NICHIREN SHOSHU TEMPLE
FOR
THE NORTHEASTERN UNITED STATES, EAST CANADA AND TRINIDAD & TOBAGO

Myosetsuji News

ISSUE 193 JULY 1, 2017

GUIDANCE FROM SIXTY-EIGHTH HIGH PRIEST NICHINYO SHONIN

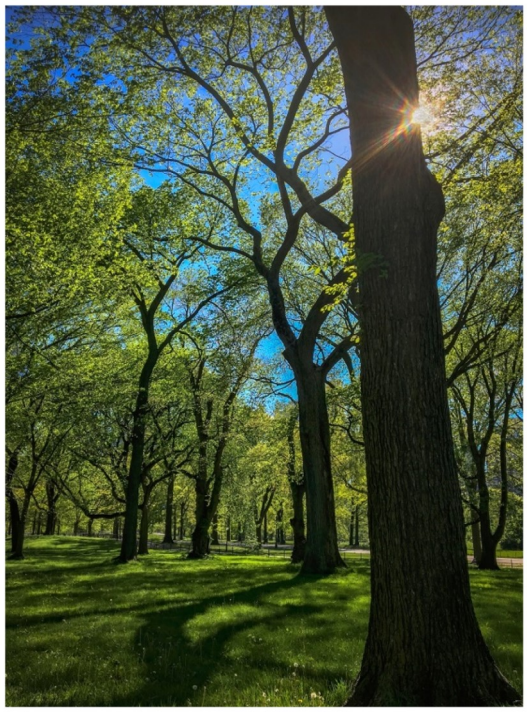
On the Occasion of the May Kōsen-rufu Shōdai Ceremony

On this occasion of the May Kōsen-rufu Shōdai Ceremony, conducted here today at the Head Temple, I would like to express my heartfelt appreciation to the large number of participants in attendance.

The month of May already has begun. I imagine both the priesthood and laity of each chapter have united in the spirit of *itai dōshin*, and are devoting themselves to their practice, day and night, aiming toward this year's shakubuku goals.

Shakubuku is the supreme Buddhist practice, which was established by our Founder Nichiren Daishonin, the True Buddha in the Latter Day of the Law. Shakubuku is the correct and best way to save all living beings in the Latter Day of the Law.

Today, Nichiren Shoshu is powerfully advancing, aiming toward our goal—to achieve a membership of 800,000 Hokkeko believers by 2021, the 800th anniversary of the advent of our Founder Nichiren Daishonin. In the challenge to achieve kōsen-rufu, it is not what you say but what you do that counts. Every member of each chapter must unite as one and do shakubuku in the spirit of *itai dōshin*.



"The Parable of the Poisoned Arrow" is one of the most famous Buddhist parables. It is contained in the Collection of Medium-Length Agama Sutras *(Chū-agon-kyō)*.

You probably know this story. In simple terms, it goes as follows:

One of Shakyamuni's disciples begged his master to answer various questions: "Is this world everlasting? Or is it in flux? Will the world end? Is the Buddha still existing after his passing?" Shakyamuni did not answer these questions in a straightforward way. Instead, he responded by saying, "Suppose a man is wounded by a poisoned arrow [and people bring him to a surgeon]. Suppose the man should say, 'I will not let this arrow be taken out until I know what sort of a person shot me. What is the name of the person? Was the person tall or short? Was the person a townsman or a villager? What is this

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Gosho Quote for July 2017

Reply to Utsubusa Nyōbō

(Utsubusa nyōbō gohenji)

Let me briefly describe the virtues of Myoho-Renge-Kyo. The five characters of Myoho-Renge-Kyo can change evil into good, just like poison changing into medicine. Pristine Spring is so named because in this spring, stone can change into treasure. In the same manner, these five characters are able to change common mortals into Buddhas.

(Gosho, p.1492)

Guidance from Sixty-Eighth High Priest Nichinyo Shonin *(Continued)*

(Continued from page 1)

arrow made out of? What is the name of the doctor who will examine me?' And, if he refuses to allow the arrow to be removed before all of these questions are answered, this person will die. What is most important is first to remove the poisoned arrow and provide first aid."

