

PASSING THE BATON – PART 3: FINDING CONNECTIONS

By Rev. Ryuken Mita
(Translated by Rev. Kanjo Bassett)

Part 2 described Hiroko Tanaka and her mother fleeing the tsunami during the Okushiri Island earthquake: “I tried climbing the mountain by grabbing the grass with my hands, but I kept slipping. Then, from behind, my mom shouted, ‘Go!’ and pushed my behind so hard that I finally reached the top. When I looked back, my mom was no longer there, only a pitch-black sea.”

The shock of losing her mother right before her eyes overwhelmed Hiroko. She was filled with guilt, as if her mother had disappeared in exchange for her own life. Her mother’s younger sister, Mayumi, came to get her five days after the earthquake since Hiroko had lost her father many years before. Hiroko has no memory from the time when she was all alone until her aunt embraced her. Even after 23 years, her mother’s body has not been found.

Aunt Mayumi and Hiroko lived together in Hakodate until Hiroko got married. Hiroko has a daughter, Rina, and her family of three live in Hakodate. Hiroko has kept the story of the disaster hidden from her daughter.

Recently, she fought with her aunt about visiting Okushiri for the tsunami memorial and has been out of contact since. “I don’t want to remember that sad feeling,” she explained. “I didn’t want Rina to know, so I fought with my aunt,” then looked down.

It took great resolve for Hiroko to talk about these painful experiences. “What can I do now?” she asked. “I saw images on TV of the earthquake, tsunami, and fires in Tohoku. When I saw they were the same as those from Okushiri, I realized this sad memory will never go away. I thought about what to do. I remembered my mom. I clasped my hands in prayer toward my father’s photo, chanted ‘*Namu Myoho Renge Kyo*’ and then while gazing at the photo, my mother’s face came to mind. Maybe that is what I can do now, right?”

I felt her connection to the Odaimoku and said, “This is a Nichiren Shu temple, so let’s pray by chanting ‘*Namu Myoho Renge Kyo*’ and convey the feelings in your heart.” During the sutra chanting of the memorial service, Hiroko started crying. Unable to move while still clasping her hands, unable to chant the Odaimoku, unable to even offer incense at the altar. After that service, she came several times to join in prayer, but was unable to move, still deep in her sorrow.



Then in 2016, at the 23rd anniversary of the Okushiri earthquake, our temple organized a pilgrimage to Minobusan to coincide with cherry blossom season. I wanted to take Hiroko to a special place, so I invited her personally. Initially, she hesitated, but after entrusting Rina to a friend, she joined the trip.

At Minobusan, we paid our respects at the Main Hall and Nichiren Shonin’s memorial, then took the ropeway to Okunoin Shishinkaku at the top of Mt. Minobu. There, I explained, “This temple is called the Hall of Remembering Parents,” and described its origin.

Shishinkaku is on the mountain where Nichiren Shonin spent his last years, continuously showing gratitude to his deceased parents. Every day for nine years, he climbed to the mountaintop, faced the direction of his hometown of Kominato in Awa Province, now Chiba Prefecture, and chanted Odaimoku to repay his gratitude to his parents. Nichiren’s disciple, Nichiro Shonin, built the temple the year after Nichiren’s passing to convey to future generations Nichiren’s profound filial piety.

I wanted to connect Hiroko with the heart of our founder, who chanted the Odaimoku with gratitude for his parents. Hiroko held back tears as she listened to my story. “Maybe I’m the same,” she said. After these few words filled with various emotions, before the statue of Nichiren praying for his distant parents, a smile appeared on Hiroko’s face for the first time in many years.

At home in Hokkaido, Hiroko set up a small altar and her parents’ memorial tablets. The memorial services began again. I visited monthly to pray. She no longer cried, and little by little, I could hear her chanting the Odaimoku behind me.

