

日應上人教化集

ENLIGHTENING
MESSAGES PART II:
ETERNAL BUDDHA
IN US, IN THE WORLD

By Bishop Nichiou Itagaki



Honolulu Myohoji
2003 Nuuanu Ave.
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Preface (Afterword of the Original Work)

“Third day of the New Year”—I write from the fundamental spiritual training place for the preservation of the national polity. This year’s mental readiness is “heaven and earth.” I mentally pledge to the pillar of Japan, the Great Bodhisattva, the Nation’s St. Nichiren, and offer my service and devoted labor.

“Sixth day of the New Year”—On this ground, I am training my body and my mind in the Lotus Sutra and the Odaimoku. It is a place that has applied the Lotus Sutra, the ground of the Truth, and the Buddha Land. I also believe in this Sutra and cause others to form bonds with it.

The above is one entry that was written by our respected teacher, Bishop Nichiou Itagaki, in 1984, in a campus notebook. While compiling his writing, I was overcome by the thought that our respected teacher had never been concerned about his own personal and private matters.

The Lotus Sutra, the Great Saint, the fundamental spiritual training place—our teacher devoted all his fervent energy to his mission, and the powerful emotions, from his handwriting brace up those who succeed him.

We should always examine ourselves to see if the attitude of our faith is true to the intentions of Bishop Nichou. To receive and keep the real Truth is to engage in various works to return our indebtedness to Bishop Nichou for having discarded his personal and private matters and devoting himself solely to enlightenment activities, and it is the lineage of the affinity with the Truth. While believing in these, I respectfully pen this afterword with sincere gratitude for the kind benevolence of our respected teacher.

Tenth Bishop, Rev. Keiyu Itagaki
Butsugenji, Kaiko-zan

Now Is Indeed the Time to Look Again at the *Rissho Ankoku Ron* (Treatise to Establish Righteousness and Secure the Peace of the Country)

In recent years there are floods, famines and earthquakes, and environmental pollution, beginning with the Minamata mercury poisoning, which started from the contamination of the ocean and rivers. There is cholera, which seems to have started from Tokyo bay, and pollution from the contamination of the air. Moreover, the character of human beings is rotting.

What is the source of these natural calamities, of floods, earthquakes and strong winds, epidemics, air pollution and the decay of the human mind?

In the *Rissho Ankoku Ron*, St. Nichiren teaches us about that cause from such sutras as the Ninno-kyo, Konkomyo-kyo and the Daijiki-kyo.

As you probably know, the Kamakura period, when St. Nichiren lived, was a time of a succession of natural disasters, famines and epidemics. As is described in the writings of the Saint, the country was filled with calamities and epidemics, and these dominated the land. The roads were filled with the discarded skeletons of horses and cattle lying in the

grass, beggars were everywhere, and the dead filled the land. That was because the world has turned its back on the real Truth, the people flocked to a mistaken teaching, and reverted to evil, and the gods that protected the nation, discarded the country and do not look back. Consequently, the devil takes their place and gives rise to the various troubles that afflict the country. This is the reason that is taught to us.

Shakyamuni Buddha is the Father of the universe and the cosmic law, and as the Father of the world, with His eye of the Truth and the power of the Truth, He sees through all that happens in this world, and is teaching us in every particular.

This is, after all, because we have turned our back on the real Truth (failed to place the Lotus Sutra at the forefront), the teachings are confused, we have forgotten to cultivate a proper mind, and forgotten our gratitude to the love of the Universe and Mother Nature. Isn't this the reason why the various deities are raining their anger and divine punishment upon us? The Lotus Sutra explains this principle to us.

The truth is that depending upon the way of thinking of those who dwell in this world, this world can become a Buddha Land as well as a Pure Land. When the mind is pure, the earth and also water become pure. The atomic-bomb hell of Hiroshima

and Nagasaki is also the karma from the human mind.

Both the Pure Land and hell are not removed from the Saha world (“the land of endurance,” the world in which we live in). The place where we are now living does truly become a Pure Land and also hell. Whether we make it a Pure Land, as well as hell, depends on our mental attitude.

As was stated by the Saint’s writings, Buddhism had lost its unity, the people had gone astray from the real Truth, and when morality and the mind becomes corrupt, natural disasters occur frequently, and troubles arise from both within and without the country. These are clearly described. Moreover, the relationship between the country, people and teachings are explained carefully in detail. When I think about the fact that our temple, in the holy land of Izu, is the place of enlightenment to return to the Lotus Sutra, rectify the people’s minds, pray for the peace of the country, and correct the conditions of society, I believe that it is truly the time to look again at the spirit of the *Rissho Ankoku Ron*.

I would like to briefly touch on St. Nichiren’s writings.

“That is the country prospers through the Dharma and the Dharma is precious through the people. If the country falls to ruin and the people are

doomed, someone should worship the Buddha and someone should believe in the Dharma. We must first pray for the country and establish Buddhism.”

“If the country is lost and our home is destroyed, to where will society escape? If you think about your safety, shouldn’t you first pray for the peace of the four directions (the world, the country)?”

“You must quickly reform your faith, and quickly return to the sole good of the real vehicle. If so, accordingly, the three worlds are all the Buddha Land. Does the Buddha Land decline? The ten directions are completely the Treasure Land. Can the Treasure Land be destroyed?”

“The country prospers through the Truth. The Truth is precious through the people. The teachings are spread through the people, and ruined through the people. The purpose for Shakyamuni Buddha’s appearance in the world and the salvation of living things is fulfilled through people. If the country is ruined and the people are doomed, who will worship the Buddha? Where will Buddhism exist? We should first pray for the establishment of the peace of the country and put forth the true teachings of Buddhism.”

“If the country is lost and our home is destroyed, to where can society escape? If we seek our own assurance, we should pray that the country be calm.”