This parable warns us that we tend to postpone what we need to place emphasis on now. Instead, we focus our eyes on other issues. In other words, it is essential that we know what is most important right now.

What we must accomplish now, by any means, is for all the chapters to achieve their shakubuku goals, which they vowed to accomplish in front of the Gohonzon. Then, with these achievements, we should welcome the 800th anniversary of the advent of our Founder Nichiren Daishonin in 2021.

In the Gosho, *Attaining Enlightenment at the Initial Stage of Faith through the Lotus Sutra* (Hokke shoshin Jōbutsu-shō) the Daishonin teaches:

If they hear the Lotus Sutra, which enables people to attain Buddhahood, this [encounter] becomes the seed [of Buddhahood] for them, and they eventually will attain enlightenment without fail. Therefore, Tiantai and Miaole follow this notion and expound [in their commentaries] that one should tirelessly teach the Lotus Sutra. It is like those who falter and fall to the ground, but are able to use that very ground to push themselves up to stand again. In the same way, even if they descend into hell, they will rise again before long and attain Buddhahood. The people in the Latter Day of the Law will definitely fall into hell as a result of turning their backs on the Lotus Sutra. In any case, one should strongly teach and make people listen to the teachings of the Lotus Sutra. Those who follow and take faith in it will be able to attain enlightenment, and even those who slander it will likewise attain Buddhahood in the end through the poison-drum relationship. (*Gosho*, p. 1316)

"The poison-drum relationship" is a metaphor expounded in the Nirvana Sutra. It is said that when a drum smeared with deadly poison is beaten, all those who hear the sound of the drum will instantly die. The poison-drum relationship also is called a reverse relationship. Teaching and making a slanderer listen to the teachings of the Lotus Sutra corresponds to forming a relationship with true Buddhism, which will be the cause for the attainment of Buddhahood for the slanderer.

Today, the priesthood and laity of Nichiren Shoshu are making concerted efforts, and the members of each chapter are moving forward, aiming toward our goal—to achieve a membership of 800,000 Hokkeko believers. At this time, I believe that it is essential for each of us to understand the significance of the poison-drum relationship. Then, we should feel certain that now, in the Latter Day of the Law, Myoho-Renge-Kyo of sowing the seed of the true cause is the great Law that can lead both those with positive and reverse relationships to the direct path of attaining Buddhahood. With this firm belief, we must devote ourselves to do shakubuku more than ever.

I sincerely pray for your further endeavors in your practice.

Faith Experience by Yukiko Perez

Hello everyone. My name is Yukiko Perez and I am from Westchester.

Many might consider my experience as "unusual," but today I would like to give my experience on how I've had a change of heart through the events that has happened to my life in recent years.

3 years ago my kids and I went back to Japan for the summer and as soon as we got back to NY, my husband confessed that he wanted a divorce. At first I brushed it off thinking it was his usual spur of the moment thoughts, but this time he actually packed his belongings and left.

I felt betrayed and livid as to why he waited until we came back to NY to tell me this. Tears kept coming as I also felt that I had let my children down.

I wanted to go back to Japan with my children, but they wanted to stay in NY. I felt a lot of pressure in what seemed as a dead-end situation.

I called my family in Japan to explain my situation and they said to me, "Everything will be okay because you have the Gohonzon and all you need to do is pray. This practice is not about the other person, but yourself. You will get through this." With their words of encouragement, I started chanting for 2-3 hours a day. However, whenever I would see my husband, anger and frustration took over causing arguments and I would often blame him for being in the situation that we were in at the time. As I continued to chant, I was able to have a calm state of mind and I was able to accept my own personal flaws.

Our Chief Priest, Rev. Takikawa's advice to me was to continue my practice and pray for myself to act in a way that I would not regret in the future.