Three months after returning, the Odaimoku was opening her heart. Hiroko, who had fought with her aunt about returning to Okushiri, decided to contact her after a long time. She wanted to tell Aunt Mayumi that she had started

to perform memorial services for her parents and that they should go back to Okushiri together on July 12.

Hiroko then learned that her aunt was fighting terminal cancer. Hiroko had rebelled against her aunt as a child. Now, she wanted to repay her aunt’s kindness as she was like a foster mother to her. She took care of her aunt. Free from any lingering resentments, she stayed by her aunt’s side, conveying her gratitude and filling all the old gaps from past arguments. “Thank you for everything. Thank you.” Her aunt’s last words to her were filled with gratitude. Mayumi passed away in January 2017.

I visited Hiroko’s home for the memorial service the next month. She took her juzu from a small pouch, and the service began. After offering prayers for her parents and her aunt, she showed me the pouch and said, “I got this pouch from my aunt. She got it from my mother when she was a child. She used the pouch that my mother made at school to store her medicine. Now, I use it to store my juzu. When I chant *Namu Myoho Renge Kyo*,’ I feel connected to both my mother and my aunt, and it makes me happy. Everyone’s lives are connected, right?”

“It’s because you chant *Namu Myoho Renge Kyo*’ that you can realize everyone’s lives are connected,” I said.

In *Bojikyō Ji*, Nichiren wrote: “My head is my parents’ head, my feet are my parents’ feet, my ten fingers are my parents’ ten fingers, my mouth is my parents’ mouth. If I offer, it is like offering seeds and fruits, like body and shadow.”

Nichiren’s words mean that we inherit our bodies from our parents, we are grateful for having been born and raised and are as one with our parents. Everyone will face the pain of losing their father or mother someday. Even so, if our bodies are one with our parents, then our hearts are also one.

Nichiren Shonin teaches that the Lotus Sutra is the teaching of the lotus flower. When a lotus blooms, the seed is already present within the flower. In

the same way, if our parents are saved by the Buddha’s heart of the Lotus Sutra, then we are also saved. The relationship between parent and child is like that of seed and fruit, body and shadow, an inseparable unity.

The life we have received, along with the baton of chanting the Odaimoku, is imbued with the Buddha’s most precious teachings of the Lotus Sutra. It contains the wish to save us all from suffering, to understand the meaning of living, and to live with gratitude, hoping for everyone’s happiness. By deepening our faith and chanting the Odaimoku, we along with our parents wish to be enveloped in the vast heart of the Lotus Sutra.

On the 49th memorial day after Aunt Mayumi’s passing, Hiroko told her daughter Rina for the first time about the disaster in Okushiri, explaining how it felt as if her mother’s life was lost in place of her own. She had not been able to speak of it before because of the overwhelming grief. She only wanted to forget it all. Rina responded, “Auntie told me about it at the hospital. She said you were very sad and couldn’t talk about it now, but when you were ready you would tell me and that I should help you.”

Once again, Hiroko was moved to tears by the warm heart that her Aunt Mayumi had left behind.

The following spring, Hiroko went to Okushiri with her daughter Rina for the first time since the earthquake. Upon returning to Hakodate, Hiroko smiled and said, “When I went to the place where I parted from Mom, I thought about what happened. When she pushed me and said, ‘Go!’, what she meant was ‘Live on!’ Looking forward, auntie’s words meant the same thing. I’ve only been looking down and not moving forward. But now, I need to move ahead.”

Now when she faces her altar and connects her heart with the hearts of her parents and her aunt, Hiroko finds the deepening of her chanting of the Odaimoku to be the force that helps her re-examine the meaning of life, move peacefully towards happiness, and move forward, all at her own pace.

Hiroko’s childhood memory of her mother as she chanted towards the photo of her father was the baton of faith that was passed down to her. “I too will one day pass something on to Rina.”

As Nichiren Shonin always reflected on gratitude towards his parents, we can offer our gratitude to our families and ancestors, and chant the Odaimoku to contemplate the connection of life: “The splendid bonds of Odaimoku, I pass it to others, and I too take it.”

