

Nichiren Shu News

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Nichiren Shu Renews Commitment to World Peace on the 80th Anniversary of the End of World War II

Memorial Services Held at Ikegami Honmonji Temple and Chidorigafuchi National Cemetery Emphasize Need for Dialogue and Reconciliation

By Rev. Keiji Oshima

2025 marks the 80th anniversary of the end of World War II, and Nichiren Shu has held solemn memorial services that honor the lives lost in the war while charting a path toward lasting global peace. Two significant ceremonies, one at Ikegami Honmonji Temple on June 5 and another at Chidorigafuchi National Cemetery on August 15, brought together approximately 200 clergy and lay followers, united in prayer for world peace and reconciliation.

Dialogue: The Foundation of Peace

During the service at Ikegami Honmonji Temple, Rev. Nissho Kanno, Archbishop of Nichiren Shu, expressed deep concern about current global tensions while offering hope for Japan's role as a peace leader. "As the only nation to have experienced atomic bombings, Japan must not allow itself to follow the path of conflict, but instead the country must become a torchbearer for world peace, a leader in building bridges through dialogue," he declared.

This emphasis on dialogue resonated throughout both ceremonies. At the National Cemetery, Rev. Eshin Tanaka, Chief Administrator of Nichiren Shu, reminded the congregation that blind faith in one's own "righteousness" often leads to conflict. True righteousness, he explained, serves as a compass for understanding essence, enabling us to "embrace national and cultural differences, accepting and respecting one another."

Rissho Ankoku: A Vision for Today's World

Central to both services was how we apply Nichiren Shonin's teaching of Rissho Ankoku (Establishing Peace through the True Teaching) to contemporary life.



Rev. Tanaka emphasized that a genuine memorial to the war dead lies not in harboring resentment, but in "building a peaceful world of physical and spiritual tranquility on this earth."

Rev. Kanno reinforced this message, noting that "Nichiren Shonin prayed for people's peace of mind and national tranquility through the spirit of Odaimoku, calling for Rissho Ankoku. May these services serve as the first step toward realizing his aspiration."

A Global Perspective on Peace

The services demonstrated a profound awareness of contemporary global challenges. Aiko Akahane, a participant who is 82 years old, shared her thoughts on the universal nature of peace work, "Whether directly or indirectly, we are all connected to the world. We must view the realities of what is occurring in Ukraine, Palestine, and elsewhere as our own concerns, and we must ask ourselves what we can do, always maintaining conscious awareness that we are stakeholders in peace."

This global perspective was embodied by Rev. Myoko Kobayashi, who has spent decades conducting memorial services at Pacific War battlefields including

Peleliu, Saipan, and Guam. At 85, she continues her mission of reconciliation, always emphasizing that "gratitude must never be forgotten" as a foundation of lasting peace.

Symbols of Hope and Renewal

The ceremonies featured powerful symbols of hope, including approximately 20 bundles of paper cranes created by children from Nichiren Shu kindergartens and nursery schools nationwide. These colorful offerings represented the next generation's prayers for peace and their inheritance of the responsibility for building a better world.

Another participant, Seiichi Kawamura, 89, offered practical wisdom for peace-building, "Don't carry weapons. Don't seek revenge. Above all, engage in



dialogue. For peace, leaders and all of us alike must prioritize conversation."

From Memory to Action

While honoring the 370,989 unidentified remains housed at the National Cemetery, with over a million more still outside Japan, the services focused on transforming memory into positive action. Rather than dwelling on past tragedies, the emphasis was placed on learning from history to build bridges of understanding across all divides.

