

# Nichiren Shu News

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## AN IMPORTANT MESSAGE FROM THE EDITOR

COVID-19 has created a worldwide crisis forcing changes in work and lifestyles for the safety and wellbeing of all people. As you may know, the Japanese Government issued an emergency declaration from April 7 to May 6 to prevent the spread of COVID-19. However, the number of infected people is increasing in Japan and throughout the world.

In response to the Japanese Government's declaration and the current situation, Nichiren Shu decided to close the Head Office of Nichiren Shu from April 20 to May 8. The Japan Post Office has also suspended mail service to many international destinations. Under these conditions, it is impossible for us to print and mail Nichiren Shu News at

this time. The June issue of Nichiren Shu News, this issue, is being prepared as usual. However, we will be posting a downloadable PDF of the June issue of Nichiren Shu News (#238) on the NBIC website: <http://nichiren-shu.org/news/> that will be available from June 1.

Please use the opportunity to print your own copy of the paper until physical

copies of the issue can be printed and sent out.

Situation updates and other notices will be posted on the Nichiren Shu English language portal site: <https://www.nichiren.or.jp/english/activities/>

We sincerely apologize for any inconvenience and ask for your kind understanding.

## PRACTICING THE BODHISATTVA WAY IN THIS TIME OF CRISIS

By Rev. Daiei Matsui  
from Nichiren Shu Shimbun

Some say that they feel depressed whenever they watch news programs these days. They feel less and less motivated. Everywhere on TV and in newspapers there are reports of more victims of the coronavirus every day. This feeds people's anxiety. Some say the government isn't doing anything for the people, so people are becoming more dissatisfied. Some say the government cannot be believed, so there is growing distrust. With all this anxiety, dissatisfaction, and distrust, there is great confusion. Media focuses on how

to avoid infection from the virus. People think that they are okay. When they are asked to use self-restraint and stay home, they complain and are offended that they are forced to be patient. In times like this, it is particularly important to learn the teachings in Chapter 20 of the Lotus Sutra, 'Never-Despising Bodhisattva.' Never-Despising Bodhisattva bowed with gassho whenever he met people. He always said that he never despised others, because they would practice the way of Bodhisattvas and become Buddhas. The "Bodhisattva Way" that he recommends is to do something for others.

What can we do for others today? Even if we do not know whether we



have the virus, we must act as if we do. So our practice is simply "Do not give the virus to others." In other words, not to pass the virus on to others is to practice the Bodhisattva Way. We are asked to practice self-restraint again

and again. This restraint, if we only do it for ourselves, gives us much stress. We become sick of it and hate it. But to practice the Bodhisattva Way is not to exercise restraint. It is a positive action with determination for becoming Buddhas. "We trust you. Let us not pass this virus on to others." That is what we should do now. It is the Bodhisattva Way. All ministers, members and followers of Nichiren Shu have to proclaim in our communities that "the determination to not pass the virus to others," with the teaching of Never-Despising Bodhisattva, eases people's anxiety as we fight against the virus together."

—Translated by Rev. Chishin Hirai

## MINOBUSAN AND THE CORONAVIRUS

By Rev. Shinkyō Warner

It seems like such a long time ago. On February 18, I woke before dawn in Chijaku-bo, an inn for pilgrims at Minobusan, Mt. Minobu. This was where the International Shingyo Dojo was scheduled to be held in May and June this year. Like so many other things, it has since been canceled. I was there with Rev. Kanjo Bassett who works with the International Section of the Shumuin. I was in Japan for a meeting of the Nichiren Shu Publication Subcommittee being held in Tokyo.

Before that, we had time to attend the morning service at Minobusan Kuonji Temple. It doesn't matter how many times I have been there, or how long it has been between visits, it always feels like I'm coming home. Maybe because while I was attending Shingyo Dojo, almost 20 years ago, we spent nearly every morning for 35 days there, chanting the Lotus Sutra and taking in the splendor around us. On that cold day this February, the congregation was sparse, but the energy was strong.

As we left Kuonji Temple, it was just starting to get light. The tops of the mountains around us were illuminated by the rising sun, tinting them red like the newly rebuilt five-story stupa in front of the temple. We descended the Bodaitei, the 287 steps of enlightenment, on our way to Nichiren's memorial, the Gobyosho. The sun climbed higher into a clear sky. As the trees caught more of the light, their leaves became an even

brighter green. The mountain was truly showing off for us that day.