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One Mind, One Fleet: A Nichiren Buddhist Chaplain’s Journey into the United States Navy

By Rev. Kanjin Cederman

On April 8, I reached a significant milestone in my journey of service, faith, and leadership by graduating from the Basic Leadership Course at the Naval Chaplaincy School and Center in Newport, Rhode Island. This achievement builds upon my earlier completion of Officer Development School (ODS) in August 2025, marking my formal transition into commissioned naval service and my continued development as a spiritual leader within the U.S. Navy. This moment represents the culmination of a dedicated five-year journey of preparation, discernment, education, and service.

Alongside my military training, I have completed my Master of Divinity degree, equipping me with the theological, pastoral, and academic foundation necessary for chaplaincy. The integration of formal religious education with Navy leadership training reflects my dual calling—to serve both the Dharma and the nation with integrity, compassion, and wisdom. My formation has been shaped by scholarly study, lived Buddhist practice, and real-world leadership experience cultivated through years of enlisted service.

The process of becoming a Navy Chaplain involves three essential phases. First is the completion of theological education, such as a Master of Divinity, which provides spiritual and doctrinal grounding. Second is endorsement by a recognized religious organization, affirming my authority to represent and teach within my faith tradition. Third is commissioning through the United States Navy Chaplain Corps, where I am trained to function as both an officer and a spiritual leader within the military environment. Although I will become 50 years old this year, I was relieved to pass the rigorous physical exams of the Navy and Marines, including a 7.6-mile hike with a 60-pound backpack. I deeply felt the protection and blessing of the Eternal Buddha and Nichiren Shonin, pushing me to take the extra step and not give up. As an official Chaplin in the U.S. Navy, I bring valuable leadership experience that strengthens my ability to relate to Sailors and Marines across all ranks.



An important part of this journey was the final Care Board selection process, which served as a culminating evaluation before commissioning. This board consisted of an interview with senior officers who presented complex, and at times multi-part, situational scenarios. Each question required a response within approximately three minutes, demanding clarity, composure, and precision. The expectation was to provide succinct, well-reasoned answers that demonstrated not only pastoral sensitivity, but also sound judgment, ethical awareness, and the ability to operate effectively under pressure. This experience reinforced the importance of being both spiritually grounded and professionally decisive in the role of a Navy Chaplain.

With formal endorsement from my religious organization, I am authorized to teach, lead, and conduct Buddhist practices in accordance with my tradition. This includes offering services, guiding meditation, providing doctrinal instruction, and supporting the spiritual development of those seeking the Buddhist path. I strive to ensure that what I teach remains faithful to my lineage while also being accessible and meaningful within the diverse and

dynamic environment of military life.

As a Buddhist Chaplain, I will wear the distinctive Buddhist emblem—represented by the Dharma Wheel (Dharmachakra)—as a symbol of the Buddha’s teachings and the path to awakening. This emblem signifies not only my religious identity but also my commitment to guide others through suffering toward clarity, resilience, and inner peace.

In my role, I will perform a wide range of duties: offering confidential spiritual counseling, conducting Buddhist services and meditation sessions, supporting Sailors and Marines and their families during times of crisis, and advising command leadership on matters of morale, ethics, and religious accommodation. I will also ensure the free exercise of religion for all service members, regardless of faith tradition, embodying the mission to serve all.

A unique and meaningful aspect of my ministry has been introducing traditional Japanese Buddhist cultural practices into the naval environment. I conducted the first Channoyu (The Way of Tea) gathering with Navy Sailors, using the ritual not only as a cultural experience but as a tool for mindfulness, presence, and calm during counseling

services. Through the quiet discipline and intentionality of the tea ceremony, Sailors are offered a grounded space to reflect, decompress, and reconnect.

