

Myosetsuji News

ISSUE 224

FEBRUARY 1, 2020

GUIDANCE FROM SIXTY-EIGHTH HIGH PRIEST NICHINYO SHONIN

On the Occasion of the December Kosen-rufu Shodai Ceremony

On this occasion of the December Kosen-rufu Shodai Ceremony, the last Kosen-rufu Shodai Ceremony of the year, conducted here today at the Head Temple, I would like to express my heartfelt appreciation to the large number of participants in attendance.

We have only a month remaining in this year, "The Year of Courageously Advancing Forward." I imagine that the members of all chapters, based on unity between the

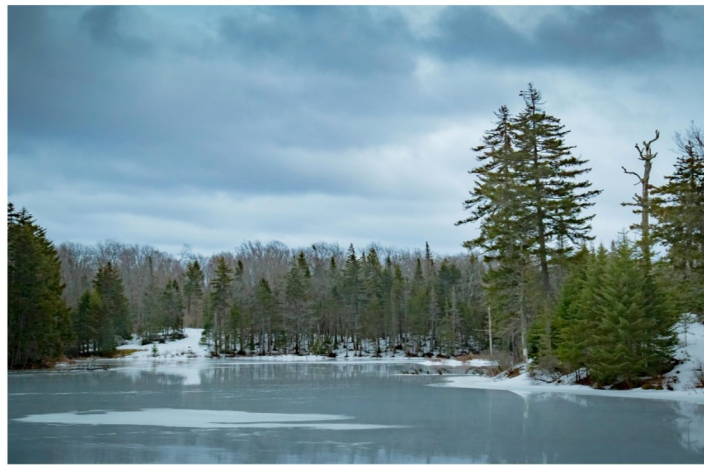
priesthood and laity in the spirit of *itai doshin*, are exerting themselves in their practice, day and night, in order to achieve this year's shakubuku goals that they pledged in front of the Gohonzon, in order to welcome

the auspicious occasion of commemorating the 800th anniversary of the advent of our Founder, Nichiren Daishonin in 2021.

The establishment of a membership of 800,000 Hokkeko believers is the vow we pledged in front of the Gohonzon. Thus, this is currently the most important goal that all chapters throughout the country must achieve at any cost.

In order to achieve this goal, we must reaffirm that each one of us has the awareness and pride as a disciple and follower of our Found-

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Gosho Quote for February 2020

Reply to Shijo Kingo **(Shijo kingo dono-gohenji)**

The Lotus Sutra states: "If, after my passing, there are good men and good women, and one among them secretly preaches the entire Lotus Sutra or a phrase of it to even one other person, then you should know that this individual, indeed, is an envoy of the Tathagata. As the Tathagata's envoy, he carries out compassionate action in his stead." A person who recites even a character or a phrase of the Lotus Sutra and also preaches it to others is an envoy of Lord Shakyamuni.

(Gosho, p. 620)

GUIDANCE FROM SIXTY-EIGHTH HIGH PRIEST NICHINYO SHONIN (CONTINUED)

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er Nichiren Daishonin. Then, we must earnestly chant Daimoku with indomitable determination, no matter what obstacles and devils may confront us. With the benefits and joy from chanting Daimoku, the members of each chapter must stand up and make concerted efforts to do shakubuku—refuting heresy and revealing the truth—following the golden words: “One’s life is insignificant while the Law is supreme. You should be willing to give your life to propagate the Law.”

The Daishonin teaches the following in the *Gosho*, *Questions and Answers between a Sage and a Foolish Man* (Shogu mondo-sho):

To begin with, in order to bestow benefit upon all people through the propagation of Buddhism, one first must have a thorough understanding of the teaching, capacity, time, country, and sequence of propagation. As for the periods [of propagation], there are the Former, Middle, and Latter Days of the Law. As for the Law, there are both Mahayana and Hinayana teachings. As for the practices, there are shoju and shakubuku. If one carries out shakubuku during the period when shoju should be practiced, this will be inappropriate. On the other hand, if one performs the practice of shoju dur-

ing the era when shakubuku must be used, this will be an offense. Thus, it is of foremost importance to know first whether the present time is for shoju or shakubuku.