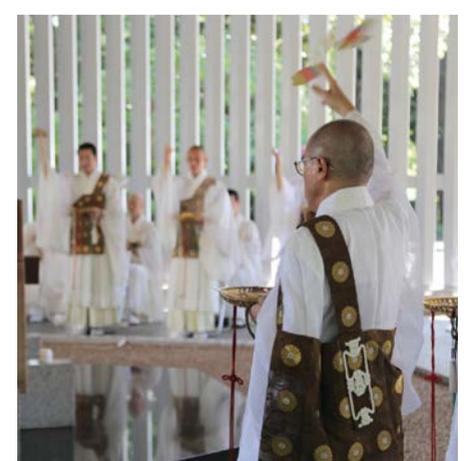
A Message of Compassionate Engagement

The 80th anniversary memorial services of Nichiren Shu delivered a clear message to the global community: lasting peace requires not the absence of conflict, but the presence of harmony tempered by compassion. As Rev. Kanno noted, peace demands "patience that is far more difficult and profound than warfare." As Nichiren Shonin shows us, through the practice of compassion, individuals and nations can deter the cycle of conflict and create genuine harmony.

Moving Forward Together

As wars and conflicts continue in various places around the world, these memorial services served as both a solemn reminder of war's devastation and an inspiring call to action. The Nichiren Shu community worldwide is invited to embrace this spirit of dialogue, forgiveness, and active peace-building in their daily lives and communities.

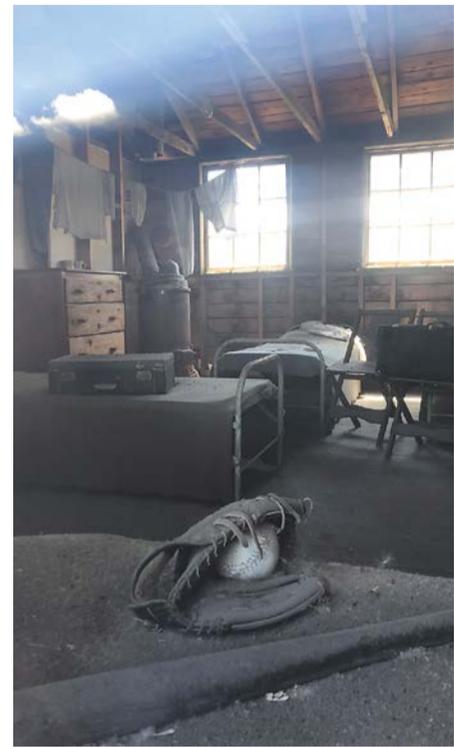
The path forward, as shown in these ceremonies, is clear. With the wisdom of the Lotus Sutra and the compassionate heart of the Bodhisattva, humanity can move past the divisions that fuel conflict and toward a world where all beings can live in security and happiness.



REMEMBERING THE JAPANESE INTERNMENT CAMPS IN AMERICA



A memorial service being held by a stone monument at the site of the former Manzanar internment camp.



A residence in one of the internment camps.

By Rev. Ekou Murakami

How would you feel if you were suddenly told to leave your home and move to an unfamiliar place? And what if you had no right to refuse, and the reason given was simply that you are Japanese or Japanese American?

Following the attack on Pearl Harbor in December 1941, U.S. President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066 in February of 1942. Japanese Americans residing in designated areas of California, Washington, Oregon, and southern Arizona were deemed “enemy aliens” and ordered into forced internment. The number of people reached as high as 120,000. Among them were first-generation Japanese immigrants who had come from Japan, as well as second-generation Japanese Americans born in the United States. Within a limited timeframe, they had to pack their belongings into a single suitcase and were driven to “assembly centers.” In fortunate cases, nearby non-Japanese individuals may have

offered to manage their household goods or even purchase them. Still, in most instances, they had no choice but to leave everything behind.

After a temporary stay at the “assembly centers,” they were sent to forced internment camps called “war relocation centers.” Photographs from that time show them crammed into trains, forced to endure long journeys, suggesting the journey was extremely painful.

These internment camps were hastily constructed in remote, desert-like areas, with ten sites established across the U.S. I visited three of the camps — Manzanar in California, Tule Lake in California, and Minidoka in Idaho. Each was situated under such harsh climatic conditions that it was difficult to imagine life there. At every site, there was a tall tower to monitor the residents. I could see the actual barracks that people had lived in.