I also delivered a lecture on the Nichiren Buddhist teaching of “Itai Doshin,” emphasizing that although we come from diverse backgrounds and traditions, we can unite in purpose and spirit. In sharing this teaching with fellow chaplains, I sought to foster deeper understanding, cooperation, and a sense of “one-mind” among those entrusted with the care of others.

Central to my calling is my commitment to sharing the teachings of the Lotus Sutra. This sacred text offers profound hope, resilience, and universal awakening. It is my goal to educate future believers and make these teachings available to any Sailor or Marine seeking meaning, purpose, or spiritual grounding.

It is essential that Buddhism becomes part of the broader tapestry of the United States culture, which is why I accept this Mission from the Buddha and Nichiren Shonin. I am committed to organizing and creating resources that will support future generations of chaplains and Buddhist practitioners within our military and hospitals, helping to establish a strong and lasting foundation for Buddhist ministry.

I will become the seventh Buddhist Chaplain in the history of the United States Navy and the first to serve as a representative of the Nichiren Buddhist tradition. This is both a profound honor and a solemn responsibility. It is my vow and hope that I can faithfully represent the Buddha Dharma in a way that benefits all sentient beings.

I would like to thank the International Section of Nichiren Shu Shumuin Headquarters for their support throughout this lengthy process.

My journey is a reflection of my own deep commitment to compassionate service, grounded in Buddhist principles, and strengthened through military leadership. I will continue to serve with the intention that the light of the Lotus Sutra remains present and accessible—guiding others through the challenges of military life with wisdom, courage, and compassion.



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THE CIRCLE OF SHODAIGYO

By Rev. Yotatsu Chiamulera
and Rev. Shinkyō Warner

We can understand *Shodaigyo* as a practice of returning. Not returning to a distant or supernatural place, but a gradual return to the true reality of life. Its entire structure seems to be built around this movement: approach the Buddha, go deeply into a practice, then return to our daily lives with transformed perception.

This practice was founded in Japan by Rev. Nichijun Yukawa in the 1940s and then further developed by Rev. Tairyū Gondo who also wrote the book, *The Journey on the Path of Righteousness*. More important than its historical origin is the interior experience that it seeks to awaken.

Shodaigyo starts and ends in the same way: with *Raihai*, reverent salutation to the Buddha. This does not seem accidental. The practice begins by showing that what we seek is not necessarily involved with realizing an extraordinary state, but in knowing how to approach reality correctly.

The position one takes in *Raihai* is similar to the “child’s pose” in yoga. Not in the sense of tantrums or childishness, but in the sense of recovering a mind with the capacity of seeing without rigidity. A mind less hardened by certainty, less imprisoned by the constant need to control everything.

In *Raihai* we also touch the feet of the Buddha. In the traditions of India, touching someone’s feet is a gesture of profound respect. As part of this practice, this gesture points towards something more intimate: recognizing that a wisdom exists separate from the small mental construction we normally call “I.” Little by little, the body enters the practice even before the words of the mind.

THE PLACE OF THE JOURNEY: Then comes *Dojoge*, verses of the *dojo*. The word *dojo* has an extremely rich meaning. “Do” means a road, a practice, a way of living. “Jo” means a place. A *dojo* therefore is not a physical space. It is a place of transformation. But this idea has another aspect that is even more profound. A *dojo* is always a place along a journey.

Arriving at a *dojo*, we learn something, then leave again. Little by little, we start to perceive that all of life functions like this. Our home is a *dojo*.



Our body is also a *dojo*. We spend years thinking that these things belong to us permanently, but the experience of life slowly reveals the contrary. We live in different houses. Our body changes continually. People enter and leave our lives. Everything that seems solid reveals its transitory nature.

When we resist this, we suffer. When we start to accept this, something in us relaxes. Perhaps because of this, *Shodaigyo* uses the body, breathing, silence, and repetition. This practice does not try to convince us intellectually. It allows the entire body to understand something that the mind by itself can only accept with difficulty.