The time to practice shoju is when the Lotus Sutra spreads throughout the nation and there is not a single evil teaching or master. At that time, one should withdraw to the forests and devote oneself to the practice of observing one’s mind



and the Law, carrying out the practices such as the five practices, the six practices, and the ten practices.

However, during the time of shakubuku, one should not act in this manner. When erroneous doctrines of various sects become rampant and compete against each other, gaining acclaim by taking the stance that their respective doctrines are superior to others; and when incorrect teachings are viewed as equal to the correct Law, and Mahayana and Hinayana followers fight with each other over what is correct—this is the time, above all else, to refute

these slanderers. This is the practice of shakubuku. The Lotus Sutra and Nirvana Sutra both state that if one is unaware of this principle, and is mistaken about the implementation of shoju and shakubuku, one will be far removed from receiving the benefit of attaining Buddhahood. Rather, one will fall into hell. This is also clearly stated in the interpretations provided by Tiantai and Miaole. What I mention here is critical in conducting Buddhist

practices....

(*Gosho*, p. 402)

Precisely, in the Latter Day of the Law, shakubuku is the correct method that must be used, while in the periods of the Former and Middle Days of the Law, the past shoju method was appropriate. In this passage, the Daishonin indicates how im-

portant shakubuku is for the Buddhist practitioners in the Latter Day of the Law by stating the following: “When erroneous doctrines of various sects become rampant and compete against each other, gaining acclaim by taking the stance that their respective doctrines are superior to others—this is the time, above all else, to refute these slanderers. This is the practice of shakubuku. The Lotus Sutra and Nirvana Sutra both state that if one is unaware of this principle, and is mistaken about the implementation of shoju and shakubuku, one will be far removed from receiving

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GUIDANCE FROM SIXTY-EIGHTH HIGH PRIEST NICHINYO SHONIN (*CONTINUED*)

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the benefit of attaining Buddhahood. Rather, one will fall into hell. This is also clearly stated in the interpretations provided by Tiantai and Miaole. What I mention here is critical in conducting Buddhist practices.”

He also teaches the following in the Gosho, *Letter to Nanjo Hyo'e Shichiro* (Nanjo hyo'e shichiro dono-gosho):

No matter what great merit one gains by performing good deeds; even if one transcribes the Lotus Sutra ten million times, and achieves the observation of the mind based on the principle of *ichinen sanzen* (three thousand realms in a single life-moment), should he fail to denounce the enemies of the Lotus Sutra, he will not be able to attain enlightenment. (*Gosho*, p. 322)

The Daishonin strictly warns us that no matter what good deeds one accumulates, even if one



transcribes the Lotus Sutra ten million times, and gains true comprehension of the profound principle of *ichinen sanzen*, unless one denounces the enemy of the Lotus Sutra, that is, if one does not shakubuku the enemy of the Lotus Sutra, one will fail to attain Buddhahood.

This passage strictly indicates that though you may convince yourself that you are religious and have strong faith—always devoted to the Buddhist practice, have a thorough knowledge of the Buddhist doctrines, and have mastered Buddhism, if you turn a blind eye to slanders that go against the true Law, and neither refute heresy nor do shakubuku, you will not be able to attain enlightenment. These golden words are profound in meaning. We must take them seriously with our entire body and soul, and deeply engrave them into our hearts. We should in no case forget them.

Furthermore, the Daishonin teaches the following in the same Gosho:

One may loyally serve the imperial court for ten to twenty years, but if he recognizes an enemy of the emperor and neither reports it nor personally feels enmity, all the services he has thus far offered will come to naught. Rather, he will be punished. (*ibid.* p. 323)



Even if someone is in the service of the imperial court over many years, such as 10 to 20 years, if this person knows an enemy of the master, but neither reports it to his superior nor denounces this enemy, one's long years of meritorious service will all disappear. On the contrary, this person will be treated like one who is accused of a crime.