We crossed the bridge over the Minobu River and climbed the steps to the Gobyosho. We chanted Hobenpon and Jigage. I offered prayers of gratitude to our ancestors, to all those people whose honest work and hard labor enabled the peace and prosperity we enjoy today, to our nations and all other organizations which help us work together for our common benefit, and to the Buddha, Nichiren Shonin, and all their disciples who have transmitted the Wonderful Dharma to us. I also prayed that we, as Bodhisattvas, continually remind ourselves of our vow to lead all beings to the Enlightenment of the Buddha.



Near the Gobyosho is the site of the original Kuonji Temple, where Nichiren Shonin lived on this mountain. We tried to imagine Nichiren there. What would we say to him? What could we learn from this man who lived through plagues, famines, storms, war and persecution incomparable to anything we face today?

Or is it? When I was in Japan, there were relatively few cases of COVID-19 outside China. As I write now, there are almost three million known cases and over 200,000 people have died. In some parts of the world, this plague is still expanding, in some it has subsided, and in others it is now taking off again. Because people are confined to their homes, economies are strained and some people cannot get food. It is like a famine without a food shortage. Global warming continues to bring severe weather. As more people die and others become desperate, can war be far behind?

I am back in Kentucky now, but Minobusan is never far from me. I know many people working selflessly in medical facilities, grocery stores, and even food banks, fully aware of the danger to themselves and their families but still determined to serve others. I have also encountered many people filled with fear and anger, not knowing what to do or whether they are going to survive. And, of course, there are the few, blissfully ignorant of their risky behavior as they satisfy their selfish desires.

Nichiren Shonin was surely familiar with people like this, and he was determined to save them all through the



good medicine of the Lotus Sutra. We should be equally determined to benefit all people, knowing that as Bodhisattvas we chose to come into this world of suffering. We cannot know how many people this virus will take or what the world will look like once it has subsided. However, we do know that if we are taken, we will pick another life, in another world, and we will resume our task of benefiting all beings.

Now is our time to study and practice. Now is our time to show the world what a Bodhisattva is and to awaken all beings to their true natures. Minobusan is in your heart, too. It is important today, in this time of crisis, to remember what Nichiren wrote in *Shoho Jisso-Sho*, his Treatise on All Phenomena as Ultimate Reality, "Earnestly endeavor to strengthen your faith, so that you may be blessed with the protective powers of Shakyamuni Buddha. Endeavor yourself and cause others to take up these two ways of practice and learning that stem from faith. If possible, please spread even a word or phrase of the Lotus Sutra to others."



# Welcome Sri Lanka

By Rev. Kanjo Bassett, Shumuin

On March 25, a dream came true for Nichiren Shu devotees in Sri Lanka: Nichiren Shu officially recognized the Sri Lanka Sangha. It has been a long journey in both senses of the word, a deep commitment on the part of devotees to build a temple in Sri Lanka, far away from Japan with generous assistance from temple members in Penang and Singapore.

First contact was through the FaceBook page of Ichinenji Temple in Penang, Malaysia and temple member Alex Ang. After a period of online communication and discussion, Revs. Kangyo Noda and Ervinna Myoufu along with Mr. Ang traveled in December 2013 to the Bandaragama suburb area of Colombo, Sri Lanka and met with the group headed by Mr. Genumu Ranasoora. Together with the members, they held a regular service together at Mr. Genumu's home. Since then, Kokusai Fukuyoshi, international ministers, have traveled to Sri Lanka regularly to meet with members and hold services in members' homes. Travel distance is a challenge for the Kokusai Fukuyoshi and for local members. Public transportation is rather expensive for members, and it's difficult for many to attend meetings regularly. Online tools, such as FaceBook

and WhatsApp, are important for keeping everyone "plugged in" both locally in Sri Lanka and with their sister temples in Penang, Singapore, and Jakarta.

Despite the challenges, Sri Lanka Sangha members have sacrificed time and money traveling to Penang to celebrate Wesak with Ichinenji Temple members, as well as to Singapore for the recent anniversary celebration there. They are also preparing to build their own temple. The devotion of the Sri Lanka Sangha is a nourishing example of faith to all Nichiren Shu members around the world. Sincere congratulations on behalf of Nichiren Shu and friends!