One of these sites, the Manzanar Internment Camp, is now a historic landmark. It features a museum and is well-preserved for visitors to learn the historical facts.

The Los Angeles Buddhist Temple Association has held a memorial service here every year at the end of April. During my training as an overseas minister, I conducted a memorial service with ministers from other sects at the Manzanar Internment Camp. The camp is near Death Valley National Park and is about a three-hour drive from Los Angeles. It was battered by fierce winds and unrelenting sunlight. Spending a few days there might be bearable, but enduring years in such conditions is just unimaginable. In the year that I visited the camp, the weather was extraordinarily calm. Even so, the sunlight was so strong that it made us feel exhausted. At the museum, there were some elderly Japanese Americans who had lived at and experienced time at the internment camp, and they talked about their life at the camp. All of them were getting old. It was a rare and precious opportunity.

I interviewed some of the members of the Seattle Nichiren Buddhist Church who had experienced life in the camps. It was really impressive to me that one lady said, “It was a difficult life with many hardships, but I was also happy to spend time with many Japanese people and to be able to speak Japanese.” When we imagine life in the camps, we tend to think of only the negative parts, but her words were quite positive. Life inside the camps was different at each site and situation. In some cases, from what I have heard, people could work inside and outside the camps. Even under these difficult circumstances, they created their own pastimes. They enjoyed “Sports Day (Undokai)” and other seasonal events. Even the formation of religious groups was permitted. They made the sutra books themselves and read the sutras together. I have seen photographs of services held by the various sects in the camps and of handmade sutra books which were used then and can now be found at the Seattle Church.

Here, I would like to introduce the unique Mandala Gohonzon that Mr. and Mrs. Korekiyo, members of the Seattle Nichiren Buddhist Church, were bestowed by Rev. Kanjitsu Iijima during their internment at Minidoka in Idaho. He was the minister of the Seattle Church before the war. When the war started, he was interned earlier than others without a chance to say farewell to the members who didn’t know when or where he had gone and were very anxious. Mr. and Mrs. Korekiyo reunited with Rev. Iijima at the camp in Minidoka. According to Mrs. Korekiyo, Rev. Iijima carried three sheets of paper and a sumi brush. He inscribed three Mandala Gohonzons, one of which was given to them.

According to the inscription, it was written on April 8, 1944, on Shakyamuni

Buddha’s birthday, along with “Head Minister of American Ichijo Buddhist Temple.” This shows Rev. Iijima led the religious group, read the Lotus Sutra, and conducted the services inside the camp. Mr. and Mrs. Korekiyo must have felt relieved to see Rev. Iijima again. I wonder what feelings must have inspired him to create this Gohonzon? There is no doubt that this special Gohonzon helped Mr. and Mrs. Korekiyo sustain themselves through their time in the internment camp.

Such spiritual bonds were likely forged within the various communities in the camps, helping them endure the difficult times together. They kept this precious Gohonzon throughout their lives. Upon their request, this Gohonzon was donated to Seattle Church after both of them had passed away.

Even now, regardless of being Nikkei or non-Nikkei (related to Japanese ancestry or not), there are many people who want to learn about the internment camps. Pilgrimages to visit the sites of the camps continue to this day for people to see and learn about their history.

All of the three sites that I visited were in rough areas as written before. That is true. However, only at the Minidoka site is there a river flowing nearby. One woman who had spent time interned at both the Tule Lake and Minidoka camps, told me that the river near Minidoka had made her feel almost as if she was in Japan for a bit. I highly recommend visiting the camps. Feel the air, and talk with the knowledgeable park rangers. We can learn many things. In the meantime, please visit the websites for the camps to see the photos and to become familiar with the many stories.



At each former internment camps, a tall watchtower remains standing as a reminder of this difficult wartime history..



This unique Mandala Gohonzon was created by Rev. Iijima at the camp in Minidoka, and he gave it to Mr. and Mrs. Korekiyo while they were interned there. The couple kept it carefully as an important and treasured item for the rest of their lives.

