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New Year's Message for 2026 from the Chief Administrator “Unwavering Resolve for the Revitalization of Nichiren Shu”

By Rev. Chokei Mitsuoka
Chief Administrator, Nichiren Shu

As we welcome the New Year of 2026, I extend my heartfelt greetings to you all.

At the Nichiren Shu Congress held on December 11, I was deeply honored to be appointed as the next Chief Administrator of Nichiren Shu.

The Buddhist community in Japan faces significant challenges today. Declining birthrates and aging populations are profoundly affecting the vitality and sustainability of temples. Yet even more pressing is the dramatic shift in how people perceive religion and the transformation of their faith. We must honestly acknowledge that in today's society, our voices of propagation do not always reach as far as they should.

The Odaimoku and the Lotus Sutra have been entrusted to us. Nichiren Shonin faced countless hardships, and our predecessors walked this path before us. Now it is our turn. With unwavering resolve, we must fulfill our mission in these challenging times.

To fulfill this mission, we must first build a strong foundation. Nichiren Shu must preserve its tradition for generations to come. Every priest must be able to serve with confidence and fully demonstrate their abilities. Last year, we established the “Nichiren Shu Grand Design.” It charts a clear course for our sect in these unprecedented times.

As Chief Administrator, my mission is clear: to work through the challenges facing Nichiren Shu, guided by this Grand Design.

In 2031, we will observe the 750th Memorial of Nichiren Shonin's passing. Today, we can chant the Odaimoku with peace of mind and devote ourselves to daily practice. This is the fruit of Nichiren Shonin's wholehearted dedication and of all who followed in his footsteps. This Memorial is more than an occasion to honor his legacy. It is a call for each of us—as bodhisattvas living in the Latter Age of the Dharma—to strengthen our resolve and to carry Nichiren Shu into the future.

I believe my strength lies in following through on decisions and acting without delay. As Chief Administrator, I pledge here and now: I will give my all to the revitalization of Nichiren Shu.

May this year be one of hope and progress for all of you.



New Archbishop Installed Following Resignation of Most Ven. Nissho Kanno

By Rev. Keiji Oshima

On November 11, 2025, the Most Ven. Nissho Kanno, Abbot of Ikegami Honmonji Temple in Tokyo, resigned from his position as Archbishop of Nichiren Shu due to health concerns.

On November 25, the Archbishop Nomination Committee convened and selected Ven. Nisshu Inoue, Abbot of Yanaka Zuirinji Temple in Tokyo, as the 56th Archbishop of Nichiren Shu.

The installation ceremony was held on December 17 at the Nichiren Shu Head Office, with over 200 people in attendance including the Chief Abbot of Minobusan Kuonji Temple, abbots from the principal temples, members



Archbishop Nissho Kanno resigns and Ven. Nisshu Inoue becomes the 56th Archbishop of Nichiren Shu.

of the Nichiren Shu Council, and lay representatives.

In his inaugural address, the Most Ven. Inoue first offered prayers for the recovery of his predecessor, Ven. Kanno. Acknowledging the weight of his new responsibility, he pledged his wholehearted dedication to the successful commemoration of the 750th Memorial of Nichiren Shonin's Passing in 2031. Preparations are already underway through the Nichiren Shu Head Office.

The Most Ven. Inoue concluded his address by calling upon the entire Sangha for their continued support as Nichiren Shu advances toward this historic occasion.

NICHIREN BUDDHIST INTERNATIONAL CENTER RELOCATES OFFICE TO SAN JOSE

The Nichiren Buddhist International Center (NBIC) held a Closing Ceremony on November 25, 2025, marking the conclusion of operations at its facility in Hayward, California. The ceremony, conducted by Rev. Tetsudo Takasaki, Manager of NBIC, honored the dedication of those who established and sustained the center over the years. Participants offered prayers of gratitude for the merits accumulated through the center's work and reflected on the legacy of everyone who contributed to its mission.

Following the ceremony, NBIC has relocated its office to the Nichiren Buddhist Temple of San Jose. The two organizations will now share the facility while maintaining their distinct roles and functions.

A NEW ARRANGEMENT: Throughout the years, the Board of Directors conducted a review of operations to determine an effective path forward for NBIC's mission. The relocation represents a consolidation that enables the center

to maintain its programs within a more sustainable framework.

NBIC will continue to focus on its support functions for international propagation, and the Nichiren Buddhist Temple of San Jose carries on its activities



as an international propagation point. This structure allows both organizations to fulfill their respective missions while benefiting from a shared location.