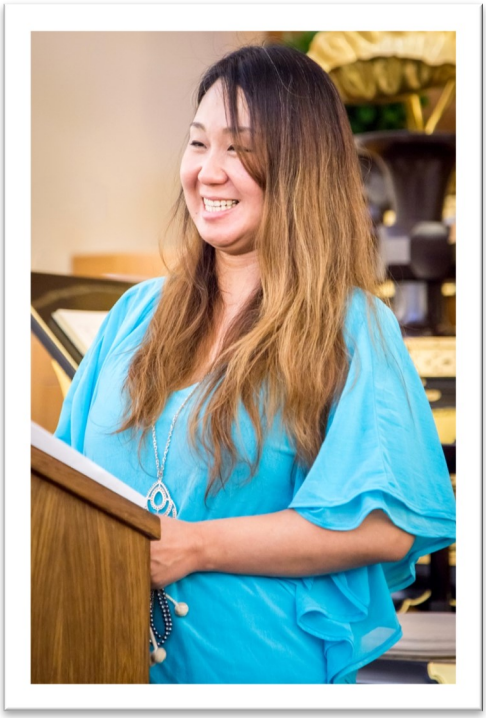
I continued with my practice and chanting and visited the temple as much as possible. For about half a year We were running short on finances and I would soon have to get a job to support myself and my children. Due to my lack of experience and never having a job in the states, I was very insecure and very concerned about getting a job.

I constantly prayed for a job where I could use my skills and to make others happy. I have always had an interest in decorating cakes and I was able to get a job where I got to do just that. Now I have been given a lot of responsibilities at the bakery where I work and I enjoy my job very much. I am very thankful for this job and to the Gohonzon for granting me this opportunity.

As for my relationship with my husband, things had gone downhill. One day my son came to me and said that he had something to tell me.

At that moment, I knew that my husband had had a child with another woman. This was something I was afraid of happening. My son saw text messages between my husband and another woman mistakenly appear on his phone. I asked my husband about this, but of course, he denied it.

One of the main reasons why I was so upset about this was because



even though I have 2 sons, I also wanted a daughter. About 10 years ago, due to Hysteromyoma, I had to undergo surgery and have my uterus removed. As somebody who knew how I felt and knew what I went through, I could not believe that my husband would do this to me.

I called my sister in Japan and told her that everything was over. Her reply was simply "It is not." She told me that it is not about my husband but my karma and that I needed to put my all into my practice and to continue chanting.

As I continued chanting, I started to appreciate my husband's existence. It is because of him that I am able to continue my practice and strengthen my faith. My husband once had faith in Nichiren Shoshu Buddhism, but I realized that my actions were what caused him to distance himself and eventually stop his practice.

2 years after my husband asked for a divorce, I made a promise that I would make a pilgrimage to our Head Temple at the foot of Mt. Fuji in Ja-

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Faith Experience by Yukiko Perez *(Continued)*

(Continued from page 3)

pan to pray to the Dai-Gohonzon, the source of all Gohonzons. During the summer of last year, I was able to keep that promise and I was able to make a trip back to Japan with my children.

My children and I were able to go to the Head Temple. My appreciation for my family had deepened even more as we left Japan once again.

After visiting the Head Temple, you will usually hear experiences of people's lives changing drastically for the better. But, even after being back in NY for a couple of months, I did not notice any changes. I was filled with frustration and started praying that my relationship with my husband would end.

One day while talking to my husband, one thing led to another and he yelled at me saying, "I don't ever lie. Don't call me a liar!"

After that statement, I asked him this question, "I am going to ask you this. Do you have any other children?" With the statement he made earlier, he had no choice but to give me the truth and he answered "yes." This was the very first time he admitted to having another child. I'm sure my husband expected me to act out with complete rage, but even to my own surprise, I was very content with him telling me the truth that my sons now had another sibling. I really wanted to meet this baby. There was no anger what so ever, just pure happiness and the minute I met her I fell in love with her. Also, the baby was a girl and I could not believe that my sons now had a sister. This is something I learned later on, that my sons had already met their little sister and they felt very guilty for hiding this from me. Now, we have the baby visit our home from time to time and she is just the cutest little girl.