Then, we acknowledge the three treasures: the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha. In the tradition of the Lotus Sutra, we also revere Nichiren Shonin as the living symbol of the transmission of the Dharma from Shakyamuni Buddha to the Superior Practice Bodhisattva, the leader of the Bodhisattvas from Underground.

THE SOUND AND THE SPACE: Before the chanting starts, there is an initial silence. This silence has a very profound importance in *Shodaigyo*. It marks a transition between the scattered rhythm of daily life and the interior space of practice.

We arrive at the *dojo* bringing our thoughts, preoccupations, anxiety, memories, and distractions. The mind continues to accelerate through the movement of the day. That’s why *Shodaigyo* doesn’t start immediately with intense recitation of the Odaimoku. First there is a deceleration.

Nichijun Yukawa (1876-1968) was born in Nagasaki province. He received monastic ordination at the age of 11. After finishing his studies at Sosan University at Minobusan, he served as a priest responsible for several temples in the provinces of Fukushima, Nagasaki, and Fukuoka.

In 1950, he became the Administrator of Seichoji Temple, where he founded a school of spiritual education. Later, he was transferred to Honpoji Temple in Kyoto.

When he was in his 50s, he spent time undergoing treatment at a hospital. From this experience, he arrived at the conviction that it is precisely through the

there only exists sound, breathing, the body, and presence.

In the Lotus Sutra, enlightenment does not appear as an escape from the world or a negation of human experience. It appears as a transformation of the way we see reality itself. It does not mean the absence of suffering, fear, or sadness, but rather not to be completely dragged through these states.

In the Mahayana tradition, especially in the developed interpretations around the Lotus Sutra and preserved by Nichiren Shu, there is an understanding that samsara and nirvana are not separate realities. Awakening does not happen outside our common lives, but precisely within them. During *Shodaigyo*, we start to perceive this directly.

The mind continues to produce thoughts, anxiety continues to emerge, and anger continues to appear. But the practice creates a small space between our consciousness and these mental states. Little by little, we see that we no longer need to believe and follow everything that arises in our mind.

What we call the Ten Realms can be understood precisely this way: different states of life that we continually experience. Some moments seem close to Hell, marked by intense suffering. Or close to Wrath, dominated by aggression and competition. Other moments, we seem close to Bodhisattvas, when we see the sincere desire to relieve the suffering of others. There can even be flashes of the state of the Buddha, times marked by serenity, presence, and interior liberation. *Shodaigyo* does not eliminate any of these states. It teaches us to observe them without building a fixed identity around them.

And here is an important point. Meditation does not mean stopping thoughts or completely emptying the mind. Instead, it is a return to the present moment, observing thoughts without being completely dragged along by them. Gradually, the practice keeps creating a state of attention that is more open, in which we start to perceive the mind without being entirely confused with everything it produces.

Then we arrive at the Odaimoku: *Namu Myōhō Renge Kyō*. Rev. Gondo raised a profound question about this chanting: do we chant the Odaimoku, or does the Odaimoku chant us?

This question touches the center of the practice. Normally, we feel that an “I” exists, separately observing the world, practicing the Dharma and trying to attain this thing called enlightenment. However, during the chanting of the Odaimoku something slowly starts to change. The repetition of Odaimoku continues, the rhythm of the beat, our synchronized breathing, and the vibrations of our voices seem, ever so gently, to weaken this rigid separation between “I” and the practice. For a few moments, the habitual sensation disappears of someone trying to “arrive” at some spiritual place. In that time,

SILENCE, MERIT AND GRATITUDE: This is why the practice does not end with the Odaimoku. After chanting, we return to silence. This silence is not just the absence of sound. It helps us see how this practice continues its effects even after we return to our daily lives.

This is why there is silence both before and after chanting. The first silence collects the mind. The second silence matures into what was awakened during the chanting.