“Quickly reform your little thinking and your mind of faith, and return to the faith of the Lotus Sutra. By so doing, the three worlds (the universe) will all become the Buddha Land. How could the Buddha Land decline? The ten directions are completely the Treasure Land. How could the Treasure Land be destroyed?”

This is what St. Nichiren is teaching us. Are these not words that are speaking of the mind of the Saint, who sincerely thought about the country, and his great undertaking of attempting to save it?

If this is so, why is the country so important?

“When the country is in disorder, the demons are confused, and because they are confused, all the people are confused....”

Before the minds of the people are confused and turbid, the protective gods of the country first discard the country, and the evil spirits exert themselves, and the minds of the people are confused. The result is, at that time, the country is invaded by another country, and in one swoop it is ruined. St. Nichiren clearly states that domestic confusion and the chaotic state of the people’s mind, exacerbates their suffering and destroys the country.

The Saint had written, “internal distress and external trouble”—hardship of treason (a traitor

will appear in one's country), and the hardship of invasion from another country (one's country will be invaded)—and these had really occurred.

St. Nichiren presented these views to the then regent, Tokiyori Hojo in an attempt to save the country. The result was that the banishment to Izu came upon him.

St. Nichiren is the pillar of Japan. He had the conviction to even say that if Nichiren was lost, the country of Japan would be destroyed. I wish to take his words to heart. As long as we are living in the country of Japan, shouldn't we take it upon ourselves to believe the words of St. Nichiren, who sincerely thought about the country, from the bottom of our heart and carry out his teachings to the word? Moreover, St. Nichiren's feelings for the country were not a narrow nationalism, but a nationalism that wished to save all living things. I believe that the mind of the Saint was to spread the Buddha's intentions to the peoples of the world and save them, with the country of Japan as his foundation.

Moreover, the Lotus Sutra, which is the real Truth, is in fact a sutra with a deep karmic affinity with Japan.

“This sutra (the Lotus Sutra) is in the related-northeast, and so forth, and the Western China country is in the direction of ram-monkey (south-

west). The country of Japan, in the eastern direction, is in the direction of the ox-tiger (northeast). From India, to be in the related-northeast, is quite unexpectedly, the country of Japan.” (*Soya Gosho*)

St. Nichiren strongly sensed, also through the sutras, a deep affinity between the Lotus Sutra and the country of Japan. And he strove to save the important country of Japan from ruin with a confidence to even say: “There is no yes or no for Nichiren.”

Is there anyone who has thought so truly about the Buddha, the Truth and people?

This Buddhism is a religion with a boundless spirit that will save all living things. However, to realize that spirit in this world, it must first be practiced in the country. It was St. Nichiren who asserted this. That is why, in the *Kaimoku Sho*, he announced: “I must declare and hope that I will absolutely become the pillar of Japan, the eyes of Japan and the great vessel of Japan.”

Lessons of the *Shion Sho*

The Great Teacher and Guide Nichiren, who practiced the Lotus Sutra, the Truth-Soul of Shakyamuni Buddha, with his very person, and was a person of the human world and a god of the

heavenly realms in the latter days of Buddhism, wrote the *Shion Sho* in the land of Izu. These writings of the Saint are the teachings to truly rectify the present state of things where people have forgotten their debt of gratitude in the turbid age of the decadent teaching of Buddhism. We by all means wish to read his writings with our very person.

As explained in the *Shinjikan-gyo*, the four great kindnesses are (1) the kindness of our father and mother, (2) the kindness of the living things, (3) the kindness of the king, (4) the kindness of the three Buddhist treasures.

Just as we are being told that these four kindnesses are “equally given to all living things,” we must never forget that every person is receiving them. In particular, it is explained that those who study Buddhism must repay these four kindnesses.

In the home there is the kindness of our parents. When we go out into society, there are the kindnesses of all people. From the perspective of the nation, there is the kindness of the king. And when seen from the universe, there are the kindnesses of the three Buddhist treasures. Each person, without exception, is a recipient of these.

Nevertheless, perhaps because of the latter days of Buddhism, today we even forget the kindness our parents, who are very close to us. We do not know

the minds of our parents, who think of us, and it has become an evil world where we kill them as a foe. To say nothing of what we are doing for the three other kindnesses.

In the Shinjikan-gyo it is written: “The many living things of the evil world with the five pollutions do not awaken to the deep kindnesses and are always disregarding that merit. I teach the four kindness, which will benefit them, and have them enter the path of right views and the highest wisdom.” Just as it is suggested here, the conditions of the world were already seen by Shakyamuni Buddha.

All people are receiving the love of the thoughts of the father and the joy of the father, which is the kindly love of giving, and the love of the mother that removes sadness. It is exactly as described: “The great kindness of the loving father is like the Sanno (Mountain King Deity) and the deep kindness of the affectionate mother is like the great sea.” While nothing more needs to be said about the father’s kindness, particularly, the mother’s mind that thinks of her child, as described by the Shinjikan-gyo, is truly deep, and nearly incomparable. Her thoughts for her child have continued from the time when it was in her womb and still without form. And after having been born, when the child cries, the mother listens to those sounds like music. Any other sounds are probably thought of as being noisy sounds to put

up with. Moreover, she makes her breast her child's bed, and her left and right knees, his playground, and gives him a fountain of sweet nectar. The benevolence of raising the child for a long time is beyond the canopy of heaven.

The Saint said that he had entered the priesthood to save his father and mother.

“I leave the home of my father and mother, and become a priest for the salvation that will certainly come to them.” (*Kaimoku Sho*)

Nothing needs to be said about the renouncement of the world by Shakyamuni Buddha.

The thoughts of all living things—“among the many living things we become father and mother for one another”—while people are born again and die again, that we have established a mutual connection is because of a deep karmic affinity, we must feel that kindness and live in harmony.

The kindness of the king and the kindness of the country—are we not prone to fail to take notice of these kindnesses today? We must be mindful of the kindness of the king. St. Nichiren writes: “We warm our bodies with the three lights of heaven and nurture our soul with the five grains of the earth—this is entirely the kindness of the king.”

