

Lecture in Praise of Nichiren Daishonin
January 2013, Oko Lecture

A Life Condition of Happiness that Transcends the Three Existences

Happy New Year—2013—to you in this “Year of Advancing in Unity!”

We uphold the Dai-Gohonzon of the High Sanctuary of the Essential Teaching at the Head Temple Taisekiji and look upon the High Priest Nichinyo Shonin and the Honorable Retired High Priest Nikken Shonin as our essential masters. They have received the Lifeblood Heritage of the Law, entrusted to a single person from the True Buddha Nichiren Daishonin. This year, in all of our countries and regions, let us continue to embrace the directions of our High Priest, and advance together with devotion in solid unity, as we strive to achieve kosen-rufu.

In the Gosho, “The Opening of the Eyes” (*“Kaimoku-shō”*), Nichiren Daishonin quoted the following passage from The Sutra of the Foundation in Observing the Mind (*Shinjikan-gyō*):

If you wish to know the causes you have accumulated in the past [in your past existences], look at the effects that are manifested in the present. And if you wish to know the effects that will be manifested in the future, look at the causes you are accumulating in the present...

(*Gosho*, p. 571)

A major difference between Buddhism and other religions is that Buddhism expounds the principle of the three existences of the past, present, and future. It reveals that the functions of cause and effect transcend these three existences. Based on this teaching, we are able to correctly explain the differences in life conditions and statuses among people at birth and the divergent hardships and joys that occur in their lives. Furthermore, the Lotus Sutra points out that the fundamental reason for the various hardships and misfortunes in the lives of people is the slander that they committed in the past. These difficulties actually are the effects of such slander. Buddhism further teaches that people can be released from their suffering when they expiate their negative karma.

Nichiren Daishonin stated the following in the Gosho, “The True Object of Worship” (*“Kanjin no honzon-shō”*):

The practices that Shakyamuni carried out and the virtues he consequently acquired are all contained in the five characters of Myoho-Renge-Kyo. If we embrace these characters, the same virtues that Shakyamuni gained will naturally be bestowed upon us.
(*Gosho*, p. 653)

When we sincerely believe in the Gohonzon and chant Daimoku, we will experience the fusion of our faith with the object of worship (*kyōchi myōgō*), and our Buddha nature will manifest in our lives. Then, we will be able to open and attain the life condition of Buddhahood. Moreover, even if we encounter various hardships and problems, we will be able to receive the wisdom and power from the Gohonzon to overcome them.

Our Honorable Retired High Priest Nikken Shonin presented us with the following directions:

Life is characterized by the infinite path of the three existences of past, present, and future, that transcends death. Therefore, when we achieve a correct focus encompassing the three existences, we will gain a truly correct, expansive, and profound perspective on life. This can be accomplished by gaining an understanding of its every component, according to the Daishonin's teachings.

(*Dainichiren*, vol. 611, p. 70)

What, then, is important now with regards to our practice? It is to closely follow the three great objectives for action in this “Year of Advancing in Unity,” under the guidance from of our High Priest Nichinyo Shonin.

- 1) To strengthen our faith and practice through consistent Gongyo and Shodai.

Our High Priest Nichinyo Shonin states:

Indeed, if you eliminate the practice of worship from religion, then it is not religion. It is nothing but philosophical theory. Mere theory cannot bring happiness to people. Faith is action and experience, not theory. If we sincerely do our morning and evening Gongyo, our various problems will be resolved correctly without fail. Such are the tremendous benefits of the Gohonzon.

(*Dainichiren*, vol. 799, p. 37)

In other words, the actual performance of faith and practice—to have faith and practice solidly established within our lives—is of foremost importance. A

person may insist that he has faith, but if his faith is not manifested in action, no one can know whether or not he really has faith. Only when faith and practice are firmly established in one's life can one be considered a person of true faith. Let us all sincerely perform the actual practices of Gongyo and Shodai every day to further improve and expand our faith and practice. Let us increasingly put forth our best efforts to expiate our negative karma from the past and to correctly overcome our various hardships and problems through the tremendous virtues and benefits of the Gohonzon.

2) To carry out shakubuku with unity between the priesthood and laity.

Nichiren Daishonin wrote the following in the Gosho, "On the Transmission of the Three Great Secret Laws" ("*Sandai hihō bonjō ji*"):

Now, in the Latter Day of the Law, the Daimoku that Nichiren chants is different from that of previous ages. It is the Nam-Myoho-Renge-Kyo of the practice for oneself [for Nichiren Daishonin himself as the True Buddha], and the practice for others [enabling others to attain enlightenment as well].

(*Gosho*, pp.1594~1595)

In the Buddhism of the sowing of Nichiren Daishonin, the practice for oneself represents Gongyo and Shodai, and the practice for others refers to shakubuku and helping others to grow in faith. They are like the two wheels of a vehicle and the two wings of a bird. If one is lacking, no progress can be made. High Priest Nichinyo Shonin stated:

Daimoku and shakubuku form a single unit. Indeed, Daimoku characterizes the essential source of the various actions taken to do shakubuku. We must cultivate a fearless and unshakable determination and a powerful conviction in doing shakubuku and drive away all obstacles that arise. To achieve this, it is essential for us to sincerely and vigilantly do Gongyo and chant Daimoku.

(*Collection of the High Priest's Directions [Goshinan shū]*, vol. 10, p. 81)

Let us assertively participate in the Shodai Ceremonies that are presently held in various countries and regions, following the lead of the Head Temple. As priests and lay believers, let us form a solid unity and do shakubuku, as we advance to accomplish the designated goals for 2015 and 2021.

3) To promote pilgrimages to the Head Temple in each country.

In the Gosho, "Reply to Lord Nanjo" ("*Nanjō dono-gohenji*"), Nichiren Daishonin states:

Those who travel to this place to pay their respects will instantly eradicate the negative karma they have accumulated since the remote past and transform their sins of the three categories of action into the three virtues.

(*Gosho*, p. 1569; *The Gosho of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 1, p. 83)

Visiting to the place where the True Buddha Nichiren Daishonin resides will enable us to eliminate all negative karma that we have amassed from infinite past kalpas. Additionally, the Daishonin expounds that we can transform the evils of the three categories of action into the three virtues of the property of the Law, wisdom, and emancipation. Thus, he teaches that we successfully can achieve the pure life condition of the Buddha, the wisdom to correctly determine the truth in all things, and the inherent life condition to overcome hardships and suffering.

The Commemorative Ceremony Celebrating the Completion of the Major Renovation of the Image Hall (*Mieidō*) will be held in November of this year. I am certain that your eagerness to go on a tozan pilgrimage is intensifying. Let us reform our life conditions through our performance of Gongyo, Shodai, and shakubuku, and let us advance with devotion, so that as many people as possible from countries around the world will be able to joyfully go on a pilgrimage to the Head Temple.

As I have explained, a life condition of happiness that transcends the three existences is characterized by our assiduous performance of the practice for ourselves— Gongyo and Shodai—and by our ever-intensifying devotion to carry out the practice for others—shakubuku. In this way, through our faith and practice, we can construct a meaningful and joyful life.

I pray for all of you to advance with ever more devotion, so that you will be able to report to the Dai-Gohonzon the results of your efforts in the practice for yourself and for others during the year.

Furthermore, I sincerely pray for your continued good health, as you advance in your practice throughout this year.