Since then, the fights between my husband and I have decreased and we are even able to joke around with each other again. What my husband did was wrong and it may be hard for outsiders to understand. We are no longer together but I wish his happiness and hope that we can chant together again.

With this experience, I believe that I was able to take a step back, reevaluate myself and better myself. With this practice and faith, even in the worst situations, you are able to find happiness and be content.

People may have different views about my experience, but I believe that the change of heart that I was able to experience was a true benefit and I wanted to share this with you all.

There has to be a reason behind me staying in NY. I will continue my faith and practices for Kosen-rufu and continue to Shakubuku others.

Thank you.

Faith Experience by Susanna Kunkel

During my first year of consistently practicing this True Buddhism, the concept of "changing poison into medicine" had a profound impact on me. As I continued to chant, I started seeing myself and my life more clearly. While facing my Gohonzon, it became clear to me that it's as if I had been throwing all my garbage out the kitchen window into the garden, and wondering why it stinks so much! My victim mentality shut me off from the realization of cause and effect that Buddhism teaches. While the "stench" in my life seemed overwhelming, the concept of turning poison into medicine gave me great hope. It's as if I could see the stinking garbage becoming fertilizer with rich nutrients for beautiful flowers to grow. It wasn't that I had to run away from the garbage, or have it removed by someone else. The power of the Gohonzon was changing the negativity in my life into positivity and hope.

Our Chief Priest at the time told us the Chinese parable about the farmer and his horse which really helped me change how I looked at things. If

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Faith Experience by Susanna Kunkel *(continued)*

(Continued from page 4)

you'll allow me, here's a short version of it:

A farmer and his son had a beloved stallion who helped the family earn a living. One day, the horse ran away and their neighbors exclaimed, "Your horse ran away, what terrible luck!" The farmer replied, "Maybe so, maybe not. We'll see."

A few days later, the horse returned home, leading a few wild mares, as well, back to the farm. The neighbors shouted out, "Your horse has returned, and brought several horses home with him. What great luck!" The farmer replied, "Maybe so, maybe not. We'll see."

Later that week, the farmer's son was trying to break one of the mares and she threw him to the ground, breaking his leg. The villagers cried, "Your son broke his leg, what terrible luck!" The farmer replied, "Maybe so, maybe not. We'll see."

A few weeks later, soldiers from the national army marched through town, recruiting all the able-bodied boys for the army. They did not take the farmer's son, still recovering from his injury. Friends shouted, "Your boy is spared, what tremendous luck!" To which the farmer replied, "Maybe so, maybe not. We'll see."

From this story and from the teachings of "Changing Poison into Medicine," I began to understand that what seems negative may actually be positive or become positive, and vise versa. I learned to not be so quick to react to circumstances, to keep practicing and to trust Gohonzon.

During this past year, I faced a severe illness which brought me to more deeply challenge this mindset. In November, the day before I left for our Tozan pilgrimage to the Head Temple in Japan, I found out what we thought was a bad case of tonsillitis was actually throat cancer. My surgeon cleared me to go ahead and go on the trip, and he would email me the biopsy results while I was in Japan. I texted Dennis to let him know and his response was it's the best possible place in the world for me to be. So true!

One of the things I love about studying is that sometimes articles and lectures become like treasures stored for future use. It may not feel like it really applies at the moment, but we never know. The first thing I packed that night was Rev. Obayashi's article on "Overcoming Severe Difficulties, Obstacles and Devils," as I remembered he talked a lot about illness. I love studying, as our priests' explanations of Buddhism provide insights into life's phenomena that are so deep and empowering.

As I read the article on the plane to Japan, my feelings and thinking about my illness completely changed. When I read the following sections, I almost had to laugh at myself. He was talking about the gift of receiving karmic retribution in this lifetime, and not carrying it into future lives. The following quotes especially hit home:

"If anyone sees a person who accepts and upholds this sutra and tries to expose the faults or evils of that person, whether what he speaks is true or not, he will in his present existence be afflicted with white leprosy." And,

"The Lotus Sutra is the core of all sutras . . . if out of arrogance one does not refrain from slighting it, the tongue in one's mouth will break out in sores."