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



Mausoleum of Nichiren Shonin on Minobusan with a carved Odaimoku on its front.

The Seven Great Parables in the Lotus Sutra (9): "Jigage"

By Rev. Kosei Uchida

We have studied the seven parables in the Lotus Sutra. The most important parable is the last one called "An Excellent Physician and His Children" in Chapter 16. Moreover, all the other six parables are expounded to help understand the deep meaning of Chapter 16. Summarized in the gatha (verses), it is famously called *Jigage*, which all Nichiren Shu ministers and followers are supposed to read and recite every day.

Before going into the parable, let's discuss its background first. Shakyamuni Buddha put His true intent in the Lotus Sutra. The Lotus Sutra originated in India and was brought to China. Tientai Chih-i (538–597) explained the importance of the Lotus Sutra in China. Master Dengyo Saicho (767–822) established the Tendai Sect on Mt. Hiei and placed his faithful reliance on the Lotus Sutra.

More than 400 years after Saicho established the Tendai Sect, Nichiren Shonin reached his conclusion, after his extensive efforts in studying Buddhism, that the Lotus Sutra is the best, because only the Lotus Sutra reveals Buddhahood can be attained by all living beings and the eternal life of the Buddha.

Nichiren Shonin often says in his writings on how important *Jigage* is. "The Lotus Sutra consists of 28 chapters. Of all of them, Chapter 2 and Chapter 16 are especially important and should be read every day, because Chapter 2 suggests that all the living beings can attain Buddhahood and Chapter 16 clearly says the Buddha has eternal life. *Jigage* is the most essential part of the Lotus Sutra. All of the heart and soul of the Buddha is put into *Jigage*."

Allow me to present my most touching *Jigage* phrase, "I know who is practicing the Way to Buddhahood and who is not. Therefore I expound various teachings to all living beings according to their capacities." This part is always encouraging and relieving for me, because the Buddha talks to me like "When you practice the Way of Buddhism, you sometimes grow weary, feeling like giving it all up. I understand and accept what you feel. Do not worry. I will expound my teaching while watching for the proper time and

occasion." I am enormously impressed with His compassionate phrase. Again, think deeply about how profound the teaching of *Jigage* is and how wonderful it is that we can read and recite *Jigage* every day.

Kanjin Honzon-sho (2) – Why Is the Odaimoku So Valuable?

By Rev. Sensho Komukai

Kanjin Honzon-sho consists of 30 questions and answers. While in discussion on "mutual possession of the ten realms," a doubt arises, "According to the Lotus Sutra, all the living beings can attain Buddhahood, because each and every living being has a Buddha nature. But that's hard to believe. Shakyamuni Buddha, free of all delusions and evil passions, is the lord of all the worlds in the universe, always trying to save all sentient beings, therefore highly and widely respected. How could it be possible that the Buddha resides in each of our humble minds?"

The answer is: It can be possible by accepting and keeping the faith in the five characters of *myo, ho, ren, ge* and *kyo* (*The Lotus Sutra of the Wonderful Dharma*). Why and how? The Buddha says in Chapter 16 of the Lotus Sutra, "The duration of my life is innumerable. I obtained the eternal life by the practice of the way of Bodhisattvas." He completed six Bodhisattva practices, such as generosity, observing precepts, patience, endurance, meditation, and wisdom. His many good deeds in the realm of Bodhisattva resulted in getting the high virtue of being a Buddha. Those who have become Buddhas are not Buddhas from the beginning. They attain Buddhahood only after they have experienced the other nine realms, especially through the practice of the Bodhisattva way, because the Bodhisattva practice is not merely for personal enlightenment but also for benefiting others. As ordinary beings, we can also reach the realm of the virtuous Buddha if we attend to the practice of the Bodhisattva way. As we practice more, evil minds will disappear, and the Buddha nature we originally possess will fully come to fruition for us to reach the state of the Buddha mind.

