

# Myosetsuji News

ISSUE 225

MARCH 1, 2020

GUIDANCE FROM SIXTY-EIGHTH HIGH PRIEST NICHINYO SHONIN

## On the Occasion of the January Kosen-rufu Shodai Ceremony

In this early spring of the 768th anniversary of the establishment of true Buddhism, "The Year of Achieving Our Shakubuku Goal," I wish you a Happy New Year!

I believe you have welcomed the start of "The Year of Achieving Our Shakubuku Goal" feeling refreshed, and have renewed your pledge to make further efforts in your practice.

As you know, today, the priesthood and laity of Nichiren

Shoshu are powerfully moving forward in their practice, based on unity between the priesthood



and laity, in the spirit of *itai doshin*, as we aim toward our goal—establishing a membership

of 800,000 Hokkeko believers by the auspicious occasion of the 800th anniversary of the advent of our Founder Nichiren Daishonin, which is finally approaching in a little more than a year.

The establishment of a membership of 800,000 Hokkeko believers is the vow we pledged in front of the Gohonzon. We must be aware that the great significance lies in all chapters throughout the country achieving our

shakubuku goal without fail.

(Continued on page 2)

## Gosho Quote for March 2020

### *Reply to Sairen-bo* (Sairen-bo gohenji)

The votaries of the Lotus Sutra must neither discard their faith nor dishonestly live their lives. If they devote their lives completely to the Lotus Sutra and practice precisely as stated in the golden words of the Buddha, they will, without fail, enjoy a long and healthy life, unaffected by misfortunes and illnesses. They will achieve the ultimate supreme effect not only in their future lifetimes but also in their current lives. Moreover, they will be able to attain the great aspiration of kosen-rufu.

(Gosho, p. 642)

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

(Continued from page 1)

In order to achieve this, we must have an indomitable determination and bravely devote ourselves to propagate Myoho-Renge-Kyo, without any hesitation, just as taught in 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.” Then, it is essential that we refute slander, the root cause of unhappiness, and do shakubuku—refuting heresy and revealing the truth.

The Daishonin teaches us the following in the Goshō, *Letter to Nanjo Hyo’e Shichiro* (Nanjo hyo’e shichiro dono-goshō):

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. For example, one may loyally serve the imperial court for ten to twenty years, but if he recognizes an enemy of the emperor and neither re-

ports it nor personally feels enmity, all the services he has thus far offered will come to naught. Rather, he will be punished. You must realize that all the people in this age are slanderers of the Law. (Goshō, p. 322)

Literally, we must be well aware that conducting shakubuku, the act of compassion that can save all living beings, is far more important than accumulating any kind of



great merit by performing good deeds; transcribing the Lotus Sutra ten million times, and achieving the observation of the mind based on the principle of *ichinen sanzen*.

Precisely, the best way to save many people who are suffering in agony due to the poison of the slander of erroneous teachings is shakubuku. In order to invite true happiness, there is no way other than teaching others about the teaching of our Founder Nichiren Daishonin, the True Buddha in the Latter Day of the Law, and leading them to take faith in Nichiren Daishonin’s Buddhism through shakubuku, as much as we can.

Furthermore,  
(Continued on page 3)



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

(Continued from page 2)

Nichiren Daishonin expounds in the Gosho, *On Teaching, Practice, and Proof* (Kyo gyo sho-gosho) as follows:

If the disciples and followers of Nichiren are cowardly, nothing can be achieved. When we compare the pre-Lotus Sutra teachings and the Lotus Sutra and debate on which one is superior or inferior, shallow or deep and whether or not one can attain Buddhahood, even Shakyamuni Buddha of the theoretical teaching of the Lotus Sutra is no one to be afraid of. A bodhisattva at the stage of near enlightenment is to be feared even less, and this is even more so with the followers of the pre-Lotus Sutra teachings. Embracing the Lotus Sutra is like being in the highest position of Heavenly King Daibonten. You may look down upon the views of the followers of heretical teachings as primitive. However, keep in mind that you must be resolved to refute and correct their errors.

(Gosho, p. 1109)

As these golden words teach, we must not be cowardly when we conduct shakubuku, the greatest act of compassion, which can save all living beings. It is most essential that we do shakubuku with absolute faith in the Dai-Gohonzon as well as a firm determination and the courage of “Single-mindedly yearning to see the Buddha, they do not begrudge their lives.”

The Daishonin expounds the following to us in the Gosho, *Reply to Shijo Kingo* (Shijo kingo dono-gohenji):

You must employ the strategy of the Lotus Sutra more than any other tactics. The golden words, “All others who bore you enmity or malice have likewise been wiped out [by the benefits of the Lotus Sutra]” are undeniably true. The essence of military strategy also was derived from Myoho-Renge-Kyo. You must continuously deepen your faith with no doubts. Nothing can be achieved if you are



cowardly. (ibid. p. 1407)

“All others who bore you enmity or malice have likewise been wiped out” (*Hokekyo*, p. 538; *Lotus Sutra*, Watson, p. 288) in this passage is a phrase taken from the Bodhisattva Medicine King (*Yakuo bosatsu*; twenty-third) chapter of the Lotus Sutra. Because of the benefits of embracing Myoho-Renge-Kyo, we can repel every kind of obstacle that hinders our attainment of Buddhahood.