We are being told that while the blessings received from nature are not received directly from the country, our safety is being ensured, we can live our daily lives, and also successfully engage in economic activities because of the kindness of the king and the kindness of the country.

The Saint is saying to us that isn't it true that our bodies are warmed with three lights of heaven (sun, moon and stars), and our soul is being warmed by the five grains from nature's love, all the kindness of the king and the kindness of the country?

The kindness of the three Buddhist treasures, particularly the Buddha's thoughts are described: "The four kindness expounded by the Buddha are the kindness of the Buddha's treasure, and the highest." This kindness is truly immense.

"With the water of whole world used as inkstone water, all the trees and plants burned and made into an inkstick, the hair of all the beasts used for a brush, and the land of the entire universe as paper, and we penned all our thoughts, could we ever fully express our debt of gratitude for the Buddha's kindness?"

It is exactly as St. Nichiren teaches us. How indeed are the intentions of the Dharma and the soul of the Dharma pouring into all directions of the Great Universe and the Saha world.

The kindness of the Truth—the Saint has taught that the Truth is the teacher of the various Buddhas, and what is precious for the various Buddhas is the Truth. And that is why he said that those who wish to repay the kindness of the Buddha, must repay the kindness of the Truth.

The kindness of the priesthood—the Saint has also taught that the Buddha's treasure and the Truth's treasure certainly lives through the priesthood. Without firewood there is no fire, and without the earth, the trees and plants cannot exist. In the same way, even if there is Buddhism, unless there is the priesthood to study and convey it, two thousand years of the righteous teaching and the imitative teaching has passed, and Buddhism will not be conveyed to the age of the decadent teaching.

These writings had been done in January when the Saint was forty-one and declared that he was a practitioner of the Lotus Sutra. We cannot help but feel that to today's world, which resembles the turbid and evil conditions of the decadent teaching, we must convey the proper faith of knowing and returning the kindnesses we have received.

Well then, finally, what must we by all means keep in mind is that during the Saint's spiritual training at Izu, both day and night, for twelve hours without sleep, namely, as he immersed himself in the chanting for the entire day, within his joy of realizing

that he was the practitioner of the Lotus Sutra, there is our our Great Saint's immense kindness. This is also clearly described in his writings.

Just as it is clearly stated in the *Shion Sho*: "The fourth fascicle of the Lotus Sutra says: 'An evil man who speaks ill of me (Shakyamuni Buddha) in my presence with evil intent for as long as a kalpa is not as sinful as the person who reproaches laymen or monks with even a single word of abuse for their reading and reciting the Sutra of the Lotus Flower of the Wonderful Dharma....' When seeing these words, we give rise to a mind of faith, sweat profusely, and tears, like a shower, will come from our eyes. I regret for having been born in this country and created a lifetime of karma for many people."

The Saint is tell us that even if an evil person always swears at and curses Me (Shakyamuni Buddha) for the long period of time of a kalpa, the period for a large rock to finally disappear from a single brushing from the feather garment of a heavenly being, which descends from heaven once in a hundred years and returns, that sin is light. Nevertheless, if with a single ill word or bad language, one swears at and hurts the feelings of a layperson or priest, who is reading or chanting the Lotus Sutra, that sin is extremely grave. When we see these words and compassion of Shakyamuni Buddha in the sutra, we give rise to the mind of faith,

perspiration comes from our body, and tears flow from our eyes like rain.

St. Nichiren said this because many had slandered the real Truth from his having been born in this country, and created the sin of using profane language. While he says that he laments having done that, the Great Saint could not help but be greatly moved by the Buddha's kindness, and feel the deep kindness for all living things, particularly the slanderers of the Truth.

There are many who say that St. Nichiren only attacked other religions and was exclusivistic. That is by no means true. He was an honest person who had directly seen the teachings of Shakyamuni Buddha. The letters to his disciples and followers are all truly overflowing with only kindness and warm feelings for others. The Great Saint is a person who always shed tears of kindness from his eyes.

The Four Illusions of We Ordinary People

While we can clearly see things of concern to our interests and advantages, which we see with our sensory eyes, we cannot do the same for spiritual matters and things that are truly important. That way of seeing things is a subjective inversion, like falling into the world of the four illusions.

Although we hear the name of the Buddha, we do not inquire about His holy teachings. We do not read the sutras, which He has left us, although we see them. We do not become a believer, although we see a priest, who should introduce these to us, and we do not believe in morality. It is because of this that filial obedience, which is the starting point for these, is not practiced and there is no respect for parents. This is indeed the karma that causes the four reversals.

The four illusions are *jo* (eternity), *raku* (bliss), *ga* (self) and *jo* (purity). What do these mean? When we see things with our eyes, which are caught up by our senses, we think that things, which are not truly eternal, are eternal; things, which are not true happiness, are bliss; things, which are not truly our self, are thought of as being our self, and things, which are not true purity, seem pure. These four reversals cause the lives of all of us to err and make us have thoughts that lead to our destruction.

I will explain in detail about the four illusions. There is first *jo* (eternity). The most extreme form of this illusion is that while it is determined that human beings will die, we think that we will not die today or tomorrow. While we logically know that human beings die, we do not think that we will die today or tomorrow. Even when attending a funeral, we might think about death at that time, but a while

later, we think that we are fine and that our family is the same.

This is followed by the fact that young people think that they are forever young and energetic. We think that even our status, reputation and fame will always continue. This is true for our fortune as well. We think that it will always be ours.

We must know that this is an illusion that arises from the earthly desires and ignorance. To take notice of this is the first step to enter faith.