Accordingly, if a disciple or a follower of our Founder Nichiren Daishonin, the True Buddha in the Latter Day of the Law, sees those who suffer from the poison of slander, and neither conducts shakubuku nor denounces slander, this deed will go against the intention of the Daishonin. Thus, this is not a correct way of practicing the Daishonin's Buddhism. Following the Daishonin just as he taught and devoting oneself to one's practice on the correct Buddhist path is the only way to achieve the attainment of Buddhahood in this lifetime.

The Daishonin teaches in the Gosho, *On Chanting the Daimoku of the Lotus Sutra* (Sho hokke daimoku-sho) as follows:

In the Latter Day of the Law,

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GUIDANCE FROM SIXTY-EIGHTH HIGH PRIEST NICHINYO SHONIN (CONTINUED)

there are many who do not possess the seed of Buddhahood. There are only a few who possess it. Thus, there is no doubt that the people [in the Latter Day of the Law] will fall into the evil paths. [Since they are going to fall into the evil paths one way or another,] we should strongly teach and make them listen to the Lotus Sutra and let them form a poison-drum relationship with it. Thus, now is certainly the time to create a reverse relationship by propagating the Lotus Sutra. (Gosho, p. 231)

Regarding the “poison-drum relationship,” I have repeatedly mentioned it. The poison-drum is a drum smeared with poison. It is said that when a drum smeared with poison is beaten, all those who hear the sound of the drum will instantly die, whether they wish to hear it or not. This passage uses a metaphor of beating a drum smeared with poison, to indicate that even those who neither listen

to nor take faith in the Law can eventually sever their earthly desires and attain enlightenment.

That is, all living beings inherently possess the Buddha nature. Through listening to the correct Law, forming a relationship with it, and then awakening to it and practicing it, our Buddha nature will become manifest so that we can achieve the attainment of Buddhahood. Even those with a reverse relationship, to say nothing of those with a positive relationship, will be saved in the future without fail, if they are made to listen to Nam-Myoho-Renge-Kyo of the Three Great Secret Laws.

At this time, when we will be welcoming the auspicious occasion of the 800th anniversary of the advent of our Founder Nichiren Daishonin in the year



after next, I sincerely wish that each of us will revere these golden words. Then, all members of all chapters will recognize how important shakubuku is, and devote themselves to advance their great propagation activities based on a firm determination. With these efforts, I hope that all chapters will achieve their shakubuku goals without fail so that, they will be able to formally welcome the auspicious occasion of the 800th anniversary of the advent of Nichiren Daishonin.

FAITH EXPERIENCE BY MARIA ARIADNA

Hello everyone, Happy Sunday! My name is Maria Ariadna, or Ari, for short. I came to New York to



study Business and Financial Law at Fordham in 2014, 5 years this past July, which is when I came to my first Sunday Buddhist meeting. I arrived a few minutes late and through the side doors to find a room packed with individuals all facing me and chanting in perfect unison. I felt such tremendous positive energy radiating through me. Hearing the chanting of the liturgy for the first time was a lot of information at one time and it took my brain a moment to adjust -- it's an

entirely new language with new rules for pronunciation, and slim to no margin for errors -- but no pressure. But when we reached the Daimoku -- the consistent chanting of Nam-Myo-Ho-Ren-Ge-Kyo -- I knew I had found what I needed, what I was looking for: my path.

I was born in Mar del Plata, Argentina, a surf town off the coast of Buenos Aires, in 1993. My mother and I moved to Buenos Aires, a city much like New York, and then to Miami, Florida in

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FAITH EXPERIENCE BY MARIA ARIADNA (CONTINUED)

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2000. I still remember being in my third-grade class when the teacher received a call from the main office and proceeded to turn on the TV to show the news of the Twin Towers on 9/11. Fast forward 18 years to the day and time the planes were crashing into the Towers, and I found myself at the Priest's Residence at our Temple in Flushing, taking part in my Gojukai ceremony, accepting membership as a Nichiren Shoshu Buddhist. And so, a day that had always been a day of such sadness was transformed into the day that the seed of happiness was planted in my life. I had the biggest smile on my face during the entire ceremony and teared up at the end.

