

Nichiren Shu News

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NICHIREN SHU ARAGYO COMPLETION CEREMONY

By Rev. Kosei Uchida

On February 10, the completion ceremony for Aragyo, 100 days ascetic training, was held at Nakayama Hokekyoji Temple in Chiba Prefecture. Aragyo has not been held for the past three years due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Those who entered Aragyo with expectations and anxiety on November 1 last year would be sure to return from the training with physical and mental strength.

The weather forecast reported that it would be snowy early in the morning. Just before 6:00 a.m., when the Zuimon gate was opened, people waiting for the return of the trainees gathered around the gate. Upon hearing the loud but hoarse voices chanting the Odaimoku and the sound of a fan drum from within the Aragyo-do Hall, the people in the crowd were clearly troubled.

Why were the voices of the trainees so husky? It was because they had been chanting the Lotus Sutra aloud and performing water purification practice for 100 consecutive days.



The 115 priests, upon completing the strenuous 100 days of Aragyo training, chanting the Lotus Sutra in the completion ceremony held at Hokekyoji Temple.

During the 100 days, the trainees were not allowed to cut their hair or shave their beards. Because they were so short on sleep that there was a risk that they could hurt themselves. As the images show, they came out with long, untrimmed hair and beards.

Seeing the priests walking out of the gate, some devotees could not stop shedding tears, while others reached out

and pulled at their robes out of respect and gratefulness.

One of the principal mentors, Rev. Kosen Wakamatsu, addressed the crowd at the end of the completion ceremony, "I cannot express enough thanks to those responsible for organizing Aragyo training for the first time in three years. These 115 priests were able to stand up to the harsh training. During the 100

days, they strenuously chanted the Lotus Sutra not only for themselves but also for all Nichiren Shu devotees. I am excited and look forward to making great efforts in spreading the Odaimoku and the Lotus Sutra."

One priest who completed the Aragyo for the first time in his life said, "This was the utmost ascetic practice for conquering weak self. I am happy to have barely completed the practice with my life." Another commented, "For 100 days, I have been worried about my temple and family. Being alone, I have often asked myself, 'Why do I have to do such a hard practice? I did not run away, mainly because my fellow priests supported and encouraged me a lot. I express my heartfelt thanks to them and to my family who took care of the temple during the 100 days.'"

We are facing a mountain of difficult problems in the world. Hopefully, those who completed this Aragyo ascetic practice will be able to help find the keys to a solution through their sincere prayer with the light of the Odaimoku and the Lotus Sutra.



Following their training, the priests offering a kito blessing.



A priest finds time to re-connect with his family and supporters.



Priests with fan drums lead processions around the Hokekyoji area.

Takenoshita Josho-in Temple

By Rev. Kosei Uchida

This year marks the 750th anniversary of our Founder Nichiren Shonin entering Minobusan.

In 1274, when Nichiren Shonin was 53 years old, he decided to leave Kamakura for Minobusan. He departed on May 12 and arrived on May 17. It took him six days to complete the journey. At that time, the only means of transportation were either on foot or on horseback. He moved away from the lively city of Kamakura, going over hills and valleys and following a road running along the banks of a river.

Totally exhausted from the trip, he stayed at a small and quiet post town. He recalled the long and arduous journey, stating, "The river flows fast like shooting arrows. Big stones are being carried away so often by the strong current that the passage of people and horses was impossible. A boat is listing dangerously like paper submerged under water. The ongoing road is as narrow as a straw rope. The trees form a dense thicket."

To commemorate this 750th anniversary, a memorial service is held at historically important points Nichiren Shonin passed on his way to entering

Minobusan. He stayed at a small hut in Takenoshita village on May 13 thanks to Shigehachi Suzuki, who pleasantly offered him accommodations. In token of his gratitude, Nichiren Shonin wrote the Great Mandala for Suzuki.

On February 6, 2023, the 750th memorial service was solemnly held in Josho-in Temple to remember the days of Nichiren Shonin entering Minobusan.

Nichiren Shonin stopped by this place three times. The first was when he was on the way in his move from Kamakura to Minobusan on May 13, 1274. The second time was on September 8, 1282, when he

left Minobusan to go to a hot spring in Hitachi Province. And finally, on October 22, 1282, as his ashes were carried for burial at Minobusan after he passed away at Ikegami.

