

New Year's Address
Overseas Department Chief, Most Rev. Nichijitsu Urushibata
January 1, 2021

To all Nichiren Shoshu priests and Hokkeko members throughout the world: Happy New Year 2021, “The Year of the 800th Anniversary of the Advent of our Founder, Nichiren Daishonin.”

On this first day of the year, I extend my sincere New Year's greetings to all of you, and I pray wholeheartedly for the peace and advancement of kosen-rufu in each country.

Last year, the novel coronavirus disease spread globally. The epidemic disrupted the social order of the entire world. The economies and healthcare situations were significantly disrupted.

In Japan, it became difficult for the believers who live far from the Head Temple to go on tozan. And as a matter of course, overseas believers are not able to make tozan pilgrimages at all.

The great auspicious occasion of the 800th anniversary of Nichiren Daishonin's advent is just around the corner. The obstacles and devils have been disrupting this once in a hundred years event.

On the first day of the hundred-day Shodai campaign, High Priest Nichinyo Shonin referred to the obstacles and devils that are emerging before this great, auspicious occasion:

In this present age of the Latter Day of the Law, the five impurities are rampantly permeating the world, and evil doctrines and sects that are the cause of unhappiness are laying down strong roots. Because of this, the entire world is in confusion and devastated by the spread of the coronavirus and abnormal weather. Now each one of us must have absolute faith in the Dai-Gohonzon and conduct courageous shakubuku, just as taught in the passage that states:

Whomever you may meet, conduct shakubuku to the people and refute the teachings of the other sects. Proclaim repeatedly with all your might that the Lotus Sutra is the only teaching that will lead the people to Buddhahood, and that the various other teachings obstruct them from attaining enlightenment and are the root cause for leading them to fall into hell.

(*Gosho*, p. 673)

(*Dainichiren*, vol. 896, p. 37)

In this present age, when the five impurities prevail throughout the world, the High Priest is clearly showing the right path for us to follow, as practitioners of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism.

Following the High Priest guidance, the Nichiren Shoshu Head Office designated the year of 2021 as "The Year of the 800th Anniversary of the Advent of our Founder, Nichiren Daishonin."

2021 is the essential year for all priests and lay believers to repay our debts of gratitude to Nichiren Daishonin.

The *Rissho ankoku-ron* states the following:

There have been unusual occurrences in the heavens, and natural disasters on earth. Famine and epidemics rage in all lands beneath the skies and in every corner of the realm.

(*Gosho*, p. 234)

We, the priests and the lay believers of Nichiren Shoshu, know the fundamental cause of misfortunes. We have the important mission to refute slander, lead people to the right path, and establish the Buddha land. On this occasion of the 800th anniversary of the Daishonin's advent, we must surmount the worldwide crisis of the spread of the coronavirus and abnormal weather and keep advancing toward kosen-rufu in the future.

Further, we have decided on the following three practical points for overseas believers in conjunction with next year's objective.

1. Consistently conduct Gongyo and Shodai every day.
2. Carry out the practice of shakubuku, the best way to repay our debts of gratitude to the three treasures.
3. Promote the development of faith through practicing in the spirit of *itai doshin*.

1. Consistently conduct Gongyo and Shodai every day:

Gongyo and Shodai in the morning and evening are fundamental practices and the source of fortune for Hokkeko believers. The strong vitality to live a fulfilling day will naturally emerge through daily Gongyo and Shodai.

It is vital to set the time and conduct Gongyo and Shodai with all other family members to form unity within the household.

The world is in a chaotic situation due to warfare and the coronavirus pandemic. Now is the time to gain a strong life force to overcome various hardships by conducting Gongyo and Shodai. Let's have a solid conviction and dedicate ourselves to elevating our life state and establishing happiness in our lives.

2. Carry out the practice of shakubuku, the best way to repay our debts of gratitude to the three treasures:

Conducting shakubuku is the core of Nichiren Daishonin's teaching. It is crucial to practice shakubuku to bring peace in our countries and to attain our own happiness.

Carrying out shakubuku is the mission of the followers of the Bodhisattvas of the Earth, and it is the compassionate action to save all living beings.

Shakubuku is the Buddhist practice to expiate all negative karma from the remote past, and it is the supreme way to repay our debts of gratitude to the three treasures. With this understanding, let us devote our life to carry out shakubuku. Practicing Gongyo, Shodai, and shakubuku brings forth immeasurable benefits.

3. Promote the development of faith through practicing in the spirit of *itai doshin*:

Under the current circumstances, overseas believers can't make a pilgrimage to the Head Temple. Participating in the Oko Ceremony and other activities at the temple and attending meetings at members' homes are now essential opportunities to develop our faith.

Please use sufficient countermeasures to prevent the spread of the novel coronavirus by washing your hands, gargling, sanitizing, and wearing a mask. Please avoid risks to contract the illness, form a firm unity of *itai doshin* between the priest and the lay believers, and make ceaseless efforts to develop faith.

I hope all overseas priests and lay believers will understand the significance of this year 2021, "The Year of the 800th Anniversary of the Advent of our Founder, Nichiren Daishonin." And I wish that you will etch this year's three practical points into your heart and put them into practice.

The Second High Priest Nikko Shonin states in *The Twenty-six Admonitions of Nikko* (Nikko yuikai okimon) :

Until kosen-rufu is achieved, propagate the Law to the full extent of your ability, without begrudging your life.

(*Gosho*, p. 1884)

We still are a ways away from kosen-rufu, and we will be proceeding for a long time.

The 800th anniversary of Nichiren Daishonin's advent represents a significant milestone for us to take another step toward kosen-rufu. One hundred years from now, we will welcome the 900th anniversary of Nichiren Daishonin's advent. At that time, the followers of the Bodhisattvas of the Earth who will lead the next generation will be making further efforts to propagate the true Law.

Let us look forward to kosen-rufu in the future and continue our efforts to propagate the Daishonin's Buddhism steadily. I wish that all priests and the lay believers will uphold a new determination, accomplish the unity of *itai doshin*, and devote your lives to kosen-rufu.

I would like to conclude my New Year's address by praying from the bottom of my heart for the happiness of each one of you, for peace in your nation, and the advancement of the propagation of the true Law in your country.