Later that morning, I went to the home of another Buddhist member who allowed me some time alone with her Gohonzon (our object of worship in our practice) while she went to run some errands and I knelt down and bawled my eyes out after chanting Nam-Myoho-Renge-Kyo for 20 minutes straight. I apologized to the Gohonzon for not having awoken to the obvious earlier and I thanked the Gohonzon for the moment I was living and the answer

to the spiritual question that I had been previously asking during all of 2019. My question was simple: what was the most correct way of connecting to the divine? I knew that if I answered that question, then the larger questions regarding where I belonged and what I was meant to do with my life would be answered.

At the beginning of that year, on New Year's Day 2019, I had gone up to the rooftop of my old apartment building and I said, "Universe, I am open to whatever you have for me. Show me the light and I will follow it." I later learned about Ayurveda (an ancient holistic health system) and started being more mindful of what I ate and how I started my day. I tried various meditation techniques, mantras, apps, and prayed in various ways every day. I started praying with candles and felt the force increase, but still felt like I was only scraping the surface.

But on 9/11/2019, when I knelt down before Gohonzon, I knew I was home, I had reached the spiritual destination that I was searching for. But this was not even the first time that I had heard about Buddhism; I had studied religions and I would always skim over Buddhism because it came so naturally to me, and I always agreed with everything it said that I didn't take the time to really learn about it -- I only knew what I needed just to pass my school exams.

In fact, when people

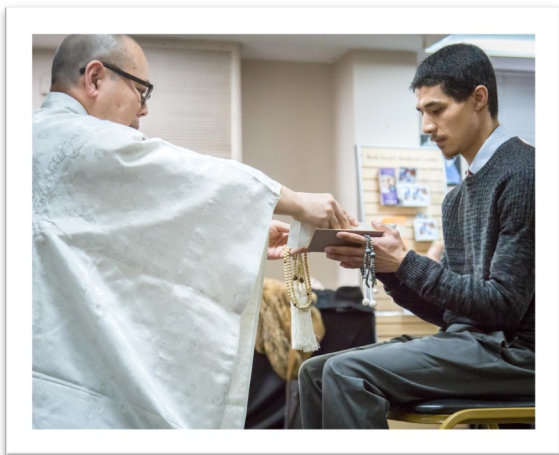


asked me what my religion was, I would always say, "Catholic, but I'm spiritual and have practiced Reiki, I'm also a little Buddhist..." But I had never studied Buddhism -- the few things I had bothered to read connected with me so easily that without any actual knowledge about what it meant to be a Buddhist, I was telling people I was a little Buddhist already.

Even before coming to New York 5 years ago, I was going to churches and wanting to spend my time there in a posture of prayer, yet no one else I saw was doing this. I thought it was odd to not be in a posture of prayer in a house of worship and of prayer. I was connected to Catholicism because my great grandma would pray with me every evening, so in 2019 I already knew I wanted to pray every day and every night. But I was really inconsistent.

Later in the year, while watching a TV show that featured Ramadan, an Instagram filter that said "Happy Ramadan" alerted me to the fact that Ramadan was to begin 3 hours later. I took it as a sign and an opportunity. I already did the girls' basketball and flag

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FAITH EXPERIENCE BY MARIA ARIADNA (CONTINUED)

(Continued from page 5)

football teams' conditioning, so I thought this was the religious equivalent -- no eating or drinking from sun up to sun down and prayer 5 times a day during each of the 5 movements of the sun. It was nearly impossible to keep up, but by the end of the month, praying every morning and evening was easy and natural.

In hindsight, it seems that as I opened myself to the universe to bring me the answers I was looking for, my body naturally adjusted to the practice that my mind knows now. Even after connecting to Nam - Myo - Ho - Ren - Ge - Kyo after my first temple visit, once I was home alone, I stopped chanting. I felt overwhelmed by my space, my home didn't feel right and my personal problems were overwhelming. So, I stopped chanting and attending meetings.

It wasn't until I was left with no shelter, no income, nor options that the opportunity to cat-sit for Inés Pandelli while she went on



Tozan came up. She invited me to her home to go over details and for a Buddhist meeting just 4 days before she left for the Tozan pilgrimage to visit the Head Temple in Japan. At the meeting, I met two members from Trinidad, one of whom, Jacqueline was celebrating her birthday on the 11th. I mentioned that I had a pitch meeting that very same day and having heard this, Inés arranged so that I would have my Gojukai ceremony in time for my meeting. That morning of the 11th, Jacqueline was also there, and she gifted me the liturgy I use today.