CONTINUING THE WORK: Since its establishment, NBIC has contributed to Nichiren Shu's international propagation by welcoming training participants and producing multilingual resources for practitioners. This support work continues from its new location.

NBIC extends its gratitude to all ministers, staff, and supporters who have contributed to the center's work over the years. As NBIC begins this new phase, the center remains committed to its role in supporting Nichiren Shu's international propagation.

—Rev. Keiji Oshima



GRAND OPENING CEREMONY HELD AT HOKKESAN ICHINENJI TEMPLE IN PENANG

By Rev. Yuon Ito

On October 5, 2025, an Opening Ceremony was solemnly conducted at Hokkesan Ichinenji Temple in Penang, Malaysia, with Most Ven. Nichiyu Mochida serving as the Chief Officiant.

For more than 20 years, Ichinenji Temple has functioned as an international propagation point for Nichiren Shu. As a central hub among Southeast Asian missions, the temple has continuously engaged in Buddhist propagation, training of lay followers, doctrinal education, and charitable activities. Today, the temple community includes approximately 200 followers and continues to thrive with strong faith and vibrant energy.

BACKGROUND OF THE RELOCATION: The decision to leave the previous location was made in the spring of 2023. Although the sudden news came as a great surprise to many, the strong unity cultivated over many years prevented any major disruption. Fortunately, a new location was soon secured.

The current Chairman of the Board, Ms. Kee Swee Ling, offered an office

building that had previously been owned by her late father—who himself was a devout believer in the Lotus Sutra and one of the founding supporters of Ichinenji Temple—to be used as the new location for the temple.

The previous location had also been generously provided for many years by Mr. Ng Kim Fatt as a contribution to the temple. Such examples illustrate that the operation of a temple ultimately depends on deep reverence “for the Buddha” and a spirit of altruism “for the sake of others.” It is through this spirit that a temple brings peace and tranquility to all who gather there.

FROM RELOCATION TO GRAND OPENING CEREMONY: Once the new site was secured, the Board of Directors engaged in extensive discussions and proceeded with work on renovation. Restoring a building that had long been unused required substantial funding and approximately six months to complete.

Generous donations were received from local devotees, overseas supporters, and clergy from Japan and also from other places. Few temples attract such widespread attention and support. As

shown in the accompanying photographs, the modern yet dignified altar space has deeply impressed many visitors. The temple now looks ahead to even greater development in the years to come.

THE OPENING CEREMONY: Since its founding, Ichinenji Temple has maintained close ties with the Nichiren Shu Head Office and with Minobusan. In particular, the Most Ven. Mochida has provided unwavering support for over two decades, both publicly and privately. In recognition of this long-standing relationship, he graciously agreed to preside over the grand opening ceremony for the temple.

Numerous clergy and lay followers attended from Minobusan and across Japan, making the celebration truly magnificent. On October 4, Rev. Taiken Aoyama from Minobusan delivered a commemorative lecture, followed by a warm yet dignified gathering with more than 30 devotees.

On the day of the ceremony, the Most Ven. Mochida served as Chief Officiant, assisted by four Vice Officiants and six *Shoho-shi* priests. Although the main

hall was limited in size, it was filled, and the atmosphere was charged with an indescribable sense of exaltation.

A lion dance performed before the ceremony and a powerful *kito* blessing conducted during the service further heightened the intensity. The auspicious red and yellow colors emblematic of Chinese culture seemed to embody the joy and celebration of the occasion.

In the evening, a formal banquet was held. Participants delighted in Penang’s renowned cuisine, while the tropical climate and festive spirit were reflected in the entertainment: an elegant jazz session, a stunning face-changing, a traditional Chinese performance by a ten-year-old boy of remarkable skill, and a lively dance session that included all the guests. Though the event extended well beyond its scheduled time, laughter never ceased, and the entire day concluded as a truly joyous and unforgettable celebration.

It is sincerely hoped that Ichinenji Temple will continue to flourish and develop as a Lotus Sutra practice center from which the chanting of the Sacred Title will resonate from Southeast Asia to the entire world.



STUDY CLASS ON THE LOTUS SUTRA AND NICHIREN SHONIN'S TEACHINGS



The Seven Great Parables in the Lotus Sutra (10): Final Lesson

By Rev. Kosei Uchida

The Seven Great Parables represent the very essence of the Lotus Sutra—Two Vehicles Obtaining Buddhahood (*nijo sabutsu*)—Chapter 3 “The Burning House and the Three Carts,” Chapter 4 “The Parable of the Rich Man and His Poor Sin,” Chapter 5 “The Three Blades of Grass and the Two Trees,” Chapter 7 “A Treasure Palace in a Magic City,” Chapter 8 “The Gem Fastened Inside the Garment,” and Chapter 14 “A Brilliant Gem in the Top-knot”) and the Buddha Attaining Enlightenment in the Eternal Past (*kuon jitsujo*)—Chapter 16 “An Excellent Physician.”