Raku (bliss), which follows, is to think that bliss is to bring pleasure to our body and satisfy our desires, exactly as commanded by our earthly desires. We are thinking that happiness is good food and drink and various amusements. These, however, are temporary ease, and they do not last forever. With liquor too, even with good liquor and pleasure seeking, after one week of constantly doing so, one will grow weary. It will no longer be fun. And what later awaits us is suffering. This is particularly a problem when that pleasure had not been received through one's own ability and labor. A moment of enjoyment gives birth to eternal hardship. Bliss is the seed of suffering. This is true for the human being himself. As is stated in the Nirvana Sutra, what comes to the proper and handsome self with magnificent embellishments are the older sister (bliss), who gives gold, silver and so forth, and the

younger sister (suffering), who is ugly with torn and soiled clothes, with festering sores. They have never separated, and suffering and bliss accompany one another to the extent that we feel it will always be that way.

From olden times we were told to experience suffering when young. That was to teach us that if we experienced pleasures when young and enjoyed ourselves, we will suffer when old. This is especially true for sensual pleasures, which are not true happiness, and we must be ready for the sufferings that will surely later appear.

The next is *ga* (self). While it would be wonderful if we could acquire the awareness of being children of the Buddha and the possessors of eternal life, even if we understand this conceptually, we do not experience this in our actual lives.

We think that the small self, the physical body alone is our *self*. We do not know that the trueheartedness within our mind is our self.

This is also being taught in the sutras. There was a man who was staying in a vacant small house while on his errand. At that moment an ogre carried a corpse into the house. Next, another ogre followed right after, and entered the house. "The corpse is mine!" "No! It belongs to me!" And they began to quarrel over the corpse.

A settlement could not be reached. The ogres asked the man about who had carried the corpse. Even if he said the truth, and no matter which side he supported, death was inescapable. If he said the first ogre had carried the corpse, the second ogre would be angered, and the same would happen if he said the second ogre had carried the corpse. At each questioning the man's hands and legs were plucked off and exchanged with the limbs of the corpse. And finally, his body had been completely exchanged with the body of the corpse. His original body was installed as the body of the corpse and consumed by the ogres. The man agonized about what in the world he had now become.

This physical body is perhaps a temporary existence. Since it is truly undependable, the existence called a human being, oneself (ego), has the same nature as the Buddha, namely, trueheartedness. Unless we can acquire the awareness of possessing eternal life, there is no true spiritual peace for us, and we must realize that it is here that the preciousness of a human being is found. The final illusion *jo* (purity) is the fact that the truly beautiful and pure, when seen from our senses that are caught up with our earthly desires, do not seem that way. The illusion *jo* tells us that the superficial beauty, which decorates the surface, seems to be pure. We ordinary people are prone to decide on purity and the unclean from what has appeared on the surface. Through the mind of a

person, there is a difference of pure and unsightly for a pockmark and also a dimple.

When we go before people, we wash our face and adjust our clothes, but we are not concerned about doing so without washing our mind. Forgetting about correcting our mind but frequently visiting the plastic surgeon is the state of we ordinary people.

The above is a summary of the four illusions. We ordinary people, each one of us, are afflicted by this illness of the mind, and we have ceased to see the compassion of the Buddha and the true image of human beings.

In order that we do not give rise to these mistaken views, the Buddha gives us the four teachings that human life is impermanent, suffering, nonexistence of a permanent self, and emptiness (relativity), which are the opposite of *jo* (eternity), *raku* (bliss), *ga* (self), *jo* (purity) of ordinary people.

This, however, is not the conclusion of Buddhism. To the utmost degree it is a lesson that is taught to us to arrange our mind of mistaken views, wipe away the clouds on the mind's mirror, and clearly know the Buddha, His teachings and the true image of human beings.

The Lotus Sutra Is the Jewel of Shakyamuni Buddha's Merit

In the *Kanjin Honzon Sho*, through the previously discussed Parable of the Good Doctor, St. Nichiren clearly explains the relationship between Shakyamuni Buddha, the Lotus Sutra, Superior Practice Bodhisattva (St. Nichiren) and ourselves. Particularly, the words of the sutra of good medicine, which the good doctor wrote down for us, namely, the contents of the Lotus Sutra are the merits of Shakyamuni Buddha. This is being clearly taught to us.

“Shakyamuni Buddha's two truths of cause and practice, and fruit and virtue are perfectly contained within the five characters of Myo Ho Ren Ge Kyo.” Just as it is written here, we are being told that the merits (cause and practice) that Shakyamuni Buddha had accumulated through his Bodhisattva practices, and the merits that he had accumulated as the Buddha (fruit and virtue), are contained within the five characters of Myo Ho Ren Ge Kyo. And in the same treatise, St. Nichiren writes: “And that is why if we receive and keep these five characters, we will gradually be given and inherit the merits of Shakyamuni Buddha. As for the Lotus Sutra, it is stated in the Nehan-gyo: ‘Let us say that there are seven children, and while there is no inequality in the love of the parents for their children, their concern is great for their sick child.’ With the

bright mirror of these sutras, we infer the Buddha's intentions. The Buddha appeared in this world not for the purpose of the people of the two thousand years of the righteous teachings and imitative teachings, but for a person like me (Nichiren) at the start of the decadent teaching."

"If the heavens are clear, the land is bright. Those who know the Lotus Truth will obtain the truth of the world. For those, who do not know that there are three thousand worlds in a single thought, the Buddha brings forth His compassion and wraps this jewel in the sachet of the five characters of the Wondrous Truth and places it on the little children of the decadent age."

He also tells us that if the sky is clear, the conditions of the land become clear through that light and visible to our eyes. In the same way, those who know the Lotus Sutra know the truths of the world (the reason for all things in the world and the actual lives of human beings). Illuminated by the light of the five characters of Myo Ho Ren Ge Kyo, we can successfully manage our lives.

It goes without saying that unless the Odaimoku is chanted with gratitude from the bottom of our heart for the absolute kindness of the Eternal-Buddha Shakyamuni-Buddha, and with our entire person for this great blessing, ours will be an empty prayer.