The Suzuki Family, who preserved this place for generations since Nichiren Shonin stayed, collected alms to establish a temple. Now a temple called Josho-in Temple of the Hokke Shu Sect stands with a fine lookout halfway up the hill of Ashigara Province, Kanagawa Prefecture.

Please pay a visit to the roads and places where Nichiren Shonin walked some 750 years ago.



A service held inside Josho-in Temple.



Entrance and stairs leading to the temple.



Statue of Nichiren Shonin at the temple.



Commemorative photo taken by the main hall.

REMEMBERING REVEREND SHIMA

By Sandra Seki

Rev. Keiryu Shima, a founding member and long-time editor of *Nichiren Shu News*, passed away on January 26, 2023, at the age of 87. He had been fighting a battle with cancer for the past decade.

I was first introduced to Rev. Shima more than 46 years ago when plans to publish a Nichiren Shu English newspaper came up. The staff, headed by Rev. Senchu Murano, included Rev. Kyotsu Hori and several notable priests who had some knowledge of English. Rev. Shima was one of the first members. I had absolutely no knowledge of journalism or writing articles for a newspaper, especially one that dealt with Nichiren Shonin's teachings and the Lotus Sutra. The purpose of the Nichiren Shu News was to spread and propagate Nichiren Shu Buddhism throughout the world.

The first issue of the newspaper was published on October 13, 1976, introducing the life of Nichiren Shonin and the Writings of Nichiren Shonin. It was also a project leading up to

the grand celebration of the 700th anniversary of the passing of Nichiren Shonin in 1981. *Nichiren Shu News* was developed and published for the members of every sangha and temple overseas, for the unity of all of the followers of Nichiren Shonin.

Through his 14 years of experience working as a reporter for the *Mainichi Newspaper*, English edition, Rev. Shima gave advice to the staff on how to select articles, develop layouts, and publish an interesting and worthy newspaper.

After Rev. Kyotsu Hori retired, Rev. Shima became the managing editor of *Nichiren Shu News* in August 1991. Though he was busy with daily work as head priest of Jikoji Temple in Suginami-ku, Tokyo, he volunteered to be the chief instructor of many Japan-U.S. Youth Exchange Programs sponsored by the Shumuin. The exchange program brought together youths from Japan and the U.S. and introduced them to the Lotus Sutra and its significance. The translated sutras were read both in English and Japanese bringing the participants together.

Rev. Shima was also an active leader at his temple, hosting Shingyo Kai, chanting the Odaimoku, on the first of every month. He would also read the Japanese Nichiren Shu Shimbun with them, explaining parts that were difficult. This created a strong bond between him and the members.

Late in 2009, Rev. Shima came to me and asked if I could take over as managing editor. I immediately refused and told him I couldn't take on such a huge responsibility. Rev. Shima said, "You must try first before giving up so quickly! I will always assist you and give you advice." I finally gave in and became editor in February 2010. I would always ask him for advice and ideas for making the newspaper better, and he would always be there for me. His guidance and support made a huge difference.

After retiring from the paper, Rev. Shima traveled to many countries visiting World Heritage sites with his wife. Sometimes, he would call me from an international destination just to describe what he had seen and share his impression. His curiosity and eagerness



Rev. Keiryu Shima played a central role as the editor of *Nichiren Shu News*.

to see the 'real thing' for himself was always amazing!

I can never thank Rev. Shima enough for everything he taught me. He was such a strong and impressive leader, and he was a great asset for Nichiren Shu. He will be missed by all his fans both in Japan and around the world!