Congratulations to the Sri Lanka Sangha. Your constant faith and fervent chanting of the Odaimoku has brought you to this new beginning. I respect you with all my heart. I wish you every success as the Sri Lanka Sangha continues to grow, and hope I can help with propagation, even in a small way. —Rev. Kangyo Noda

Congratulations to the Sri Lanka Sangha! After almost seven years of practicing together, the Sri Lanka Sangha has finally become part of Nichiren Shu's big family. I know the journey was not easy, but because

of your strong faith, spirit, and practice, we can continue our propagation. From now on, please keep your good faith, and together we will continue to spread the Lotus Sutra and Odaimoku to the people in the world, and especially in Sri Lanka. Namu Myoho Renge Kyo.

—Rev. Ervinna Myoufu

Congratulations to all members of the Sri Lanka Sangha. I'm really glad to see our dream is coming true, one by one, to become a Nichiren Shu official propagation point, and the next is building a new temple. The Buddha is always guiding us in the right direction under his protection. Let's chant the Odaimoku for future propagation in Sri Lanka.

—Rev. Yuon Ito

Congratulations on your getting the official status as a Nichiren Shu temple. It should be a great honor for everyone in your sangha. I wish you further developments, especially a great success in the construction of the new temple building. I promise that I will support as much as possible. —Rev. Keiji Oshima

The Nichiren Shu Buddhist Association of Colombo was started on December 13, 2013. Six years have passed since we began

this group. In December 2019, we started construction on a temple building, but because of COVID-19 we have had to stop and will continue after the situation gets better. We truly appreciate the support from Rev. Keiji Oshima, Rev. Ervinna Myoufu, Rev. Yuon Ito, and all the South-east Asia members for helping us build this temple. Recently, we received good news from the Nichiren Shu Head Office in Japan that our Sangha has been officially recognized as a Nichiren Shu Temple. This is a precious opportunity for us to join Nichiren Shu. In the future, we hope to carry out more Buddhist activities and propagate the Dharma to more people in Sri Lanka.

—Mr. Genumu Ranasoora,  
Chairman of the Nichiren Shu  
Buddhist Association of Colombo



## NAMI-DAIMOKU ON NIIJIMA ISLAND

By Rev. Kosei Uchida

Japan has 2,000 islands. About 500 are habitable. Tokyo Prefecture includes a chain of remote islands, the Izu Islands. One of them is Niijima Island. The temples on Niijima are all Nichiren Shu temples. The islanders are all followers and supporters of Nichiren Shu.

Long ago, exiled criminals were sent to Niijima Island. According to one historical document, some 1,333 criminals, including samurai, peasants, townspeople, shrine priests, and even Buddhist priests, were transported to Niijima Island from 1668 to 1871. Most of them were buried in a graveyard for exiles at the Nichiren Shu temple. Today, their graves are still well maintained and decorated with flowers. It may be because many exiles from the mainland contributed greatly to improving the islanders' life and culture. This included education, medical care, special skills, and performing arts. The flower offerings are always renewed and fresh to

remember the ancestors and express feelings of gratitude.

Niijima Island is strategically placed for sea navigation and famous for producing a salted, sun-dried fish called "kusaya." There are about 2,000 inhabitants. Daily supplies are transported by sea and air. Sometimes, when the sea is rough, no

supplies or mail arrive for many days. If the undersea cable to the island is broken, you cannot use phones or connect to the Internet.

For those islanders who live in a place that entails a constant element of inconvenience, chanting the Odaimoku, "Namu Myoho Renge Kyo" has

been something to live for over the centuries. Their way of chanting is rather unusual, though. It is traditionally called "Nami-Daimoku," meaning "wavy Daimoku." They chant Odaimoku in a singsong tone repeatedly, just as the waves are endlessly breaking and receding. When they gather together for a funeral or a memorial service, they chant loudly as if they are crying with emotional pain and grief. They know full well what a hard life on an island surrounded by the sea can be, but they have to live by the sea. Sorrow comes to all again and again, but they accept it as is, seeming like showing their firm resolve to overcome whatever difficulty and pain may come.

Surprisingly, there is no musical score for the Nami-Daimoku. It has been handed down by word of mouth from generation to generation. This is an intangible cultural asset born separately from the mainland and an original form of faith on the island.