I sincerely pray that each one of us becomes aware that the most important thing now is to firmly believe in the vast and boundless benefits of the Dai-Gohonzon, and to teach others about these benefits and to shakubuku as many people as possible. I then hope that the members of each chapter will unite as one, based on the spirit of *itai doshin*, and stand up to do shakubuku, so that every chapter will achieve this year’s shakubuku goal without fail.



## FAITH EXPERIENCE BY ZORICA PETMIL

My name is Zorica Petmil. I was introduced to Nichiren Shoshu Buddhism by Tatjana Matano five years ago. We were both born in Belgrade, Yugoslavia, now the Republic of Serbia.

I came to the United States thirty years ago, in 1990, with my first husband. Since then, I had an extremely hard time obtaining legal status, finding work, and bringing up my daughter without any family around. The worst for me was that I could not leave the country, because if I did, I could not return. One of the saddest moments in my life was in 1997, when my beloved father died, and I was not able to attend his funeral. My mother is still alive but I have not seen her in 30 years.

In the early nineties, Yugoslavia was ripped apart into 7 pieces. Civil war raged and with it came destruction of life and property, followed by poverty, death, deep misery and hopelessness. In 1999, Serbia ended up being bombed by NATO planes incessantly for a period of three months. According to immigration laws in the U.S., my husband and I were supposed to leave the country one year before in 1998, but we decided to stay here for the sake of our child, even if that meant staying illegally.

Not being able to go back home to see family and friends, not being able to apply for a real job despite the fact that both of us were college graduates, not being able to accrue any benefits or retirement, took its toll on me. I was depressed, overweight, feeling trapped and could not see the light

at the end of the tunnel. My husband and I were both struggling in our own ways and gradually became estranged from one another. The only purpose in my life at the time was my daughter Isidora. I took good care of her, making sure she had proper care, a healthy diet and a good education. When she turned 10, thirteen years ago, the worst moments of my life were just about to happen.

After 20 years of marriage, my



husband left me for a woman who was 20 years his junior. At that time, we were just about to emigrate to Canada as we were already approved for permanent residency. So, at this point, I lost my husband, and a chance to start all over in a new country. I was emotionally devastated and numb for months to come. Gradually, I began putting my life together by seeking spiritual help from many sources such as Reiki, Self Realization Fellowship, Amma, Tibetan Buddhism, Tibetan chanting, as well as following some self-proclaimed healers. I also began exercising and was losing weight.

Soon, I began dating again and met my future husband.

Looking from the outside, I was doing well. I was fitter, slimmer and active, but inside I was falling apart. Soon I discovered a lump in my breast that was diagnosed as stage-3 breast cancer. As a single mom, I was determined to take care of my teenage daughter no matter what, and was thus determined to overcome this illness. So I had a mastectomy, chemo and radiation. Even though my recovery was very slow I still managed to attend community college and in record time, only one year, graduated with GPA of 4.0 and become a dietitian. Unfortunately, I could not apply for any jobs in hospitals or nursing homes because of my immigration status. So, I worked odd jobs, cleaning houses, cooking and doing groceries for wealthy families and the elderly.

I was already married to my second husband who is an American, but my immigration issues were so complicated by now that I was not able to become a legal resident. Many lawyers would not take my case. At one point I almost threw in the towel. I was prepared to take my teenage daughter and return to Serbia. But something was telling me that there is a reason I should stay. Now I know that the reason was Nichiren Shoshu Buddhism.

Soon after, I met Tatjana through a mutual friend who is also Serbian. Without telling me too much, Tatjana invited me to attend Sunday ceremony at Myosetsuji temple. I went and immedi-

*(Continued on page 5)*

FAITH EXPERIENCE BY ZORICA PETMIL (CONTINUED)

(Continued from page 4)

ately felt strong connection. Soon, I became a Buddhist and a few months later I received my Gohonzon.

It took me a while to start practicing daily. My life was starting to get better, slowly but surely. I was introduced to a lawyer who not only accepted my case but was fully confident of a good result. My husband and I were able to buy a very affordable house in Woodstock, and so we moved there from Long Island.

The immigration process went through many stages and obstacles. Practicing alone, working on weekends and rarely visiting the temple reflected on my Buddhist practice. My chanting became sporadic and short, almost as if I wanted to sabotage my own happiness.

However, everything changed in the winter of 2019 when I began taking care of Tatjana's father-in-law. He was a 92-year-old Japanese man who had 50 years of Buddhist practice behind him. Every week since, I spend two days in a row with him, we do morning and evening Gongyo to-

gether. I make him nutritious meals, take him for walks and listen to music with him. He is a very polite man, always expressing his thanks. He always smiles even when experiencing the pains and aches of old age. He has great peace inside him and is so full of gratitude.