THE LIFE AND TIMES OF NICHIREN SHU NEWS AND WORKING WITH REVEREND SHIMA

By Rev. Kanjo Bassett

One of the last things that Rev. Shima said to me was about the future of Nichiren Shu News. He said, "Don't think of the Nichiren Shu News format (a four-page issue that's published six times a year) is sacred. We threw a lot of ideas on the wall creating it, and that's what stuck. Do whatever needs to be done to keep it, and yourselves, going." Words of wisdom from one who established *Nichiren Shu News* and was its heart and soul for more than 30 years. That didn't mean he was nice or easy to work with. Not by a long shot. Chief priests from big temples are by nature a prickly bunch, but Rev. Shima had a previous career as a journalist at

the *Mainichi Newspaper*, one of Japan's major newspapers (back when it was a real paper instead of the SGI mouthpiece that it would later become as Rev. Shima often used to joke). It gave him a unique double edge. When Rev. Shima retired as editor with Sandra Seki taking the role, I was hired part time with the responsibility of production management which is a nice-sounding title for keeping the show running with an ever-shrinking production budget. That meant hiring new and cheaper vendors for printing, layout, and design. This did not go well. Rev. Shima picked apart and criticized every little typographic and design detail. The fonts were wrong, the sizes were wrong, the colors were wrong.

Every editorial committee meeting devolved into a persistent stream of heated criticism. Things finally came to a head at a production staff meeting with special attendance from Rev. Genichi Oikawa, who was the manger of the International Section. Rev. Oikawa was there to figure out what the heck was going on. After the chaotic meeting he told me, "I'm doubling your pay." Everything was resolved when we found and started working with our current designer. Rev. Shima loved the quality, and he never complained again after that. I think my favorite experience with Rev. Shima was just before his full retirement from the *Nichiren Shu News* editorial staff. A colleague of his,

Rev. Zensho Hagiwara, was publishing a book on Gensei Shonin, commemorating the 350th anniversary of Gensei's death. Rev. Shima drove me to Rev. Hagiwara's temple and helped oil the interview, keeping things on track when Rev. Hagiwara's train of thought wandered off the rails, and helped get good pictures for the article. It turned out to be a good article thanks to Rev. Shima's quiet persuasion and determination. The mark of a real newspaper man. He cared deeply about getting things right with quality in every detail, and he wasn't afraid to mince words when necessary for the job. A rare quality, sorely missed. I'm glad to have known that side of him. Gassho Rev. Shima, wherever you are.



Rev. Shima is, in many ways, responsible for what *Nichiren Shu News* is today. His vision for the paper still guides our work, and his relentless criticism on design ushered in a whole new look and feel for the paper.



Rev. Keiryu Shima (right) and Rev. Zensho Hagiwara (left) at Ryuzoji Temple in Hiratsuka, Kanagawa on the day that we conducted our interview with Rev. Hagiwara about his book on Gensei Shonin.

NATIONAL MONUMENT FOR THE WORLD WAR II JAPANESE-AMERICAN INCARCERATION

By Rev. Myokei Caine-Barrett

Most people in the U.S. have little understanding of the relationship that Japan and the U.S. have shared over centuries. Many are unfamiliar with Japanese immigration and the history of various anti-Asian government policies in the years prior to World War II. Just about everyone is aware of December 7, 1941, the day that Japan bombed Pearl Harbor. The feelings engendered by that act continue to color the perceptions and behaviors of many individuals in the U.S., especially those who were directly involved in World War II. The internment camps and the resulting imprisonment of people of Japanese descent simply by virtue of ancestry were a result of those perceptions. The majority of those incarcerated were actually U.S. citizens who had committed no crimes.



Rev. Duncan Ryuken Williams, a Soto Zen priest of British and Japanese ancestry, published *American Sutra: A Story of Faith and Freedom in the Second World War* in 2020. This book is “the first comprehensive study of the history of Buddhism in the incarceration of Japanese-Americans during the Pacific War.” In this groundbreaking book, Williams explored personal accounts and conducted individual interviews and extensive research of previously unknown archives, and he revealed how, even as they were stripped of their homes and imprisoned in camps, Japanese-American Buddhists launched one of the most inspiring defenses of religious freedom

in U.S. history, insisting that people could be both Buddhist and American.

Williams continued his efforts to explore this history and was responsible for oversight of a major collaborative effort entitled “Irei: National Monument for the WWII Japanese American Incarceration.” The multi-faceted project focused on remembering people of Japanese ancestry from U.S. history. The primary focus is a comprehensive list of more than 125,000 names of every person of Japanese ancestry incarcerated during World War II. This list of names has been carefully checked for spelling accuracy and duplications. The list will be shared with the public by way of three distinct interlinking elements: a sacred book of names (慰霊帳 *Ireicho*), an online archive (慰霊蔵 *Ireizo*), and light sculptures (慰霊碑 *Ireihi*).