After intense chanting, we recognize something still reverberating in our bodies. Breathing slows down naturally. Our mental rhythm loses a little of its usual hardness. Thoughts continue to appear, but they no longer have

In “Essential Parts of Faith and the Practice of the Lotus Sutra,” Rev. Yukawa wrote: “Very busy people should at least practice daily the discipline of one reverence and three recitations. Whoever goes to work can practice on the road, in a vehicle, or even lying down. Having sincere faith, it is possible to practice in any circumstance. What’s important is to continue practicing in a constant fashion.”

In the same way, he emphasizes the continuous practice of the Odaimoku: “In venerating the Buddha Shakyamuni, you learn to respect human beings.”

This is why he treated every person as someone worthy of reverence. He passed away in 1968 at the age of 92.

the same weight. There is only a simple quiet, as if the mind has finally loosened its constant need to control and react to everything.

Maybe it is exactly this back and forth between silence, breathing, sound, and presence that makes *Shodaigyo* work not just as a ritual, but as a gradual transformation of the way we live in our own body and our own mind.

It is this second silence which brings us to the next part of the practice: dedication of merits, not just to ourselves, but also to those we journey with, those who have helped us, those who have already left us, and to all beings. Little by little, we start to perceive that our lives have never existed separate from other lives.

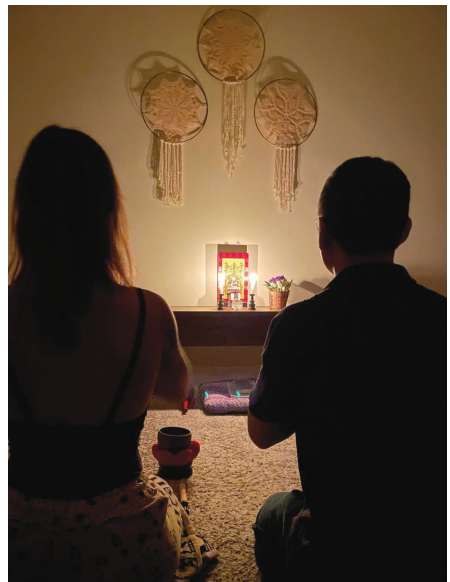
Here what we call merit is maybe just this: seeing with more clarity how things are and how many things we continually receive from other beings. This perception naturally gives birth to gratitude. And when gratitude appears, we slowly start to abandon ourselves as the center of our lives.

THE PROMISE AND THE RETURN: Then we come to the four great vows.

“Sentient beings are innumerable; I vow to save them all. Our desires are inexhaustible; I vow to quench them

all. The teachings of the Buddha are innumerable; I vow to study them all. The way of the Buddha is unexcelled. I vow to attain the path sublime.”

There is an interpretation that relates the four great vows to the four great Bodhisattvas from Underground as described in Chapter 15 of the Lotus Sutra. The vow to save all beings can be understood as an expression of the Steadily-Established Practice Bodhisattva. The vow to extinguish all illusions brings up the Pure Practice



Egmont Højskolen Students Visit Jogyo-ji Temple

By Rev. Chitoku Kawaguchi

On April 11, 29 students from Egmont Højskolen in Denmark visited Jogyo-ji Temple in Yaizu City, Shizuoka Prefecture, as part of their graduation trip. Around a third of the students, ages 20 to 50, live with disabilities.

Folk high schools, *højskoler*, are a uniquely Danish form of adult residential education, offering non-formal learning without examinations. Egmont Højskolen was founded in 1956 and is distinctive even among them. Students with and without disabilities live, study, and engage in daily life side by side, embodying the school’s core philosophy of inclusion. This commitment was evident in their visit, as fellow students assisted their peers using wheelchairs so everyone could take part in the temple’s ascetic practices. The visit itself was made possible by a Yaizu resident who had studied at Egmont Højskolen.

The students changed into traditional attire and undertook the water purification practice in the Nichiren Shu traditional style. According to tradition, water washes away physical impurities and earthly desires.

Following the practice, the students prayed in the main hall and received a Kito Blessing from several priests. They also had the opportunity to witness a sacred ceremony inside the temple, an experience that offered them a profound sense of mental and physical purity.