Chapter 16 of the Lotus Sutra is the most important chapter and the heart of the Lotus Sutra, holding the highest position in all the Buddhist sutras, because His eternity and His true intent are only shown in this chapter. Therefore, to chant *Namu Myoho Renge Kyo* means to devote yourself to the Lotus Sutra, especially to its most essential teaching, which is Chapter 16.

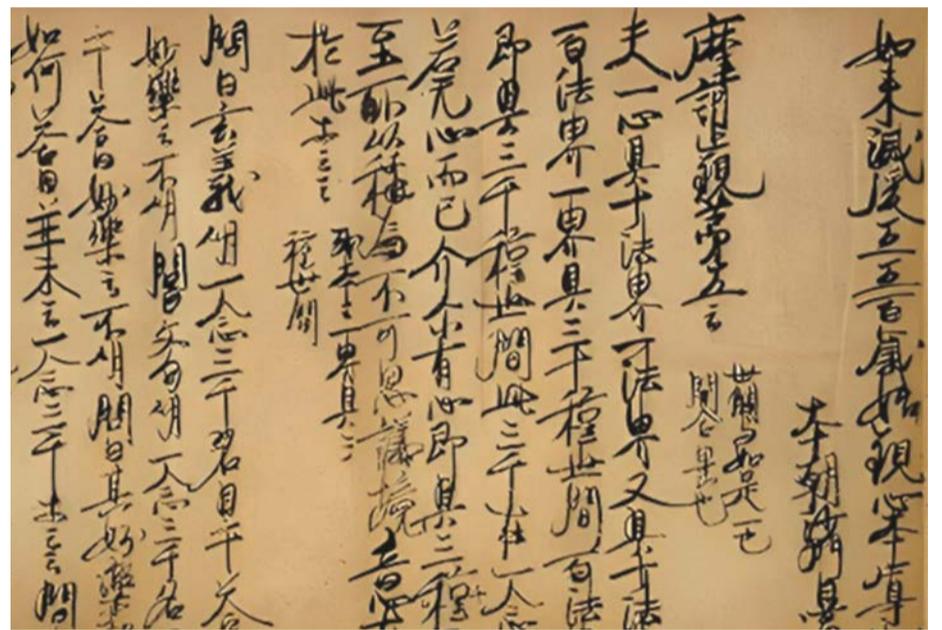
What if you have devout faith in His eternal teaching? Nichiren clearly answered, "Shakyamuni Buddha's meritorious deeds of practicing the Bodhisattva way and attaining Buddhahood are altogether contained in the five characters of *myo, ho, ren, ge,* and *kyo*. Consequently, when we uphold these five words, the merits which He accumulated before and after His attainment of Buddhahood are naturally transferred to us."

Why are these "naturally" transferred to us? Take a look at the parables in the Lotus Sutra. The parent-child relationship is focused in "The Burning House and the Three Carts" in Chapter 3, "The Rich Man and His Poor Son" in Chapter 4, and "An Excellent Physician" in Chapter 16. Shakyamuni Buddha and we as ordinary beings have a parent-child relationship. He is our father. We are all His children.

Nichiren continued, "Shakyamuni Buddha, who has attained Perfect Enlightenment, is our flesh and blood. All the merits He has accumulated before and after attaining Buddhahood are our bones." We are rooted in the flesh and blood of the Buddha. The Buddha says in Chapter 16, "My life is eternal. I am always here, expounding the Dharma.

I shall never pass away." The eternal Buddha never betrays nor forsakes us, because the Buddha is our father. Just as the poor son unexpectedly received invaluable jewels in Chapter 4, we will be naturally given the great merits from the Buddha when we strive to follow the Bodhisattva practices.

We are endowed with Buddha nature. We can cultivate the seed of Buddhahood inside ourselves through the Dharma. When we practice, all of us can depart from the stage of a common person and advance to the realm of the Buddha. Do not think that the Buddha's attainment of Buddhahood through His practice of the Bodhisattva way is unrealistic for you. Let us grow the seed of Buddhahood through the Odaimoku, *Namu Myoho Renge Kyo*.