In September 2022, Rev. Shoda Kanai of Kannon Temple of Nevada and Rev. Myokei Caine-Barrett of Houston Myoken-ji were invited to participate in the unveiling and grand opening of this exhibit. We joined camp survivors and descendants from the 75 internment sites and a host of religious clergy in Los Angeles’ Little Tokyo for the consecration and installation of the *Ireicho*. Together, we walked from the historic Nishikawa Hongwanji Buddhist Temple, where Japanese-Americans boarded buses for the camps 80 years ago, to the Japanese American National Museum’s Aratani Central Hall. Each clergy member was paired with a camp



LOTUS JEWELS

I have harshly criticized the followers of Pure Land, Zen, and Shingon priests as well as the rulers of the country only because I want to correct their mistakes in order to save them from hell. Therefore, I worry about them as they persecute me only to accumulate more bad karma.

—Nichiren Shonin, *A Response to Lay Priest Takahashi, Takahashi Nyudo-dono Gohenji* (ST 187)

When we read Nichiren Shonin’s warnings that anyone who slanders the Lotus Sutra is bound for hell, we can misunderstand that he wants such people to be punished. Though his words can be harsh, Nichiren Shonin speaks from compassion. Like him, we must be careful to keep minds of compassion, especially towards those who criticize and persecute us.

—Rev. Shinkyō Warner

survivor or a descendant of a camp survivor. They carried tablets with the names of the camps as well as a small jar of soil from each camp. The procession was led by four distinguished Buddhist and Christian clergy members carrying the *Ireicho*, sacred book of names. The installation of the *Ireicho* marked the beginning of a one-year campaign to invite everyone to visit JANM and acknowledge the names of all 125,284 individuals by adding a mark from a small *hanko*, Japanese stamp/seal, under each name. This is done to ensure that each person who died in camp or did not have children is honored and remembered.

An additional benefit of gathering in the museum is the opportunity to visit with the survivors and their descendants. Survivors and descendants shared stories and pictures of their parents and

grandparents. Artifacts from various Buddhist schools are also on display.

The museum implemented a reservation system to avoid long lines in the opening weekend. Please encourage people in your circles to add a stamp in the book of names. It is vitally important to acknowledge each and every person, including those who died in the camps or who never had children, and thus do not have descendants to honor them. Here is a link to the museum’s reservation system for viewing and placing *hanko* stamps into the *Ireicho*: <https://www.janm.org/exhibits/ireicho>



The Museum has also published a YouTube video that gives a sense of the gathering.

Writings of Nichiren Shonin

By Rev. Shinkyō Warner

As part of the Nichiren Overseas Propagation and Promotion Association (NOPPA) project to revise the *Writings of Nichiren Shonin* (WONS), Volume 7 was released in February of 2023. It is now available on Amazon.

Volume 7 is the second of the two “Followers” volumes, and it contains 86 writings which present a vivid picture of life at Mt. Minobu during the last years of Nichiren’s life. We who visit Mt. Minobu today are used to arriving in comfort, seated in cars and buses, staying in welcoming accommodations with delicious food and drink, and visiting beautiful temples and shrines to pay our respects to the Lotus Sutra, Shakyamuni Buddha, and Nichiren Shonin. In the days when Nichiren lived

there, the journey to Mt. Minobu was difficult. In good weather, the roads were steep, narrow, and filled with hazards. In winter, they became even worse.

It was impossible for the community around Nichiren to support itself, so they were entirely dependent on donations brought to Mt. Minobu. While Nichiren was always grateful for any donations he received, his thank-you letters describe how tenuous their survival was at times in that harsh environment.

