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Fresno Betsuin Buddhist Temple

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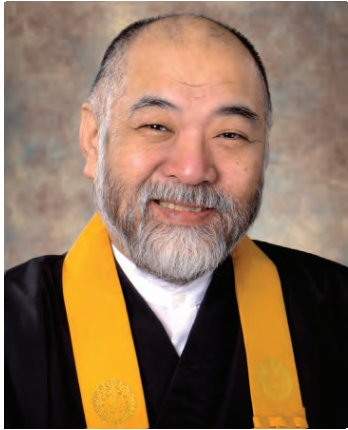
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JANUARY
2015

2015 BCA Theme: "Live a Real Life" - Makoto no jinsei no ayumon

Rev. Kakei Nakagawa, Rinban



HAPPY NEW YEAR!

In the month of January, we Jodo Shinshu, the Mainstream Mahayana Buddhists celebrate GO-SHO-KI HO-ON-KO (honorific-death-anniversary repay-indebtedness-observance) which is the most important service for us as well as the New Years' Day celebration for Japanese in general.

In the 15th century Japan, Rennyo the Master of Honganji VIII clarified the true purpose of having

this service 250 years later after Shinran Shonin's death in his letter [V-11]; as follows,

Among those who make the pilgrimage, bring offerings, and come before the image of Shinran to repay their indebtedness and express their gratitude during this anniversary, there will be those, who have truly realized the Buddha's intent. There will also be those who are lacking in the motivation for awakening the true humanity. This is an extremely serious matter. For, unless there is a decisive truly realizing the Buddha's intent (Shin), the life that is to come in the realm of perfect relaxation is uncertain. Therefore, those whose realizing the Buddha's intent is lacking (Fu-Shin) should in all haste attain the decisive mind.

The human realm is a place of uncertainty. The realm of utmost bliss is only one of eternity. Hence we should not make our abode in the uncertain human realm, but rather, aspire to live in the eternal realm of utmost bliss, peace and relaxation. Therefore, the matter of truly realizing the Buddha's intent and his utmost wish-for-the-world is placed before all else in our tradition; unless we are fully aware of the reason for this, everything is meaningless. We must promptly undergo a decisive realizing the Buddha's intent (anjin) and aspire to live in the Sukhavati (Jodo), the eternal realm of utmost bliss, peace and relaxation.

See "Ho-Onko" page 2

Rev. Alan Sakamoto



THIS WILL BE YOUR YEAR!

Happy New Years! Renka and I both would like to extend our warmest wishes for a prosperous and Happy New Year.

It's the Year of the Sheep! Were you born in the Year of the Sheep? People under the sign of the sheep are said to be tender, polite, filial, clever, and kind-hearted. They have special sensitivity to art and beauty, faith in a certain

religion and a special fondness for quiet living. They are wise, gentle and compassionate, and can cope with business cautiously and circumspectly. In their daily life, they try to be economical. Women born in this year are willing to take good care of others.

The Chinese New Year celebration, which will begin on February 19th this year, was initially observed to pay respect and honor deities and one's ancestors. Traditions include, cleaning the house before the arrival of the New Year, gathering of family to share a meal, red decorations with signs that commonly say "good fortune," "happiness," "wealth," and "longevity." Do some of these traditions sound familiar to you and your family? Are all of those wishes that you have for the New Year?

I think we all want the best and more for the New Year for our family and self. But, how many of you are saying to yourself, "Those good wishes are only signs, and they'll never really happen to me?" It's a rather negative and pessimistic way of looking at the New Year.

Those are those negative habitual thoughts where you think there is "no hope," "no job," "no boyfriend," "no girlfriend," "no good health," "no money," and/or "no new business." Those "NO's" just seem to go on and on and on. When will they stop? I hate to be the one to tell you, but they have to STOP within you. And, you are the one that can make the change to look forward to all the positives that life has to offer. It's time to reap those seeds that you have sown. You have to "release to increase!"