There are two more parables in the Lotus Sutra. One appears in Chapter 10. The parable is called “A Man Digging a Hole on a Plateau.” A man on a plateau felt thirsty and sought water. He dug a hole to find water. When he saw the dugout lumps of earth were dry, he knew that water was still far off. He never gave up. Continually digging, he found the dugout lumps of wet earth. When he finally found mud, he was convinced that water was near.

The other parable, called “A Meal of a Great King,” appears in Chapter 6. When the Buddha assures Maha-Kasyapa, one of His four great sravakas, of his future Buddhahood, the other three great sravakas, Maha-Maudgalyayana, Subhuti and Maha-Katyayana, wanted assurance from the Buddha through His uplifting words. For them, the Buddha’s encouraging voice would be felt as cool and refreshing as if they were sprinkled with nectar. It is like a man who came from a country suffering from famine. Although he saw the meal of a great king, he did not partake of it due to his doubts and fears. After he was told to join by the king, he took it at once.

At first, it is very difficult to accept that you will become a Buddha like a man who hesitates to eat the meal of a king. This is why these sravakas wish to hear the voice of the Buddha assuring them of their future Buddhahood so that they would feel secure and peaceful. Only when you hear the voice directly from the Buddha can you learn to believe that what is said in the Lotus Sutra is all true.

From the two parables, we learn that the Buddha warns us neither to fall into habits of idleness nor to be indecisive about our faith but to keep on practicing the Way of Bodhisattva patiently to reach Buddhahood with a firm faith in

the Lotus Sutra. When we continue to practice the Lotus Sutra with confidence, the Buddha will give His voice to us. Receiving His voice, we will be greatly encouraged to practice harder than ever to try to help people in need.

The Seven Great Parables help us understand the two main teachings of the Lotus Sutra—Two Vehicles Obtaining Buddhahood and the Buddha Attaining Enlightenment in the Eternal Past. The other two parables expound on how to prepare ourselves for practicing the Way of Bodhisattva to enter Buddhahood. We will see all the nine parables perfectly suited for understanding by faith what the Lotus Sutra teaches us.

Kanjin Honzon-sho (3) – Great Compassion Toward Us

By Rev. Sensho Komukai

The Buddha says, “My perfect body is contained in the Sutra of the Lotus Flower of the Wonderful Dharma (*Myoho Renge Kyo*).” This means that the essential teaching of the Buddha who has eternal life, profound wisdom, and great compassion is expounded in the Lotus Sutra. “*Namu*” means to offer your life with devotion. So, *Namu Myoho Renge Kyo* means to devote yourself to the Wonderful Dharma revealing the true intent of the Buddha.

Nichiren Shonin chanted *Namu Myoho Renge Kyo* with devout faith and put the Dharma teaching into practice, trying to spread it throughout the world without sparing even his life.

Despite many persecutions he faced, he never surrendered his resolution to spread the Lotus Sutra. In 1264, right after the Komatsubara Persecution, he called himself “the foremost practitioner of the Lotus Sutra in Japan.” Ten years later, in 1274, one year after he entered Minobusan, he professed himself to be “the prime practitioner of the Lotus Sutra in the whole world.” His sincere wish to make people have faith in the Lotus Sutra was expanded on a global scale, declaring, “All the people in the whole world, regardless of being wise or foolish, should revere Shakyamuni Buddha as the Most Venerable One and chant *Namu Myoho Renge Kyo* single-mindedly in the Latter Age of Degeneration.”

For the Buddha, the people’s sufferings are His suffering. Nichiren feels the same way. The Buddha and Nichiren Shonin didn’t care for wealth or fame or for being a self-righteous hypocrite. Indeed, they both are prepared to bear all the

sufferings of ordinary people so that they may live long and peacefully.

Now the question is, “Why do they go this far to offer a helping hand to people while bearing their suffering?”