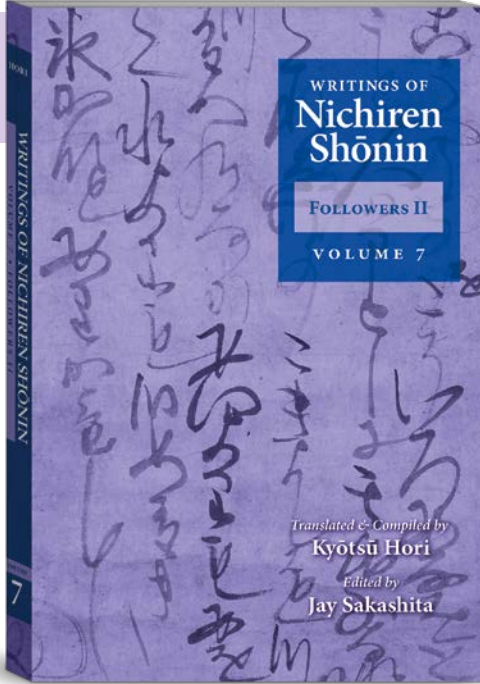
In one reply to Lord Ueno (ST 357), Nichiren explained how harsh it was. “The two-meter-deep, snow-covered mountain path, which normally has no traffic, makes it impossible for anyone to visit me here.” My “clothing [was] not thick enough to protect me against the freezing weather.” Nichiren’s food supply was gone, and he felt like he was

VOLUME SEVEN NEW SECOND EDITION

at the end of his life. After receiving Ueno’s donation, Nichiren wrote, “[I] had just made up my mind to die of hunger once and for all,” but Ueno’s gift “was like adding oil to a light that was about to burn out.”

Had it not been for those who supported Nichiren’s life on Mt. Minobu, we would not have our practice of the Wonderful Dharma today. We should be inspired by these letters to continue to support Mt. Minobu and everywhere else where people work to spread Nichiren’s faith and insight around the world.

Volume 7, completes the series. Thanks again to NOPPA for their support in this project, to the memory of Rev. Kyotsu Hori for his work in organizing these translations, and to everyone involved with making



these new volumes possible. May the merits from this work be distributed among all living beings. *Namu Myōhō Renge Kyo.*

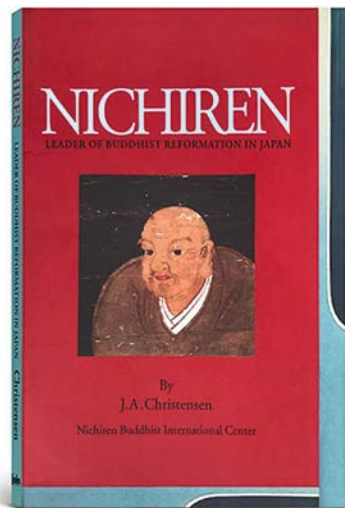


TEMPLE EVENTS

Nichiren Mission of Hawaii Rev. Shokai Kanai

Monday Night Classes

Nichiren Shonin says in *Shoho Jisso Sho*, "Without practice and learning, Buddhism will cease to exist." For over two years, we have been chanting the Lotus Sutra every Monday night on Zoom. We first practiced our chanting using the "Yohon" and later chanting from the "Daily Service Book."



Starting this year, we will be learning about Nichiren Shonin by reading *Nichiren: Leader of Buddhist Reformation in Japan* by Jack A. Christensen. You will learn about our founder and his teachings as well as the conflicts that he had with the rulers of that time.

Please join us on Mondays from 7:00 p.m. (Hawaiian Standard Time) on Zoom. If you want to get a copy of the book, please purchase it through the Nichiren Buddhist International Center (NBIC) Online Store: <https://nichiren-shu.org> — You can find it on the store's "Lotus" page under "References." Everyone is welcome to join these classes.

Nichiren Mission of Hawaii Shami Shougou Kini

Shami Training, Travel, and Exams

From November 16-20, 2022, I traveled to Japan to participate in a four-day International Shami Study Tour, which included lectures on Nichiren Shu rituals, Shomyo chanting, and visited historical places in Kamakura. Six international Shami participated in this program.

All the lectures and training were conducted in English.

Then from December 3-8, I flew to Hayward, California and stayed at the Nichiren Buddhist International Center (NBIC) to attend a series of Buddhist



lectures and to participate in entrance exams for the 2023 Shingyo Dojo, including written, oral, and chanting exams. Shami who pass these exams will be allowed to enter Shingyo Dojo, which is 35 days of intense training and lectures at Minobusan to become Nichiren Shu priests. Four Americans, including myself, and an Italian Shami were at NBIC to take the exams. We will be informed sometime soon as to whether we passed or not.