Detail from the first page of the original text of *Kanjin Honzon-sho*.



Now coming to the Lotus Sutra, when the enlightenment of women was revealed, the enlightenment of mothers was realized. When a man as wicked as Devadatta could attain Buddhahood, the enlightenment of fathers was realized. These are the two proclamations of the Buddha in the Devadatta chapter, and this is the reason why the Lotus Sutra is the sutra of the filial way among all the Buddhist scriptures.

—Nichiren Shonin, *Open Your Eyes to the Lotus Teaching, Kaimoku-sho (ST 98)*

In this passage, Nichiren reminds us of the deep connection we have with our parents and all of our ancestors. Because the Lotus Sutra saves all beings in the future, present, and past, our practice of the Wonderful Dharma is an expression of our generosity and determination to benefit even those beings with whom we no longer share the world, and to continue benefiting those who come after us.

—Rev. Shinkyō Warner

80 YEARS AFTER THE WAR: NEED TO ELIMINATE NUCLEAR WEAPONS AND “GASSHO TO ALL LIFE”

By Rev. Kugyo Ono

PRAYERS IN HIROSHIMA: This year 2025, marks the 80th anniversary of the end of World War II. On June 15 at Ikegami Honmonji Temple, memorial services for the war dead and a global Rishso Peace Prayer Ceremony were conducted. On August 15, the Anniversary of the End of the War, messages of condolence, and prayers for peace were delivered on YouTube by Rev. Nissho Kanno, Archbishop of Nichiren Shu, and a statement was issued from Chief Administrator Rev. Eshin Tanaka. In addition to the annual service and peace prayers at Chidorigafuchi National Cemetery, commemorative services are being held this year in Nichiren Shu temples in Japan and around the world.

It has also been 80 years since the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. In the Nichiren Shu Rishso Peace Association, every year we hold a memorial service on August 5 in Hiroshima Peace Memorial Park for the victims of the atomic bombings and the war dead. The Japan Religious Persons Council for Peace also attends, and we conduct a joint interfaith ceremony featuring Buddhist monks, Tenrikyo priests, and Christian ministers as a “Prayer through Fasting.”

From August 4, I traveled to Hiroshima and, together with my father, Bunkou, and my son — three generations of our family — offered prayers and chanted *Namu Myoho Renge Kyo* for the victims of the atomic bombings and those who perished in the war.

VOICE FROM NAGASAKI: Additionally, I extended my journey to Nagasaki, attending local memorial services and testimonial meetings with survivors of the atomic bombing. I had the opportunity to talk with Mr. Terumi Tanaka, a representative committee member of the Japan Confederation of A- and H-bomb Sufferers Organizations (Nihon Hidankyo), who is himself a survivor of the Nagasaki bombing.

Following is a small part of Mr. Tanaka’s testimony at the Nagasaki Gathering for the 80th Anniversary of the Bombing held on August 7.

“I saw children, blown by the blast, pressed against the wall and burned, left blackened, clinging to the wall...



Nuclear weapons must never be used. Why? Because as a result, inhumane, truly brutal situations are created — this truth must be told widely across the world, and together we must unite in a movement to prevent and abolish the use of nuclear weapons.”

This year, Hiroshima and Nagasaki are attracting global attention. The voices of atomic bomb survivors are being heard around the world more than ever. The reason is that last year’s Nobel Peace Prize was awarded to Nihon Hidankyo. Through cooperation with the Japan Religious Persons Council for Peace, I was able to accompany the group to Oslo, Norway, for the Nobel Peace Prize Ceremony and take part in the commemorative events. Details of this trip were published in Japanese in the Nichiren Shu newspaper, but here I wish to recount some of my experiences in the English-language *Nichiren Shu News*.

CHANTING IN NORWAY: I may have been the only Buddhist monk to celebrate the Nobel Peace Prize in Oslo. I believe that it is very important to oppose war and aspire for peace as a religious person, and to assert “No More Hibakusha (exposure to nuclear blast)” so that nuclear tragedy never occurs again anywhere on Earth.