—Translated by Rev. Sensho Komukai



Niijima Islanders chanting the "Nami-Daimoku."

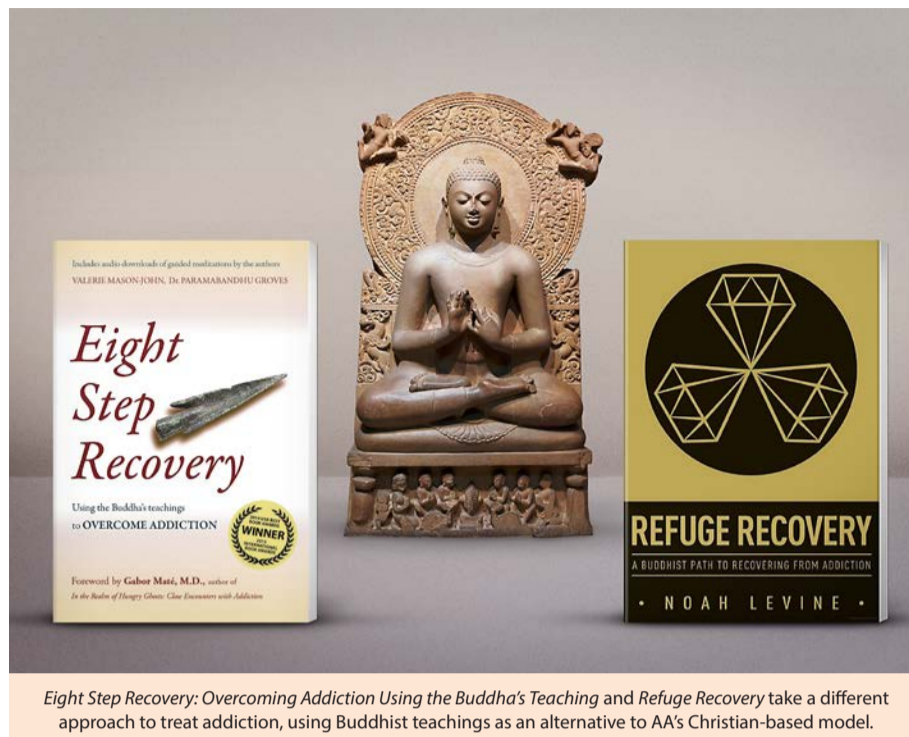
# DHARMA-BASED RECOVERY

By Rev. Ryuoh Faulconer

We had just finished morning service when a sangha member approached me and wanted to talk. The member was in recovery but felt that the Big Book used in Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) was somewhat troubling. I had never read or had experience with anything about AA or their so-called Big Book. I listened and then immediately went to the bookstore. I read the whole book pretty much in one sitting. As I read, I understood that the language and approach in the Big Book is tied closely to Christian thinking.

As I did more research into recovery, I found resources for using AA with Buddhism. Many of these articles and books reflected on the concept in the Big Book: relinquishing yourself to your higher power. I found this term “higher power” can be defined in any way that makes a person comfortable. However, in reading it closely, it became clear to me that its Christian focus cannot be simply reinterpreted. The first part of the Big Book is the story of the author, Bill. In the story, he finds God and relinquishes his power to God. For many AA members, relinquishing to God is the only way to sobriety. As I dove deeper into the recovery community, I found several Buddhist teachers working on systems similar to the system in AA but from a Buddhist perspective.

AA uses a system of twelve steps. Relinquishing your higher power to God is one of those steps. Those in AA work on the steps with a peer called a sponsor. The members work the steps and attend meetings. When they are early in the recovery process, they go



*Eight Step Recovery: Overcoming Addiction Using the Buddha's Teaching and Refuge Recovery take a different approach to treat addiction, using Buddhist teachings as an alternative to AA's Christian-based model.*

to meetings daily. After time, they may continue to attend daily or just several times a week. These meetings become a part of their sobriety and happen for the rest of their lives. Between meetings and working the steps, those in the program learn how to deal with stress, anxiety, and cravings. AA meetings happen all over the world to help support those in recovery. However, the most difficult part for the Buddhist-based systems is that they are smaller groups and do not have meetings everywhere or every day.