Taking care of him has made me a better Buddhist. By helping him he was actually helping me, building my faith in the Gohonzon and making me grateful to be a Buddhist. I realize now the importance of family and how taking care of each other is the most important duty of our lives.

Shortly after I began taking care of Mr. Matano Sr., my lawyer called and simply said "A Miracle Happened!" The immigration Judge wanted to reopen my case, which meant that getting a green card was highly likely. After a few months, I went to a hearing and another miracle happened. I had the best possible immigration



judge who immediately granted me the adjustment of status. My green card came in the mail in December of 2019.

But this is not all. There were many side

benefits. I found an excellent job with an elderly lady five minutes from my house. My daughter has a nice boyfriend and was accepted into a unique Masters program in Experimental Psychology. This was her dream. She finished her first semester as an exceptional student. My husband, an avid hiker, successfully completed the Appalachian Trail, which is 2200 miles long. Many much younger hikers gave up on the way. He, on the other hand, received protection from the elements and was able to overcome many difficulties. He himself was surprised by this.

My practice is much stronger now. I am spending a lot more time in front of the Gohonzon. In the Spring, I plan to visit Serbia and my mom after 30 years. I will also meet Nichiren Shoshu members there. This will be a big moment for me. I also plan to finally be able to go on Tozan, our pilgrimage to our Head Temple in Japan to pray to the original object of worship, the Dai-Gohonzon.

I am very honored to be able to tell you my story. I wish all of you good fortune and love.

Nam-Myoho-Renge-Kyo



## Higan-e Ceremony

*Sunday, March 22, 2020*

The Higan-e Ceremony is held on the days of the vernal and autumnal equinoxes. On these two days, the length of daylight and darkness is equal, and the sun rises due east and sets directly in the west. As the sutra expounds, "The Buddha desires the Middle Way." For this reason the benefits of performing positive deeds on these days are superior to those practiced at other times. The word "higan" is a translation of the Sanskrit word "paramita," and it means, "arriving on the other shore." In his writings, Nichiren Daishonin states: "In the great sea of sufferings of life and death, the pre-Lotus Sutra teachings are but a raft or, at best, a small boat. Even if the pre-Lotus Sutra teachings can transport us from this shore of life and death to another shore of life and death, it cannot take us across the great sea of life and death to the shore of great happiness." Thus, the fundamental significance of arriving at the "other shore," or higan, is that it is extremely important for us, as living beings, to attain enlightenment in our present form through the Daishonin's Buddhism, and in a spirit of appreciation, to present memorial offerings for our ancestors.

***All Toba requests must be received by March 8th***  
*Please Print Clearly*

<b>Name of Applicant</b>	<b>Name of Deceased</b>
General Gokuyo (if any) \$	Gokuyo for Tobas (\$10.00 ea.) \$

# Myosetsuji Temple

## March 2020

**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

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1 Kosen-rufu Chanting 10 AM (310 Greenwich Street)	2 Gongyo 7:30 AM	3 Gongyo 7:30 AM	4 Gongyo 7:30 AM Local Meeting	5 Gongyo 7:30 AM	6 Gongyo 7:30 AM Intro Mtg 7:00 PM 215 West 98th St. Apt 3B	7 Gongyo 10 AM
8 Okō Ceremony 10 AM Support Staff Meeting 12:00 PM (310 Greenwich Street) Daylight Savings Time	9 Gongyo 7:30 AM	10 Gongyo 7:30 AM	11 Gongyo 7:30 AM Local Meeting	12 Gongyo 7:30 AM	13 Gongyo 7:30 AM	14 Gongyo 10 AM Manhattan Gongyo 5:00 PM
15 Morning Gongyo 10 AM (310 Greenwich Street)	16 Gongyo 7:30 AM	17 Gongyo 7:30 AM	18 Gongyo 7:30 AM	19 Gongyo 7:30 AM	20 Gongyo 7:30 AM Intro Mtg 7:00 PM 215 West 98th St. Apt 3B	21 Gongyo 10 AM
22 Higan-e Memorial 10 AM Children's Meeting 12 PM (310 Greenwich Street)	23 Gongyo 7:30 AM	24 Gongyo 7:30 AM	25 Gongyo 7:30 AM Local Meeting	26 Gongyo 7:30 AM	27 Gongyo 7:30 AM	28 Gongyo 10 AM Manhattan Gongyo 5:00 PM
29 Introductory Meeting 10 AM Youth Meeting 12:00 PM (310 Greenwich Street)	30 Gongyo 7:30 AM	31 Gongyo 7:30 AM	The Head Temple Taisekiji has advised that due to the Coronavirus, if you are not feeling well or have a weakened health condition or are at all concerned in gathering for our various ceremonies and meetings, you should not feel obliged to attend. This even includes the Oko Ceremony. Please protect your health. - Rev. Shinga Takikawa			

**MYOSETSUJI  
TEMPLE**

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