See "Your Year", page 2

"Ho-Onko" continued from page 1

What is widespread in the world and in most cases, everyone has in mind is that if they just say the Nenbutsu with their lips, without any understanding, they will be born in the realm of utmost bliss. That is most uncertain. Living with the decisive Buddha's intent is a matter of fully knowing the import of the six characters that assorted with the six syllables of Buddha's natural voice in Ancient Indian "na-mu-a-mi-ta-bha%" and, by this, undergoing a settling of realization to the Buddha's intent.

As for the essentials of Buddha's intent, a passage in the Larger Sūtra states:

"Hear the resounding Nenbutsu and realize the Buddha's intent with utmost bliss." Shan-tao, the fifth of seven great masters of Jodo Shinshu in history has said:

"na-mu" means 'to take refuge' or simply 'Come and join in'. It also signifies aspiring to join in the Buddha's wish-for-the-world and directing virtues of all conducts. 'a-mi-ta-bha%' is the ultimate Pāramitā, the Living in truth-reality with the steadfast wish for sharing the Dharma." The meaning of the two characters "na-mu" is that we surrender ego for the Buddha's wish-for-the-world and entrust ourselves whole-heartedly to Amid the Buddha-as-words. The meaning of the four characters 'a-mi-ta-bha%' that assorted with the four syllables is that, without any effort on our part, solely surrender ego for Amida the Buddha-as-words saves all sentient beings. This is the very essence of the four characters 'a-mi-ta-bha%' the champion of Pāramitās. To understand "na-mu-a-mi-ta-bha%" in this way is, therefore, to truly realize Buddha's 'Intent'. This, in other words, is the understanding of the nenbutsu practitioners who has fully realized the Buddha's true intent by the power of benefiting others or simply the original sense of care.

Respectfully.

I hope you will read Rennyō Shonin's letter repeatedly, like your ancestors and ask questions to your minister. Please remember the fact that they were all ordinary farmers, fishermen and merchants who never received regular schooling during their lifetime. Rennyō Shonin's letters had been the text for our ancestors to study since the 15th Century to the middle of 19th Century, when Japan's government established the modern school system.

In Gassho, Rev. Kakei Nakagawa, Rinban

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It's time for you to believe that this year will bring with it all the positives! With a true and consistent positive attitude and outlook, you will see changes and doors opening with new opportunities. How you start the New Year will set the foundation for a great year. Make peace, joy, love, kindness, and compassion part of your every day.

I know, you are saying to yourself, "but he doesn't really understand my problems." You are right. But, instead of focusing on the problems, focus with a positive attitude, on what needs to be done to solve the problem and move on. What? Well, maybe you can't overcome the problem, but that doesn't mean you can't face the problem with a positive attitude. Just think about someone you know who is always happy, upbeat, and positive. Don't you just appreciate them and their outlook on life? I know I do. Those people are a gift, and we all can be a gift to others. The Chinese have a quote:

'After endless mountains and rivers that leave doubt whether there is a path out, suddenly one encounters the shade of a willow, bright flowers and a lovely village.'

The original meaning? A favorable turn of fortune will often appear just when there seems to be no way out. We can eventually find a way out from our problems. Therefore, we can all look forward to that goodness with a positive attitude, and make this the best year possible. Remember, if you believe, then you can overcome.

I go to the Buddha for guidance.
I go to the Dharma for guidance.
I go to the Sangha for guidance.

Rev. Alan Sakamoto

ATTENTION!!

FRESNO BETSUIN GENERAL MEETING
will be held on Sunday, February 8, 2015
following the Nirvana Day Service.

If you wish to have an item included on the agenda, please submit your request in writing. Must be specific to the topic, discussion, motion, etc.

Please mail request to:
Board Chairman
c/o Fresno Betsuin General Meeting
1340 Kern Street
Fresno, CA 93706

To be considered, request must be received
by February 1, 2015.