The first book I found was *Eight Step Recovery: Using the Buddha's Teachings to Overcoming Addiction* by Valerie Mason-John. She teaches eight steps, which derive from the Buddhist teaching of the Four Noble

Truths and the Eightfold Path. Valerie practices within the Triratna tradition of Buddhism. Her book is aimed directly at those who practice Buddhism and have some understanding of Basic Buddhist doctrine. Many people trying out Buddhism as a way to heal from addiction might find these teachings a little difficult at first. This is not to say that it is impossible to learn Buddhism at this level, but some people need simpler teachings. This is where the book *Refuge Recovery* by Noah Levine comes in. Noah is a certified Vipassana teacher. He became a known teacher in America with his book *Dharma Punx*. He wrote *Refuge Recovery* as an alternative for people in AA. The book simplifies Buddhist teachings to attract a larger

audience. As with *8 Step Recovery*, these Dharma based teachings include not only drugs and alcohol but also all process addictions, including gambling, eating, sex, shopping, and others. As Buddhists, we realize that all of us have addiction problems because of our desires and cravings. Buddhist-based teachings can help with the anxiety, depression, craving, desire, and shame that come with addiction. As Bodhisattvas, we want to help those suffering without judging them. We realize how important a sangha is and that is what Dharma-based recovery is. A sangha is a group of those suffering in this Saha world.

Our Recovery Dharma meetings are held a couple times a week. We have several people in our group who can mentor people who are new to the group. We encourage everyone in recovery to work the eight steps and to attend meetings. Our meetings average 8 to 24 people each week, and we welcome anyone in recovery.

I recently went back to school to get my certification as a drug and alcohol counselor. I started the group at Kosen-Ji, the Nichiren Buddhist Sangha of Greater New England. If you would like to learn more about Recovery Dharma, how to start a group near you, or just need to talk, please see the links below or contact me. Anyone who is suffering and would like to change, chant the Odaimoku and come to a meeting. You are always welcome in our Sangha.

[www.recoverydharma.org](http://www.recoverydharma.org)

[www.refugerecovery.org](http://www.refugerecovery.org)

[www.valeriemason-john.com/eight-step-recovery/](http://www.valeriemason-john.com/eight-step-recovery/)

## Protective Deities in Nichiren Shu (2) — Shichimen Celestial Maiden

By Rev. Sensho Komukai

Seven kilometers from Minobusan Kuonji Temple, stands Mt. Shichimen, which rises to an elevation of 1,982 meters. Keishin-in Temple, at the top of the mountain, is where Shichimen Celestial Maiden is enshrined. There are three folk stories about Shichimen Celestial Maiden that explain how and why Mt. Shichimen has been regarded as a sacred mountain for generations.



This statue of Shichimen Celestial Maiden is enshrined in the temple by Ichi-no-ike Pond.

The first story is from the 11th century. A nobleman in the Kyoto Court, who had not been blessed with a child, visited Itsukushima Shrine in Aki Province to pray for a child. Soon the nobleman's wife became pregnant and had a baby girl named Itsukushima-hime (Princess Itsukushima). The princess grew up to be a beautiful woman, but she was taken ill with smallpox. Though her parents did everything to cure her disease, she did not get better. They visited Itsukushima Shrine again to pray for her recovery. They received a divine revelation that said, “There is a sacred mountain (Mt. Shichimen) with seven ponds in Hakii Village in Kai Province (present-day Yamanashi Prefecture). If you purify yourself with the immaculate water of the ponds, you will be restored to health.” The princess with her attendants went up to Mt. Shichimen. When she poured water over herself at the first pond called “Ichi-no-ike,” she recovered completely. Everybody was delighted, but it was a transient joy. The princess then told those around her, “I am predestined to live in the pond. It is my fate from a previous existence.” A moment later, she plunged into the water. After a while, a large dragon appeared from the water, saying, “I will protect the Dharma in the Latter Age of Degeneration.” Then the dragon disappeared. Later, a small shrine

was built to deify the Dragon Goddess as the protective deity of the pond.

