhahood exists in the beginningless nine worlds."] The significance of practicing according to *hon'inmyo* is that enlightenment -- the original effect -- exists now in this single life-moment. Invoking Namu-myoho-renge-kyo -- the original cause - brings enlightenment forth.

The reason we decorate the altar and honor and hold in high esteem the occasion of the Buddha's death is that we believe the Buddha is with us every moment. The joyful feeling that we have on this occasion should be with us not only once a year, but also every day of the year. Unfortunately as human beings we cannot maintain this attitude for very long. It is for this reason that we celebrate *Oeshiki*, to remind us that the Buddha is ever present.

The reason for holding a ceremony every 13th day of the month and honoring the true Buddha during every morning and evening prayer is to recapture that special feeling and to attain enlightenment. Maintaining that joy in our hearts is what we want to do, whether we are standing, sitting, lying down or walking.

The practice of this Buddhism extends beyond sitting in front of Gohonzon. Nichiren Daishonin's teachings are the fusion of the laws of Buddhism and the laws of the world; there is no separation. We must keep this in our heart and live by it.

Once a year, every year decorate your altar, make flowers and enjoy yourselves! Everything you do demonstrates your faith.