I literally had white sores on the back of my throat, and it seems to me like cancer can be likened to white leprosy. Instead of feeling fearful as I had, my heart felt full of gratitude. This illness would give me an opportunity to lessen my heavy karma from slander, in this lifetime and past ones as well. I started seeing it as a benefit and an answer to prayer. I had been praying to really eradicate our deep family karma.

While at the Head Temple, I felt great hope. I felt closer than ever to our High Priest and the Dai-Gohonzon. While it was a bit of a struggle, and difficult to talk and chant, I was able to make every ceremony and connected with new and old Buddhist friends, locally and from other temples. I knew I wasn't alone facing this illness and could feel the love and support.

At one of our opportunities to chant to the Dai-Gohonzon, the following Gosho quote came into my mind: "A sword will be useless in the hands of a coward. The mighty sword of the Lotus Sutra must be wielded by one

(Continued on page 6)

Faith Experience by Susuanna Kunkel *(CONTINUED)*

(Continued from page 5)

courageous in faith."

I also remembered that courage doesn't mean a lack of fear, but moving forward in spite of our fears. I've cherished this Gosho quote, and many times have had to remind myself of it as I've gone through my journey of fighting cancer. There have been dark moments of fear, and tears, but the strength of Gohonzon brings me back to a place of courage.

Throughout this process, I have felt so lovingly protected by Gohonzon. The way things have worked out, from the selection of the surgeon, to being able to get medical insurance in place by January for the surgery and treatment -- coverage that currently is at risk of disappearing. I was supposed to go on short-term disability and not work at all for 6 months. But I'm self-employed and that option doesn't really exist for me. There was an amazing flow of work that I was able to keep up with through email and text that has carried me through these months financially, beyond logic. At times as I lay in bed at home, I could only smile as it felt like Gohonzon was a giant Samurai in my living room, guarding and protecting me. I felt a feeling of grace, peace and calm the majority of the time, and it seemed like the Daimoku from my many Buddhist friends was like a warm balmy breeze flowing through, carrying me over the moments of pain and fears.

After surgery, when I had to start the radiation treatment, I truly was challenged. I so wanted to use only natural resources and avoid the poison of radiation and chemo. Fortunately, chemo wasn't necessary but to effectively treat my cancer radiation was. I was lucky to have a surgeon who understood my beliefs and was willing to just wink at me if radiation could be avoided. But it was stage 4 cancer, and it had spread to my lymph nodes. As he said, there was no winking. The treatment process was terrifying at first, and I literally dug deep into this concept, visualizing the radiation as poison turning into medicine every day. I was able to be calm and even keep my sense of humor through the dehumanizing and terrifying treatments.

The following quote from the Gosho "General Stone Tiger" that Rev. Obayashi referenced is his article gave me great hope during this time:

The Yuga Ron of Bodhisattva Maitreya and the Dai Ron of Bodhisattva Nagarjuna both state that if one's illness is caused by immutable karma, even the most excellent medicine will turn into poison, but if he believes in the Lotus Sutra, poison will change into medicine. (M.W. Vol 1 p. 225)

The treatments are complete, and the prognosis is excellent. My body is still recovering from the poison of the radiation, but it's causing me to focus on my health in a new way.

On a lighter note, I decided to turn poison into medicine by paying my out-of-pocket medical expenses on my Hawaiian Airlines MasterCard, earning enough miles to support a shakubuku trip to Kauai, where my goddaughter and her son received Gojukai and we had a wonderful family get-together earlier this month.

I can't say that I fully understand the meaning of this illness in my life. But I keep chanting and searching to deepen my faith and practice. It does feel like a turning point. I do feel a sense of cleansing, and clarity. A sense of deeper clarity about the poison of slander and arrogance, and how the only person I need to work on correcting is myself. I've felt a deepening of my commitment to work toward lasting world peace that we call Kosen-rufu without begrudging my life for the remainder of my years on this planet, and to cherish the moments we have together.