Drawing on my previous experience as an international minister, I had the privilege of leading the invocation and dedication in English and offered a Dharma talk after the service. Priests from the Central Shizuoka Nichiren Shu Youth Association, Gomyokai, also assisted in hosting the event.



The principal of Egmont Højskolen expressed deep gratitude to the priests, noting that attending a Buddhist service and receiving a blessing was a rare and meaningful opportunity that Danish citizens would seldom have. He thanked them warmly for praying for the students’ health, bright futures, and safe journey home.

Following the service, the students performed traditional Danish songs for residents of Yaizu City, and the connection was further deepened through a local homestay program.

Rev. Juen Takatsuka, the resident minister of Jogyo-ji, reflected on the significance of the day: “Propagating Buddhist teachings in Denmark itself presents considerable challenges, so welcoming Danish visitors here in Japan was an outstanding opportunity to introduce Nichiren Shu to them.”

As inbound tourism continues to grow across Japan, this experience suggests a promising path forward: even in regions where direct propagation is difficult, the temples of Japan can become meaningful points of encounter with the Dharma for visitors from around the world.



The Danish folk students participated in water purification and other rituals at Jogyo-ji Temple.

Bodhisattva. The vow to learn all the teachings of the Buddha comes from the Limitless Practice Bodhisattva. And the vow to attain the supreme way calls forth the Superior Practice Bodhisattva.

Even more important than the literal correspondence is the way that this reading transforms the vows in our lives. When we recite these vows, we are not just repeating ancient phrases. We are bringing these promises and these beings into our own lives. We are continually remembering the direction we want to follow, knowing that we continue to be imperfect, insecure, and incomplete.

These vows have a very special beauty, because they do not come from human perfection. They come precisely from the awareness of our limitations. Illusions continue endlessly, beings continue to suffer, and the road continues infinitely. Despite all that, we make the vows. We realize Buddhism is not a search for absolute purity, but a continuous decision to wake up amid the imperfections of our lives.

Then we end with the declaration: “With this body... I will uphold my faith in the Lotus Sutra.”

In this moment, the practice stops being merely an interior contemplation and transforms itself into a solid promise.

When this vow is made collectively, it also strengthens the mutual support of those who practice and share the responsibility for the preservation of the teaching.

At the end of the practice, we again perform *Raihai*. The circle closes in the same way that it started, with a return to the posture of humility, reverence, and openness.

One more time we touch the feet of the Buddha, as someone respectfully saying goodbye when leaving the home of someone dear. We enter the practice honoring the Dharma, and we leave honoring the Dharma.

But now we return to the world transformed in some small, perhaps imperceptible way by the experience of our practice. This may be the most important aspect of *Shodaigyo*. It does not exist so that people can walk away from daily life, but rather for people to return to the world with more clarity, less attachment, less ego, and more capacity to benefit other beings.

The circle of practice completes itself in precisely this return. The teaching received in the silence of the *dojo* then continues alive in the body, in speech, in human relationships, and in the way we move through the world.

LOTUS JEWELS

In the rapids of the swift mountain streams, I rinse vegetables, and as I impatiently wait for my dampened sleeves to dry I think of the old poet Hitomaro who recited, “At Waka-no-ura, the fishermen think of the passing of their lives as they wait for the seaweed to dry.”

—Nichiren Shonin, Mt. Minobu Letter,
Minobu-san Goshō (ST 432)

Even at the end of his life, after Nichiren had retreated to the desolate mountain valley beneath Mt. Minobu, he remembered his origin in the common class of people in Japan who worked bring food from the ocean. He was not like the leaders of government and other Buddhist sects who came from nobility and were only concerned about preserving their own power and privilege. He knew the Lotus Sutra was for the liberation of all beings through respect for everyone, especially the least valued, such as his family and childhood friends.

—Rev. Shinkyō Warner