Moreover, for who do not know that three thousand worlds exists in one thought, that is to say, within our single idea (thought) there are three thousand worlds (Universal Truth-World), and who live thoughtlessly, the Buddha has gives rise to His great kindness, and into the satchet of the daimoku of the five charaters Myo Ho Ren Ge Kyo, there is the Truth jewel of three thousand worlds in one thought, which is permeated and harmonized with the Buddha's kindness, and it is wrapped with the great universe. To the little children of the age of the decadent teaching, a messenger has been dispatched to place it on their necks.

What is more, that is not a coldhearted truth and great universe. The Saint teaches us in the *Horen Sho*: "The merits of the Buddha are transferred to those who believe in the Lotus Sutra. It is like how the affectionate mother's food becomes breast milk that nourishes her child. The sutra tells us that today's 'three worlds are all my possessions, and the living beings within them are completely my children,' and so forth. That is exactly how our Teaching Lord, Shakyamuni Buddha, has made this merit the characters of the Lotus Sutra, and allows all living things to suckle them. Even if a child cannot distinguish between water and fire, and does not know if something is poison or medicine, if it drinks its mother's breast milk, its life is safe and secure." Just as it is being stated here, contained is a truly perfect warm kindness of the Buddha.

There is also the spirit to widely disseminate the Lotus Sutra by Superior Practice Bodhisattva, St. Nichiren, who will place the sachet on our necks. "I am simply striving to place into the mouths of all living things of the country of Japan the seven characters and five characters of Myo Ho Ren Ge Kyo, this is, namely, the kindness of the mother that strives to place her breast milk into her child's mouth." (*Kangyo Hachiman Sho*)

When we (children who have mistakenly taken poison) are grateful to the three Buddhist treasures, the Buddha (the good doctor), the Truth (the jewel within the sachet of the five characters Myo Ho Ren Ge Kyo) and the priesthood (the messengers, beginning with St. Nichiren), the ordinary person that we are becomes a precious person who is close to the Buddha.

Moreover, the *Kanjin Honzon Sho* ends by saying that those who drink the good medicine of the Lotus Sutra, and are its practitioners, will be protected by the four Bodhisattvas (Superior Practice, Limitless Practice, Steadily Established Practice and Pure Practice).

Merits of Understanding by Faith for a Moment's Thought

Among the words to savor the merits and mystical charm of faith and practice there is Ichinen Shinge (Understanding by Faith for a Moment's Thought).

The Kegon Sutra says: "Faith is the basis of the way, the mother of merit. It cultivates at length all good deeds, severs the cords of doubt, opens the flow of love, and shows the path of the highest enlightenment. Faith is a clear and pure mind with no defilement and impurity, and it eliminates and removes arrogance. It is the source of respect and veneration...."

Faith is the way's foundation, the mother of merit. A faith that cultivates at length all our good deeds is a great path that leads to the Buddha Land. Faith is clear eyes that distinguish between what is wrong and proper. Faith is the self-cleansing bright moon that is beautiful and harmonious. Faith is pure water that cleanses the filth of earthly desires. Faith is the soil that cultivates all things under the sun, and nurtures the Truth. It is explained that in the same way that faith is the seed that becomes the Buddha and that the various truths arise and exist, all morality and virtuous deeds arise from faith and practice as their base, and possess immense merit.

What then should our faith believe in? Isn't the answer to this question found in the chapter, The Variety of Merits?

“When the living things hear the longevity of the Buddha's life and understand it by faith for a moment's thought, they will be able to obtain innumerable merits.”

While we speak about faith, we have, after all, heard about the longevity of the Buddha who was enlightened eternally from the remote past, which was clearly revealed in the chapter of The Duration of the Life of the Tathagata, and when we give rise to an understanding by faith for a moment's thought, we are told that the merits we acquire are unfathomable. Isn't this a most important fact?

Although a very simple faith is being taught, here too, as it was explained in the “life span of the Buddha” portion, Shakyamuni Buddha is the Eternal Buddha, and when we offer our understanding by faith for a moment's thought from being deeply moved by His Eternal Life and His work of kindness that is saving all living beings everlastingly, we naturally receive infinite merits. Isn't that why we are told that it is useless to willfully speak, at any time, only about understanding by faith for a moment's thought without joining it with the *longevity of the Buddha's life*?

It is not just that the Eternal Buddha's Life is long, but with the addition of the deep emotion for that Buddha's kindness, merit and salvific power, and the mind of adoration for the Buddha, when the understanding by faith for a moment's thought for the *longevity of the Buddha's life* appears from within us, those merits are billions of times greater than the merits accumulated from engaging in the five practices of selfless giving, keeping the precepts, patience, endeavor and meditation for an extremely long period of time to know the Buddha's true teaching and acquire His wisdom. It is explained that it is beyond the description of any calculation.

We hear *The Duration of the Life of the Tathagata*, which clearly reveals that Shakyamuni Buddha was enlightened eternally from the remote past, and to offer our faith to that Eternal Buddha, is, I believe, true faith. Nevertheless, these days our gratitude and deep emotion for the Buddha's kindness are scanty, and we followers of Buddhism must think seriously about the sutra's words on understanding by faith for a moment's thought.

In chapter 18, *The Merits of a Person Who Rejoices at Hearing This Sutra*, the merits of the first great joy are revealed. Although we are not able to understand the profound philosophy by listening to the Lotus Sutra, which Shakyamuni Buddha left

to us after His demise, we rejoice upon hearing a single verse of the Lotus Sutra, and convey it to another, to two, three, ten people, twenty people, and then to the fiftieth person. At that time a good amount of the original enthusiasm has vanished, and our deep emotion is less. Even that merit, however, gives to the great multitude of people in the six paths, from hell to the heavenly realm, all that they wish for eighty years. And after having many people live in peace and comfort, it further provides them with a teaching that allows them to achieve an enlightenment of simply removing all their earthly desires. While it is an enormous merit, the merit of rejoicing at hearing a single verse of the Lotus Sutra is far greater, to say nothing of the fact that the first great joy, the merit of the great joy of the first person, is unfathomable. To make this clear for us, to that extent is the greatness of the merit of rejoicing at hearing the Lotus Sutra and conveying it to others, being described.