The next story happened in 1277. One day, Nichiren Shonin gave a sermon to Lord Hakii Sanenaga and his disciples and followers while sitting on a big rock near his hermitage on Mt. Minobu. A few moments later, a beautiful young lady showed up, seemingly from out of nowhere. She sat down quietly and bowed gracefully with her palms together to listen to his sermon. Those present looked at her inquisitively and became restless. Nichiren Shonin told her, “Everybody is wondering who you are. Show us your original figure.” The moment he poured a little water over her, she changed into a dragon, three meters long. She spoke with a vow, “I am Shichimen Celestial Maiden living in Mt. Shichimen. As a guardian of the Dharma at the Devil Gate of Mt. Minobu, I will expel the seven calamities and bring peace and quiet to all who keep the Lotus Sutra.” She then flew away up toward Mt. Shichimen.

The last story happened on September 19 in 1297. One of the Six Senior Disciples, Nichiro Shonin, along with Lord Hakii, climbed up Mt. Shichimen. In Ichi-no-ike Pond, as the morning sunlight came in and the surface of the pond rippled, Shichimen Celestial Maiden emerged from the water. She

had a crown with a hanging ornament and held a key in her right hand and a sacred ball-shaped gem in her left hand. Nichiro and Lord Hakii were convinced that this must be the same Shichimen Celestial Maiden, who had appeared before Nichiren Shonin when he delivered the sermon in 1277. They both put their palms together in gassho and enshrined the great mandala written by Nichiren Shonin in a small shrine in front of the lake along with the statue of Shichimen Celestial Maiden.

Because of this, September 19th is celebrated as the founding day of Keishin-in Temple on Mt. Shichimen. The Grand Festival for Shichimen Celestial Maiden is held on this day each year. Many people climb Mt. Shichimen staying overnight to purify themselves and receive a special prayer.



Ichi-no-ike Pond is known as the home of Shichimen Celestial Maiden, the Dragon Goddess.

## TEMPLE EVENTS

**Renkoji Temple, Italy**  
Rev. Shoryo Tarabini

### COVID-19 in Italy

Italy has been severely hit by COVID-19, and there has been nearly a complete lockdown throughout the country. All retail stores, entertainment facilities, and restaurants have been closed. We can only go to grocery stores, doctors, and pharmacies while keeping social distance. Renkoji Temple has been closed by government orders since early March. All services are now being conducted over the Internet.

Because of the lack of hospital beds for the affected, luxury hotels have been converted into hospitals for the COVID-19 patients. Getting enough medical help and building tent hospitals throughout Italy is the most important thing right now.

I pray that this pandemic will be contained soon!



**Singapore Daimoku-ji Temple**  
Rev. Keiji Oshima

### Thanks for Everything

In March, I returned to Japan after six and a half years of international missionary work. On the same day, I submitted my resignation as an international minister to the Nichiren Shu Head Office.

I would like to express my appreciation to all my friends and members of the different sanghas I was able to work at. Now a new phase in my life will begin.

However, I would like to continue contributing to international missionary work for Nichiren Shu. I would like to repay the favor I received from all of you!

Thank you so much for your kind support and compassion.

**Honolulu Myohoji Temple**  
Daniel Liu, Temple President

### The Power of Prayers

Kanzeon Bosatsu, World-Voice-Perceiver in Chapter 25 of the Lotus Sutra, immediately responds to the requests for help from anywhere, from any sentient being. Kanzeon Bosatsu will remove your various

sufferings—sickness and death. Kanzeon Bosatsu becomes the hand of salvation, when we are suffering, troubled on the verge of death or faced with calamities.

If you call “Namu Kanzeon Bosatsu” you will be protected from harm.

Therefore, always pray to Him, always honor and worship Him! Never doubt His power! Also, do not doubt the power of Namu Myoho Renge Kyo!

**Nichiren Mission of Hawaii**  
Rev. Shokai Kanai

### How to Deal with the Coronavirus

As the head minister of the Nichiren Mission of Hawaii, I must protect all the members and their families. I blessed all the attendees with a *kito* blessing on the first Sunday in March. On the second Sunday, I showed them my way of exercising to receive Universal Energy to strengthen immunity. On the third Sunday, we chanted the Odaimoku and meditated to strengthen our minds.

Nu’uanu, where our temple is located is one of the spiritual power spots of Hawaii. It is surrounded by a green forest, a stream, and a lotus pond. Besides these, we have strong winds that cut through the Pali Highway and carry away negative energy.