The more I learn about the realities of the atomic bombings, the stronger my conviction becomes that nuclear weapons are utterly incompatible with human society and with the environment.

By participating in the parade after the award ceremony in my monk’s robe, I wished to show the people of Norway and the world that Japanese Buddhists also rejoice in the Nobel Peace Prize being awarded to the Hibakusha organizations and that we hope this will help move us closer to realizing a world without nuclear weapons.

PEACE IN THE WORLD: Even as the Nobel Peace Prize award ceremony was being held, the ravages of war continued in Ukraine and Gaza: people were killing and being killed, grieving in sorrow, while the world trembled at the risk of nuclear war. As I walked through Oslo while chanting, I reflected on the following: when nations, ethnicities, or religions differ, countless forms of common sense, justice, and righteousness arise, and the ideal of world peace may appear as fragile as a castle built on sand. Yet the desire to live in health and happiness is surely a universal wish that is shared across all peoples and faiths.

If one seeks happiness by depriving others of theirs, it leads to cycles of hatred and reprisal, driving happiness away. I recalled the Minobusan Kuonji slogan, “Live Together, Prosper Together.” If we aim to “prosper together,” there are no more enemies. We need to expand the “Co-prosperity Movement” that moves Rishso Ankoku — from a national to global scale. By aiming for world co-prosperity, we may create a world that is at peace and free from war.

As human intelligence grows, we still cannot stop natural disasters — earthquakes, tsunamis, heavy rains, flooding, and wildfires. Many also die of infectious diseases like coronavirus or cancer. Some perish in traffic accidents. Since the time of Shakyamuni Buddha, the impermanence of all things and the “four sufferings and eight pains” of life have not changed. Nature remains fierce; life is full of suffering. Why, then, should we inflict further suffering through man-made wars, injuring and killing others? It is the height of folly and barbarity. If there are techniques and budgets for building nuclear weapons and drones, we should instead develop methods to control nature, invest in disaster prevention, and ensure healthy and happy lives for all living beings.

PEACE SUSTAINED BY ODAIMOKU: When Japan suffered under the Mongol invasions, it is likely that the Great Teacher Nichiren, through reading records and accounts, was aware of the horrific tragedies that befell Tsushima and Iki Islands — the burning of villages, the indiscriminate abductions, and the slaughter of people. Once war breaks out, morality, human rights, and law all vanish. It was for this very reason that Nichiren Shonin issued his warnings to the Hojo shogunate. In more recent times, the air raids over Japanese cities, the Battle of Okinawa, and the atomic bombings were likewise inhumane.

Yet in the 80 years since the war, Japan has not suffered any harm from wars. This is something for which we should be sincerely grateful for. Japan has been protected up to now and still is today. Some may say, “Japan is only protected by the U.S., under a nuclear umbrella,” but even this, including the ongoing system within which the U.S. protects Japan, has meant that there have been no casualties or losses from war. One must focus on this important fact. I believe this can only be attributed to the continued existence of Nichiren Shu today, and above all, the uninterrupted chanting of the Odaimoku, the soul of Nichiren Shonin.

Let us work together to help the world aim for mutual prosperity, so that war may naturally disappear. The banner of Rishso Ankoku — World Co-prosperity is by no means built on sand.

Fall 2025

OCT 10 Ceremony in Memory of the Founder’s Exile to Sado Island
OCT 13 Oeshiki
OCT 31 Ceremony of Changing the Robes on the Statue of Nichiren Shonin, Minobusan
NOV 11 Nichiren Shonin Commemoration Day for the Komatsubara Persecution

NOV 13 Memorial for Nichizo Shonin
DEC 8 Jodo-e (Enlightenment Day) commemorating the day when the Buddha attained Enlightenment
DEC 31 New Year’s Eve Service; Bell Ringing Ceremony held throughout Japan

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