The Buddha answered in the Lotus Sutra, “I am a man of compassion from the remotest past. I wish to give the wisdom of the Buddha to all living beings, because I have great compassion and I am the great almsgiver to all living beings. I am always thinking, ‘How shall I cause all living beings to enter into the unsurpassed way and quickly become Buddhas?’” So did Nichiren Shonin, saying with pride, “With my boundless compassion, I showed people in the Latter Age of Degeneration faith in the Lotus Sutra to cure the blindness of all the people blocking the way to hell.” His “boundless” compassion goes toward all living beings without regard to race, nationality, social status, or family origin. In the closing words of *Kanjin Honzon-sho* he says, “For those who are incapable of understanding the truth of the *ichinen sanzen* (3,000 existences contained in one thought), Shakyamuni Buddha, with His great compassion, wraps this jewel with the five characters of *myo, ho, ren, ge, and kyo* and hangs it around the neck of the ignorant in the Latter Age of Degeneration.”

Ichinen sanzen means that all living beings have Buddha-nature and will be able to reach the realm of the Buddha if the right faith is practiced. But it is very hard for ordinary people to understand this, because they become more muddled and less enthusiastic about their faith.



With His compassion, though, the Buddha always tries to help them. The jewel of *ichinen sanzen* contained in the five characters of *myo, ho, ren, ge, and kyo* is given to the ignorant in the Latter Age of Degeneration. All that we ordinary people need to do is to chant “*Namu Myoho Renge Kyo*” with a devout faith and to put the Dharma teaching into practice.

Our Founder, neither seeking his own enlightenment nor pretending to be the world savior, chants *Namu Myoho Renge Kyo* to spread the True Dharma throughout the world entirely out of his great compassion so people in the whole world can suffer less and live a better life.



In winter, however, trees appear dead, but pine and oak trees do not wither. Grasses die, but chrysanthemums and bamboo remain unchanged. The same is true with the Lotus Sutra, which will remain forever helping people even after other sutras all disappear.

—Nichiren Shonin, *A Treatise on Protecting the Nation, Shugo Kokka-ron* (ST 15)

Little is constant in our changing world. Seasons of spring flowers and fall leaves come and go. We lose contact with friends as they move through their lives. Dear parents, grandparents, and other relatives grow old and die. Institutions come together and fall apart. Through all these our memories both stabilize us and propel us into our uncertain future. With the Lotus Sutra and Nichiren’s teachings as our guide, we can see our part in benefiting others and ensuring that the Wonderful Dharma continues for generations to come.

—Rev. Shinkyo Warner

PASSING THE BATON – PART 1

By Rev. Kanjo Bassett

In the 2015 Japanese film 'Midnight Diner,' one of the story lines involves someone apparently leaving an urn of cremated remains behind in a diner. The regular customers and the diner owner discuss what to do and decide to keep it at the diner in case someone comes back to claim it, becoming a conversation piece that runs throughout the film. One of the characters, played by Michitaka Tsutsui, is Kenzo Oishi, a man from Fukushima wasting time doing nothing in Tokyo after losing his wife in the 2011 Tohoku Earthquake Tsunami. He doesn't belong in Tokyo but doesn't want to go home. One scene resonates with me. A somewhat drunk Kenzo gets into an argument with one of the diner regulars who urges him to go home. "Well, let's toast to the departed!" He yells picking up the white ceramic cremation urn, lifting the lid with the intention of pouring the toast glass of sake into it. Looking down, he stops. "Huh?"

The urn has dirt inside, not remains, but he is not surprised. He understands what nobody else in the diner can. He gently picks up some of the dirt. "This is what you do when there is no body to bury. You don't want to bury an empty urn, so you put some dirt in to make it



feel real. What else can you do?" His wife's body wasn't found. Jolted into the reality of his situation, he decides to get his act together and goes home.

When I help with temple services, such as the 49-day ceremony after one passes away, the urn is placed on the altar for the service, then given to the family to take to the grave site. Each urn has a different weight. Some are very light, some are not. After doing it many times, you get a sense of how the deceased left this world by the weight. This person suffered from cancer, this person had a strong body, and so on. You feel the story of their life in your hands.

I had the great pleasure of meeting and working with Rev. Ryuken Mita during Obon in August 2024 on Nijima Island. The island is unique in that the entire

population is Nichiren Shu, centered around Choeiji Temple, which for more than 500 years has served as a mainstay not only of spiritual practice but also culture, education, and more.

By some mysterious connection, we both ended up there to help cover hundreds of home altar chanting visits during the busy traditional Obon period in August. I never met a fellow priest with such a generous capacity for work and the ability to think and act so quickly and instinctively on his feet. It's a gift one can only be born with.