I get up early every morning before the sun rises and place a cup of water by an open window on the north side. I appreciate the five elements of the Universe and the Earth and get abundant energy from the Universe. Later, I chant the Lotus Sutra and recite the Odaimoku in the main hall for you and your ancestors.

Our temple is temporarily closed for mass services, but I accept individual members who are in good health to visit the sanctuary and pray on their own. I also conduct memorial services for groups of less than ten and do counseling over the telephone or e-mail.

May good health be with you!

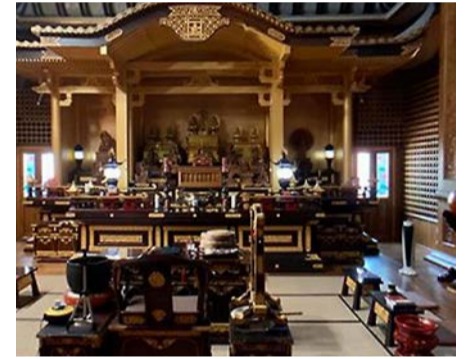
**Southeast Asia Sanghas**  
Rev. Ervinna Myoufu

### Pandemic in Southeast Asia

With the COVID-19 pandemic, all propagation activities in Southeast Asia have come to a stop. Services are now only conducted online.

Rev. Kenin Ito is in charge of the Ichinenji Temple in Penang and the other temples in Malaysia and Singapore. I take care of Rengeji Temple in Jakarta and Kaigoji Temple in Surabaya, both in Indonesia. I also usually go to Taiwan and Sri Lanka to conduct services. However, everything is at a standstill at the moment.

I pray that the pandemic is under control soon. Namu Myoho Renge Kyo.



# A THOUSAND TIMES DHARANIS

From *Nichiren Shu Shimibun*

The Lotus Sutra consists of 28 chapters. In the 26th chapter, “Dharanis,” the divine spells, transliterated from those in Sanskrit, such as “Ani, mani, manei, mamanei...,” are uttered by the two sage bodhisattvas, two heavenly kings and ten female raksasa demons, and Hariti. They all took an oath to the Buddha saying, “We will protect those who keep, read, and recite this sutra and act according to it so that they may be peaceful, and that poison taken by them may be neutralized.” It has been commonly believed that utterance of the dharanis would remove an obstacle and lead us in receiving a blessing.

In Nichiren Shu, when performing *kito* prayers, special blessing rituals, the *shuhosshi*, who have completed the rigorous 100-day ascetic practice, read the Lotus Sutra and the dharanis three times, followed by reciting the essential part of the sutra while flourishing *bokken*, wooden swords, to make prayers for the supplicants.



Nichiren Shu priests gather to recite dharanis a thousand times at Kyooji Temple in Sakai, Osaka.

A book called *Customs of the Eastern Capital* has been highly regarded as historical material, because it depicts annual events held in shrines and temples around Edo area during the Edo period. It shows that *kito* services,

in which the dharanis were recited a thousand times, were held in many Nichiren Shu temples in the area, and huge numbers of followers came together to the temples to receive the special *kito* prayers.

“A thousand times dharanis” is presumed to have originated in the Tenmon Persecution. In July of the fifth year of Tenmon period, 1536, monk soldiers and their supporters from the Tendai complex of Enryakuji Temple on Mt. Hiei marched in a crowd into the city of Kyoto and burned down the 21 head temples of Nichiren Shu. The Nichiren Shu head temples in Kyoto suffered devastating damage in this persecution. Nichiren Shu priests who escaped the danger took refuge in the branch temples in the city of Sakai, Osaka. Together with other priests and supporters in the temples of Sakai, they recited the dharanis a thousand times as one united body, wishing to return to Kyoto soon.

Their sincere prayers became efficacious. Six years later, the Nichiren Shu priests from the Kyoto temples were finally allowed to return to Kyoto. Since that time, it became popular to recite the dharanis a thousand times in *kito* prayers in Nichiren Shu temples.

—Translated by Rev. Sensho Komukai

## Calendar for June 2020–July 2020

**JUNE 1** Changing of Our Founder’s Robes, Founder’s Hall, Minobusan

**JUNE 15-17** Minobusan Kaibyaku-e, Commemoration Day of Nichiren Shonin Entering Minobusan

**JUNE 25** Nitcho Shonin Memorial Day

**JULY 13-16** Obon (Western Calendar)

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