Let alone to listen single-mindedly to the Lotus Sutra, to chant it, to fully discriminate its meanings and practice them as taught, and if we would further teach them to others, those merits would truly be unfathomable.

It is just as the sutra teaches: “Like this merit of recommending the sutra to a person and enabling him to hear the Truth, how much more is the merit of listening single-mindedly, chanting the sutra,

discriminating it's meanings and practicing it as taught?"

To that extent is the Lotus Sutra a sutra, which includes the Buddha's kindness, thoughts and merits, and this sutra is indeed the Buddha's mystic mantra.

Although we speak of the Lotus Sutra as being inspiring and a blessing, if we forget Shakyamuni Buddha, who is the Lord Teacher Parent for all humankind, and the Eternal Buddha, our faith will be confused and superstitions will increase.

To travel the path that leads to the Buddha Land, to engage in the practices that give rise to the ordinary merits, to wash away the filth of all earthly desires, the source to do these is arising from understanding by faith for a moment's thought for the *longevity of the lifespan* of the Eternal Buddha, Shakyamuni Buddha, who thinks of all living things as His children and saves us through every possible means, and, what is more, has us quickly enter the path to Buddhahood.

St. Nichiren teaches us: "Three thousand world in a single thought also arises from the single character shin (faith), the attainment of Buddhahood by the many Buddhas of the three worlds is also born from the single character shin (faith). This

single character shin (faith) is the sharp sword that cuts away the original ignorance (mental illness)... What purchases the Buddha's wisdom is the single character shin (faith).

Now When It Is Truly the Time to Widely Disseminate the Lotus Sutra—We Revisit the *Kyokijikoku-Sho*

Today's world is a time when new religions are making their influence felt in the Buddhist world, and religion is having the opposite result of confusing the mind of the people, and it seems it is no longer accepted.

Just as St. Nichiren taught in the *Kyokijikoku-Sho*, is this not the result of incorrectly understanding the teaching that is suited for the country, the capacity of the country to understand, the age, and the order to spread that teaching? I believe that we must newly listen to the teachings of the Saint's *Kyokijikoku-Sho*, strive to awaken our minds as soon as possible, widely disseminate the Lotus Sutra, and guide the people of the world.

Since these writings by the Saint were also written during his banishment to Izu, like the *Shion-Sho*, they have a deep affinity with our temple. What is that treatise teaching? After the demise of the

Buddha, to convey the Lotus Sutra to the people of the world, we must know the principles of teaching (kyo), capacity (ki), time (ji), country (koku) and order (jo). Unless this is done, the Lotus Sutra will not be spread widely.

Beginning with *teaching*, there are five thousand forty eight volumes and four hundred eighty book-case text of the sutras that were taught by Shakyamuni Buddha. These many sutras are divided into the Main Lineage, Great Vehicle, Expedient Sutras, Exoteric Sutras, Esoteric Sutra, and so forth. We must clearly know the difference among these. The sutras, which are spoken of as five thousand volumes and the seven thousand volumes, are, of course, each beneficial in themselves. However, if we were to say that this sutra and that sutra were all of the same value, there would be no coherence. Even for vehicles, there are large and small varieties. There are also expedient teachings and true teachings. There are teachings like secret talks, such as esoteric Buddhism, and these must be distinguished from the overt exoteric Buddhism. And among the Daizo-kyo (the entire Buddhist cannon), the foremost sutra is the Lotus Sutra, and that is why we are told that we must bring it forward.

About *capacity*, we are told that we must certainly have a good understanding of the ability of another to understand. To a metal worker

(goldsmith), who does not work with impure substances, the eminent Sariputra taught a method to be free of greed by seeing the impurity of human beings called *fujō-kan*. To launderers, who washed dirty garments while pushing hard with their back bent forward (it was not an age like today with washing machines), he taught the *susoku-kan*, which strove to achieve mental concentration by controlling breathing. Sariputra's efforts, however, failed. The Buddha, on the other hand, taught the *susoku-kan* to the metal workers and the *fujō-kan* to the launderers and led them to enlightenment. After using this example, the wind god of the decadent Dharma (St. Nichiren) says that even more so we must know about "capacity."

Next, about *time*, St. Nichiren tells us that if, for instance, those who work in agriculture make their fields in the fall or winter, the troubles of the seeds, earth and the people will not bring forth the least reward. In the same way, to spread Buddhism, we must know about time. Even the Buddha said about His appearance in the world and the preaching the Lotus Sutra, "for more than forty years I did not reveal the entire truth," (Miken Shinjitsu) and He did not preach the sutra.

The present world has entered the age of the decadent Dharma. According to the prophecy of Shakyamuni Buddha, the age of the decadent Dharma is the time when the Lotus Sutra must

appear. The fifth five-hundred-year period, after the demise of Shakyamuni Buddha, is the time to disseminate the Lotus Sutra. St. Nichiren says that we must seriously take this to heart.

About *country*, we are told that there are various kinds of countries such as a cold country, hot country, poor country, rich country, large country, small country, a country of only thieves and a country of only murderers. There are also Main Lineage countries, Great Vehicle countries and countries that combine both vehicles. Which of these countries does Japan resemble? The Saint says to us that is not Japan the country of disseminating the Lotus Sutra?

In regards to *order*, there is an order to the dissemination of the teachings. It might be different for a country that Buddhism had not reached, but already by the Nara period (710-794) various teachings were being disseminated. From the time of Emperor Kimmei (539-571), Buddhism was transmitted from the ancient Korean kingdom of Kudara, and until the time of Emperor Kammu (781-806), only the Main Lineage and the Expedient Great- Vehicle had been spread. It was during Emperor Kammu's time that Dengyo Daishi had appeared, and after he had revealed the true meaning of the Lotus Sutra, even those who revered the Kegon and studied the various others sects of the Hannyo and so forth, saw the Lotus Sutra as

the ultimate teaching. After knowing the earlier disseminated teaching, the later teaching must be spread. When the True Great-Vehicle was previously disseminated, the Theravada and the Expedient Great-Vehicle must not be spread. We must together discard the stones and take the golden jewels.