On our last day together at Choeiji, he gave a Dharma talk in the traditional manner: starting by chanting the Lotus Sutra and Odaimoku, followed by a short prayer that flowed into his talk about a temple member's trauma from losing her mother in a tsunami and the journey of coming to terms with her grief. As he spoke, the scene from 'Midnight Diner' flashed in my mind. How many people who lost loved ones never to be found put dirt in the empty urn to make it feel real? I learned a lot from Rev. Mita and look forward to working with him again.

Passing the Baton – Part 1

"Your body, your head, feet, ten fingers, and mouth had been inherited from your parents. The relationship between your body and your parents is as inseparable as the seed is from its fruit and the body is from its shadow."

—Writings of Nichiren Shonin,
Bojikyo Ji (ST 212)

My name is Ryuken Mita, I was born and raised in Hokkaido. In Hokkaido, we inherit our sweatiness from our parents, but even there I am known as the priest always drenched in sweat. I am particularly weak in summer heat, but our hearts burned hotter in the summer of 2024 with the Paris Olympics and Paralympics.

Athletes strive and practice daily to do their best in these once-in-four-years events. Those of us who watch are deeply moved. While gymnastics and swimming are extremely popular, I am most excited by the track and field events at the main stadium.

I am now speaking to you in the attire of a priest, but in my high school days, I was on the track and field team. Being fast was the only thing I was good at since I was young, so I specialized in sprinting, like the 100-meter dash and the relay.

Among those, my favorite was the relay. Most track events, like the



100-meter dash, are individual events. The relay is the only team event. As the anchor, I would run with all my might to the finish line, carrying the baton imbued with the hopes passed along from the other three runners before me. All of the people who supported me until I could run in the competition, those who cheered for me, my teammates passing the baton—we all ran together with our hearts united. That feeling of joy is what made the relay so special to me.



Similarly, the "Ekiden" or relay marathon, where runners pass the "tasuki" (sash) to continue the race, is something that originated in Japan. I think that this spirit of inheriting thoughts and passing them along to the next person is an idea that is deeply ingrained in Japanese culture.

In that sense, we are all running a relay in our daily lives. We have our biological parents and adoptive parents, and we inherit and pass on many things from them. What do we inherit from our parents? Our facial features? Our similar personalities?

We inherit many things, but what should be most precious is life.

We, who are running this relay of life. What kind of baton are we holding as we chant the Odaimoku of "Namu Myoho

Renge Kyo" with the connection that we have received?

It is the true heart of the Buddha, which is embedded in the Odaimoku, as spoken by the Buddha Himself in the teachings of the Lotus Sutra, the teaching that the Buddha most wanted to convey to us. In Chapter 16, "The Duration of the Life of the Tathagata" in the Lotus Sutra, we always read:

*I am always thinking:
"How shall I cause all living beings
To enter into the unsurpassed way
And quickly become Buddhas?"*

The eternal Buddha is always, everywhere, thinking of everyone, all living beings, and how to help them reach the same goal as the Buddha. This most important heart of the Buddha, which we always recite, wanting to save us from the sufferings of life, is the very baton that we, who chant the Odaimoku, receive and pass on to the next person. By participating in this relay, we also pass on life.

The desire to honor and send thoughts to deceased family members, wishing to convey the heart of memorial service, arises from the fact that we are running this relay of life. My current self exists because of my parents and ancestors.

When I reflect on this, feelings of gratitude and the desire to repay kindness emerge. These feelings, passed down through the life we've inherited, transform into the strength to live earnestly, asking ourselves, "What can I do now with this life?" That is the baton of faith in the Odaimoku that we hold in our hearts through the connections we've received.

Indeed, it is unfortunate to hear stories about how we, living in the present, are becoming more and more detached from temples and priests due to the lack of mental space and energy in our own lives, but I absolutely do not believe that the heart of gratitude, repayment of kindness, and memorial service towards those who have passed life onto us is diminishing.

(Part 2 continues in the next issue)



Winter 2026

JAN 1	Memorial Day for Nichiji Shonin, one of the six main disciples of Nichiren Shonin
JAN 13	Minobusan Opening Ceremony for the New Year at Kuonji Temple.
JAN 21	Memorial Day for Nichiro Shonin, one of the six main disciples of Nichiren Shonin

FEB 3	Setsubun (last day of winter in the traditional Chinese calendar)
FEB 7	Nikko Shonin Memorial Day
FEB 15	Nirvana Day
FEB 16	Commemoration Day of the Birth of Nichiren Shonin
MAR 17-23	Spring Higan

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Nichiren Shu

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