I've chanted every day since. After Inés came back from Tozan, practicing alongside her helped me develop a consistent practice. Whenever I had a question about the practice or the religion, Inés shared her experience and her study materials that she's collected over the years. Since she has been a practicing Buddhist for 32 years, I could not have asked for a better guide into the practice.

The first week I learned the pronunciation of the liturgy and I was able to chant the first and last parts by heart by the end of the second week. I chant today every morning and every evening, and every day this January I've done 30 to 60 minutes of consistent chanting of Nam-Myo-Ho-Ren-Ge-Kyo. I feel the difference when I don't practice. Even my relationship with my mom has changed drastically for the better; my anxiety has gone down; in short, the path that I'm supposed to follow is being illuminated and the doors are opening to the possibilities.



My experience is one of open communication with the universe. I asked for the right way to practice and so I was prepared for and then introduced to the right practice. All my opinions about how the world works have been confirmed by Buddhism. The more I learn, the more that I agree with. The more I learn, the more I want to know more.

It has been four months since my Gojukai ceremony, and I could tell you unique experiences from every single day since. Instead of telling you all the INCREDIBLE, MIND-BLOWING CONNECTIONS happening quite literally CONSTANTLY around me, let me tell you how it feels, how I feel. For the first time in my life, I feel clear. I feel awake. I feel free. And for this, and for all the connections, all the synchronicities, all the signs of the universe reassuring me, as well as for all the obstacles and devils that I encounter as I strengthen my practice, I am so very grateful. Keep chanting. No matter what, keep chanting. Thank you!

Manhattan Introductory Meeting
215 West 98th St. #3B (between Amsterdam Ave & Broadway)

Manhattan Saturday Evening Gongyo
1214 Fifth Ave. Apt. PHD New York, NY 10029 (Entrance on East 102nd St)

Sunday Ceremonies
310 Greenwich St. - 2nd fl Community Room (between Duane and Jay Streets)
the closest subway stop is the Chambers St. Station for the 1, 2 & 3 trains

Myosetsuji Temple February 2020

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
						1 Gongyo 10 AM Manhattan Gongyo 5:00 PM
2 Kosen-rufu Chanting 10 AM Children's Meeting 12 PM (310 Greenwich Street)	3 Gongyo 7:30 AM	4 Gongyo 7:30 AM	5 Gongyo 7:30 AM Local Meeting	6 Gongyo 7:30 AM	7 Gongyo 7:30 AM Intro Mtg 7:00 PM 1214 Fifth Ave. Apt. PHD	8 Gongyo 10 AM Manhattan Gongyo 5:00 PM
9 Oko Ceremony 9 AM & 11 AM (there will be 2 Oko Ceremonies - you may attend either, but not both) Support Staff Meeting 12:30 PM (310 Greenwich Street)	10 Gongyo 7:30 AM	11 Gongyo 7:30 AM	12 Gongyo 7:30 AM Local Meeting	13 Gongyo 7:30 AM	14 Gongyo 7:30 AM	15 Gongyo 10 AM Manhattan Gongyo 5:00 PM
16 Otanjo-e Ceremony 10 AM (Nichiren Daishonin's Birthday) (310 Greenwich Street)	17 Gongyo 10:00 AM	18 Gongyo 7:30 AM	19 Gongyo 7:30 AM Local Meeting	20 Gongyo 7:30 AM	21 Gongyo 7:30 AM Intro Mtg 7:00 PM 215 West 98th St. Apt 3B	22 Gongyo 10 AM Manhattan Gongyo 5:00 PM
23 Group Memorial & Introductory Meeting 10 AM (310 Greenwich Street) Youth Meeting 12:00 PM	24 Gongyo 7:30 AM	25 Gongyo 7:30 AM	26 Gongyo 7:30 AM Local Meeting	27 Gongyo 7:30 AM	28 Gongyo 7:30 AM	29 Gongyo 10 AM Manhattan Gongyo 5:00 PM

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