There's so much negativity in this world right now. My commitment to help others has only grown deeper, as I truly believe that by practicing correctly together we can turn the poison of our environment into the medicine of a peaceful existence for everyone.

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

Manhattan Saturday Evening Gongyo*
1214 Fifth Ave. Apt 43C New York, NY 10029 (Entrance on 102nd St)

Myosetsuji Temple
July 2017

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
July Special Shodai						1
Sat, Sun & Holidays……..	1 hr. Shodai with Morning Gongyo					**Gongyo** 10 AM
Mon, Tues, Wed & Thurs……..	6 PM Shodai, 1/2 hr. w/ Evening Gongyo					**Gongyo** 2:30 PM
Friday……	6:30 PM Shodai, 1/2 hr. w/ Intro Mtg.					**Gongyo** 5:00 PM*
Qns & West Cleanup 2 **Kosen-rufu Chanting** 10 AM **Support Staff Meeting** 12:30 PM **Children's Meeting** 12:30 PM **Evening Gongyo** 2:30 PM	3 **Gongyo** 7:30 AM **Gongyo** 6:30 PM	4 **Gongyo** 10:00 AM **Gongyo** 2:30 PM	5 **Gongyo** 7:30 AM **Gongyo** 6:30 PM	6 **Gongyo** 7:30 AM **Gongyo** 6:30 PM	7 **Gongyo** 7:30 AM **Intro Mtg** 7:00 PM *(Manhattan)*	8 **Gongyo** 10 AM **Gongyo** 2:30 PM **Gongyo** 5:00 PM*
MDS & NJ Cleanup 9 **Oko Ceremony** 10 AM **Youth Meeting** 12:30 PM **Chinese Oko** 12:30 PM **Evening Gongyo** 2:30 PM **Urabon Toba Cut-off**	10 **Gongyo** 7:30 AM **Gongyo** 6:30 PM	11 **Gongyo** 7:30 AM **Gongyo** 6:30 PM	12 **Gongyo** 7:30 AM **Gongyo** 6:30 PM	13 **Gongyo** 7:30 AM **Gongyo** 6:30 PM	14 **Gongyo** 7:30 AM **Intro Mtg** 7:00 PM *(Myosetsuji)*	15 **Gongyo** 10 AM **Gongyo** 2:30 PM ***No Manhattan Evening Gongyo***
Uptown & Bklyn Cleanup 16 **Urabon Ceremony** 10 AM **Evening Gongyo** 2:30 PM	17 **Gongyo** 7:30 AM **Gongyo** 6:30 PM	18 **Gongyo** 7:30 AM **Gongyo** 6:30 PM	19 **Gongyo** 7:30 AM **Gongyo** 6:30 PM	20 **Gongyo** 7:30 AM **Gongyo** 6:30 PM	21 **Gongyo** 7:30 AM **Intro Mtg** 7:00 PM *(Manhattan)*	22 **Gongyo** 10 AM **Gongyo** 2:30 PM ***No Manhattan Evening Gongyo***
Bronx & LI Cleanup 23 **Gongyo** 10 AM **Japanese Oko** 12:30 PM **Evening Gongyo** 2:30 PM	24 **Gongyo** 7:30 AM **Gongyo** 6:30 PM	25 **Gongyo** 7:30 AM **Gongyo** 6:30 PM	26 **Gongyo** 7:30 AM **Gongyo** 6:30 PM	27 **Gongyo** 7:30 AM **Gongyo** 6:30 PM	28 **Gongyo** 7:30 AM **Intro Mtg** 7:00 PM *(Myosetsuji)*	29 **Gongyo** 10 AM **Gongyo** 2:30 PM **Gongyo** 5:00 PM*
Qns & West Cleanup 30 **Introduction to True Buddhism** 10 AM **Korean Oko** 12:30 PM **Evening Gongyo** 2:30 PM	31 **Gongyo** 7:30 AM **Gongyo** 6:30 PM					

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