All the living things of the country of Japan, for more than four hundred years after the Emperor Kammu, were solely of the capacity to understand the Lotus Sutra.

“The capacity of the country of Japan was not the non-Buddhist religions or philosophies or the Main Lineage, but it possessed the capacity to understand the Great Vehicle. And among the Great Vehicle, there is none but the capacity for the Lotus.”

The country of Japan is solely a Great-Vehicle country, and among the Great Vehicle, St. Nichiren is telling us that it must be a country of the Lotus Sutra. Let alone the fact as we are now approaching the seven hundredth anniversary of the Saint’s passing, and the time when we must increasingly disseminate the sutra widely, we must revisit his writings, follow his wishes, and live up to the intentions of the Eternal Buddha.

Nijo-Sabutsu (Hearers and Causes Knowers Will Become Buddhas): We Are Also Being Allowed to Become Buddhas

St. Nichiren tells us that there are two great doctrines in the Lotus Sutra, Kuon Jitsujo (Enlightened Eternally from the Remote Past) and Nijo-Sabutsu (Hearers and Cause Knowers Will Become Buddhas). I would like to write briefly here on Nijo Sabutsu.

While the Lotus Sutra is made up of twenty-eight chapters, the central theme of the earlier fourteen chapters is Nijo Sabutsu. (Kuon Jitsujo is the central theme of the later fourteen chapters.)

Nijo Sabutsu means that the Main-Lineage hearers and the cause knowers are also allowed to become Buddhas. Of course, the hearers and cause knowers are representing the six worlds of transmigration of living beings from the world of heaven and the world of human beings to the world of hell.

Those below the hearers are the teachings of the Expedient Great-Vehicle. It is explained in many sutras, except the Lotus Sutra, that they will not become Buddhas. When we arrive at the Lotus Sutra, their Buddhahood is allowed.

The Sutra explains that those who were thought to be most unable to attain Buddhahood, Devadatta, who was like the representative of evil, that killed living things and completely opposed Shakyamuni Buddha, and the eight-year-old dragon girl, who was of the world of animals, will also attain Buddhahood.

Until now, even for those who were nearly forsaken, when seen from the reality of all things (shoho jisso) and that each of the ten realms contains the other nine realms in itself (jikkai gogu), those beings all contain Buddha-nature. Therefore, when their Buddha-nature is revealed and moved into action, we know that they can achieve Buddhahood. In the Devadatta chapter, however, the attainment of Buddhahood of evil people and the attainment of Buddhahood of women is definitively explained. Nevertheless, what is important is that they touch the Buddha's compassion and unless their Buddha-nature appears, they cannot attain Buddhahood.

The evil deeds of Devadatta were also an extreme resistance to bring forth Shakyamuni Buddha's virtues and they are significant in helping His enlightenment activities. Yet, if they had ended with that, the attainment of Buddhahood would not have been allowed. Since the attainment of Buddhahood is impossible without a sincere reflection for evil deeds and gratitude for the Buddha's compassion, it is clearly stated: "those who believe with a pure

mind and are free of doubt will not fall into the worlds of hell, hungry ghosts and animals, and be born before the Buddhas of the ten directions.” Such people have also reflected on themselves through the Buddha’s compassion and attain Buddhahood.

In the case of the attainment of Buddhahood by the eight-year-old dragon girl, having received the sermon on the Lotus Sutra of the Bodhisattva Monju and from the very fact that she had received the enlightening teachings and believed in the Lotus Sutra, which was expounded by the Buddha, she could attain Buddhahood, and she destroyed the thinking that women could not become the Buddha. The gatha, which this girl of the animal world sang to Shakyamuni Buddha, is truly wonderful.

“Your wondrous pure body of the ultimate
reality
With the thirty-two excellent marks and eighty
minor marks of the Buddha—
Your body of the ultimate reality is magnificent.
Heavenly beings revere you,
The Dragon gods deeply respect you.”

The highest contemplation of the Buddha-body is being stated by the girl. When we hear the word *hosshin* (body of the ultimate reality), we are prone to think that it is without form. The dragon girl is telling us, however, that the Buddha with a truly beautiful form is present. While this may sound like a repetition, what we must be mindful about *Nijo*

Sabutsu is that those who continue to engage in evil deeds and animal-like deeds can never become the Buddha. The attainment of Buddhahood is because of Shakyamuni Buddha's enlightening teaching of the Lotus Sutra.

It is the Lotus Sutra that clearly teaches this, and that is why it is precious.

While religion speaks of the connection between God, Buddha and we human beings, even if Shakyamuni Buddha, the subject of our faith, and the direction (object) of our faith is excellent, as stated in the above quote, if the truth of human beings, who are the core of religion, is not properly explained, we must say that the religion is imperfect. Moreover, even if there is an explanation, if it is an existence that offers no hope, the religion is truly a lonely one.

When we arrive at the Lotus Sutra, for the first time, Sariputra, with a good capacity to understand, knows that he is the true son of the Buddha through parable and discourse, and that through the teachings of the Buddha, he enters the bodhisattva practices, achieves the awakening of the Buddha, and Buddhahood is allowed for him. With this beginning, the evil man and woman that we speak of here, also, through the compassion of the Buddha and their mind of respect and adoration for the Buddha, are allowed to become Buddhas.

Accordingly, in the *Kaimoku Sho*, St. Nichiren says: “the two great truths of Nijo Sabutsu and Kuon Jitsujo are the essence of the entire collection of Buddhist scriptures.”