I would like to thank the Board of Directors and members of this temple for creating and funding the Education and Development Account, which is paying for my travel and training expenses as I pursue the goal of becoming a Nichiren Shu priest.

I appreciate all of the support that I have received from the members and from the temple. Thank you very much.

Honolulu Myohoji Temple Rev. Josho Yamamura

Lunar New Year Setsubun Service

Setsubun means "seasonal division" and is celebrated on February 3 each year. A special service conducted by Rev. Kyoshun Kageyama from Japan, was held to cleanse away all the evil of the former year. Setsubun has its origin in China, and the custom was introduced to Japan in the eighth century.



Seattle Enkyoji Temple Rie Ogushi Brooks

Faith and Practice Seminar

I was born in Japan, but I have never thought much about the word "faith." If I translate it into Japanese, it is a word which has a vague meaning. I realized its real and deeper meaning of the word for the first time at this seminar.

In this seminar, Rev. Cederman carefully explained the meaning of "faith" as it applies according to stages. He made it easy for us to understand through details and examples at every step. He compared other religions with the Buddhism of Nichiren Shu and pointed out the differences. He explained and asked questions to participants making sure that everyone understood.

I learned that it's not only having faith but also about how you manifest that faith. It is not only having faith in your heart or brain but also how you add your faith into your daily life that is important.

We say "arigato" which means thank you in Japanese when we express our appreciation.



We write out arigato using kanji, 有り難う. 有 means existence and 難 means difficult. Together, these two words mean that it is difficult to exist. If you do not have "有り難う" do we think that "faith" exists? If you do not balance these two, it would not connect to "faith." Rev. Cederman explained with clear step-by-step instructions how to maintain this balance.

At the end of the seminar, we were told to be "stupid." This does not have the straight meaning to be stupid, or foolish. I believe this was an example of having no desire in your heart, so as to experience pure faith. Replacing wisdom with faith, as Nichiren Shonin taught us.

While in the past I had prayed to the Buddha and to Nichiren Shonin, I am now deepening that more through faith.

I would recommend everyone to understand the meaning of "Faith."

This seminar was very meaningful for me, and it made me think about how I could add it in my daily life. Thank you very much! With Gassho.



Kannon Temple of Nevada Rev. Shoda Kanai

Buddha's Eyes

In the photo of the Buddha, are the eyes open or closed? I always ask this question to all the visitors to the temple. Some say closed, while others say open. They may look closed, but His eyes are actually open.

Many Buddha statues and images portray the same eye slits, as if He is in meditation. There is also a dot between His eyes, which represents the third eye. The third eye represents the inner view, while the two physical eyes represent the outer view. When properly eye-opened, the Buddha resides within the statue and observes all. Un-eye-opened statues are just art pieces.

With the inner eye, Buddha sees within Himself, meaning that He views the Dharma and brings forth the wisdom He found after attaining Enlightenment. The outer eyes see this physical world and all phenomena contained within. With these two eyes, the Buddha sees all especially your inner self. With His compassion, He can assist in guiding you to find the correct path.

Sometimes people listen, but most times they do not. For those who listen, the Buddha guides them to a teacher for further study and practice.

As we practice, we are also developing our Buddha eyes so that we can look into ourselves and observe our nature and adjust accordingly to further advance towards becoming a Buddha.

We are training to see past the defilements that come from the three poisons of anger, greed, and ignorance. These poisons distort the world around us, creating conditions for our suffering and for the suffering of others. Through study and practice, we are advancing our wisdom to better recognize the true nature of reality and to become more able to help others in realizing this for themselves.

Keep practicing and learning to increase the Buddha eyes within yourself.

Calendar for April – May 2023

APR 8	Hanamatsuri (Buddha's Birthday)
APR 15-18	Nakayama Hokekyoji Senbu-e (1,000 Recitations of the Lotus Sutra)
APR 27-29	Ikegami Honmonji Senbu-e (1,000 Recitations of the Lotus Sutra)
APR 28	Rikkyo Kaishu-e (Anniversary of the Founding of the Order)

MAY 12	Izu Honan-e (Ceremony commemorating the Anniversary of the Izu Persecution)
MAY 15-16	Wesak Day in Southeast Asia (Buddha's Birthday, Enlightenment, and Nirvana Observed)

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Art Director Alan Rowe

日蓮宗
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