Shakyamuni Buddha is eternally enlightened from the remote past, and the actual existence that lives everlastingly. He is the Eternal Buddha, who is an absolute person of character, who works in the worlds of the ten directions with the earth as His center. All living things have Buddha-nature and the Hearers and Cause Knowers also have Buddha-nature—to teach this is the ultimate purpose of Buddhism. And that is why the Lotus Sutra, which clearly teaches these two truths, is claimed to be the central teaching of all the Buddhist scriptures.

That is why our Great Saint expresses immense joy for the blessing of being born as the child of Buddha, and the joy and responsibility of serving the Lotus Sutra: “Being born as a disciple and child of the Buddha and serving the Lotus Sutra. My grief from seeing the decline of Buddhism is overcome!”

From such parables as the Parable of the Physician in The Duration of the Life of the Tathagata chapter and the Parable of the Wealthy Man and His Poor Son in the Understanding by Faith chapter, we are being carefully taught that we human beings are the Buddha’s children, that we all have Buddha-

nature, and that by accumulating bodhisattva practices, we can attain Buddhahood. This is the true declaration of the Buddha and the true happiness of human beings is found within it.

When we arrive at the Lotus Sutra, the value of human beings is greatly elevated. When we awaken to the realization of being the Buddha's child, we human beings have hope, and it is truly because of our awakening of being the Buddha's child that we can advance with our bodhisattva practices, which becomes the cause for our advancement on the path to the attainment of Buddhahood.

In the *Minobu Ki*, St. Nichiren writes: "Therefore through the Lotus Sutra a woman, who had been shunned for more than forty years became the Buddha, and Devadatta, who was at the height of the five deadly sins, also became the Buddha. If that is so, there is no doubt that even priests, laity, nuns and also women, who slander the law and are at the height of the five deadly sins in the turbid world of the decadent Dharma, will become the Buddha." That the hearers and cause-knowers will become the Buddha is made clear by this Sutra, namely, the Lotus Sutra, and there is no longer room for doubt.

Okagesama-de (Thanks to You [I Am Because of You])

These days the repayment of kindness and morality have been abandoned, and we are forgetting to be naturally grateful. In spite of that, the Japanese people often use the expression “okagesama-de.”

There are many expressions based on “okagesama-de”: It is thanks (okage-de) to my parents. It is thanks (okage-de) for employing me. It is thanks (okage-de) to the water. It is thanks (okage-de) for the land. It is thanks (okage-de) to the food. There are also memorial services for old needles, where we express our gratitude to even the needles that we are using in daily life. There is no end to the number of examples of such expressions of gratitude.

Even if we are not deeply conscious of it, by just seeing something or touching it, we feel that the fact that we can live as we do, is thanks to some blessing, and that there is a kindness that sustains the world and society, and we express our gratitude for it.

When seeing all things, we are grateful from the bottom of our heart, and bow our heads. In addition to being a practice that holds true for the path of faith, it is also a basic emotion.

We are all living and being sustained. We are grateful for being joined with one another through a karmic affinity, and is not a mind of faith to be grateful from the feeling of being blessed? Moreover, when we think about the source, is not the origin of the word “okagesama-de” (literally, thanks to the one behind the scenes) our gratitude to Shakyamuni Buddha? He is protecting this world, and with His power of love, He has taught all paths to live for our sake.

In the A Parable chapter of the Lotus Sutra, it is taught: “The triple world is my property. All living beings therein are my children. What is more, now at this time there are many sufferings. Only I can thoroughly save them.”

The three worlds (world of desire, world of form, world of no form), namely, the entire universe, is being ruled by Shakyamuni Buddha. All living things, which are born in the entire universe, are completely the Buddha’s children. Nevertheless, in the Saha world the various sufferings are many. Although there is the Buddha’s declaration that He alone can fully save and protect the living things, isn’t it a fact that through His Love, we, who have many evil passions, are protected and can live our lives in peace? When we worshipfully acknowledge this fact, I believe that we must be grateful to the Buddha’s protection from behind the scenes. It is truly the Buddha to whom we must first say “okagesama-de” (thanks to you [I am because of you]).

Words of Gratitude

The English translation of the Enlightening Messages of Rev. Nichiou Itagaki, the previous Bishop of Butsugenji temple, has been published as two parts. It is because of Butsugenji temple that I am able to conduct my missionary activities at Honolulu Myohoji. It is also because of Butsugenji temple that I am a Nichiren-Shu minister. It is indeed because of the existence of Butsugenji temple, that Rev. Yamamura of the Honolulu Myohoji can exist. My debt of gratitude to Butsugenji is deeper than can be expressed by words.

Butsugenji temple in Izu is a fundamental place of spiritual training for the unification of Japanese Buddhism through the Lotus Sutra. The advisor for Butsugenji is the former Prime Minister, Junichiro Koizumi. Prince Higashi Kuni and other notable persons have also worshiped there. Butsugenji is truly a temple that represents Nichiren-Shu of Japan.

The writer of this booklet, Bishop Nichiou Itagaki, has been called the living Nichiren of the Showa Period (1926-1989). By studying this booklet we can have a glimpse into the mind of the modern-day St. Nichiren. I have never read such wonderful writings. In the more than 750 year history of the Nichiren Shu it is a most important writing.

This is the first English publication in the world of the Enlightening Messages of Bishop Nichiou Itagaki. At this time I offer deepest respect and gratitude for the holy practice of Bishop Nichiou Itagaki of diligent effort both day and night. I also express my sincerest gratitude to Rev. Keiyu Itagaki, the present Bishop of Butsugenji, for gladly giving his blessings for this publication.

Finally, I conclude my words of gratitude by extending my thanks to the translator, Dean Makinodan, and Dan Liu, the Board President of Honolulu Myohoji, for leading the realization of the first publication in the world for the Enlightening Messages.

Rev. Takamasa Yamamura

Sixth Head Minister of Honolulu Myohoji,
Nichiren Shu



Bishop Keiyu Itagaki (R) and Rev. Takamasa Yamamura (L).