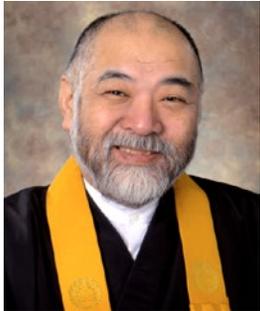




"THERE IS SOME GOOD IN THIS WORLD, AND IT'S WORTH FIGHTING FOR." - J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Two Towers*

REV. KAKEI NAKAGAWA, Rinban



**Invocation for the
75th Anniversary of the
Bombings of Hiroshima and
Nagasaki
Tree Planting Ceremony,
Peace Garden, CSU Fresno
August 6, 2020**

O Serene, O free, Namu Amita Âbhah,

On that hot summer day, under a blinding flash, which surpassed the brightness of the sun, we human beings entered into a NEW ERA against our will. We human beings, Homo sapiens, since the long ages, living our lives merely foreboding death as individuals. But since "that" day we must recognize a foreboding of the biological death of the entire race.

Our Truth-self came into view in a moment for the first time. But at the present time, we still do not recognize our deadly foolishness that may cause the total downfall of all species on the planet earth itself.

O Serene, O free,

It is 75 years after these double tragedies of Hiroshima, August 6, and Nagasaki, August 9, but people do not seem to realize the true impact of it yet.

Only the greed that is based on blind feelings due to fear of death has burst forth to become a gigantic monster as such. Currently the entire world is actually under the unbearable sufferings by the Mutated Virus Covid-19.

O Serene, O free,

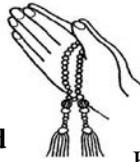
In thine immeasurable mercy and goodness, wipe away all dark stains from the heart of this earth.

Today the seedings of the Camphor tree, which survived the hell under the Atomic bomb, sent from Hiroshima, will be planted here in the soil of Central California.

O Serene, O free,

The souls of our forgotten children of Central California, who had to die young in their loneliness 75 years ago in Hiroshima, have returned to their hometown as a symbol of world peace.

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**Anjin – securing your utmost
calmness**

Hello, all Central California Sangha friends! We have now been in the pandemic for half a year, but I am excited that we were finally able to conduct Hatsubon Service and enjoy the Virtual Obon Dance on August 15th, both streamed on Zoom and Twitter. Thank you to Mr. Greg Tsudama of Fresno for helping us connect on Zoom, so that the Sangha could see each other, dancing in our living rooms. Many from different parts of California, such as Los Angeles and Sacramento, joined our Zoom Obon. And hundreds of people joined the Hatsubon service and Obon Dance through Twitter streaming. We even noticed there were people from other countries that joined. Thank you to Mrs. Sharon Morikawa and her Obon Dance teachers for the great job they did to make our Obon Dance more enjoyable and memorable. I would like to thank all the helpers and I really appreciate those who supported our Obon Snack Bag fundraiser. I hope you won something from the Obon raffle! All the proceeds from the fundraiser were distributed to CC temple and churches. I plan to make a special Obon DVD for people who are periodically receiving our Sunday Service DVDs. If you do not have internet or have not been received the DVD, please ask your temple/church board members. I will make sure that you will get one!

After spending 6 months under the pandemic, how do you feel about your life? Recently, the CDC announced that since the pandemic outbreak, more people are taking medication for anxiety. Medications help us, but our Buddhist teachings help us too! In this next part of my article, I would like to write about *Anjin*. Have you seen, or heard the word *Anjin*? *Anjin* is securing your utmost calmness. This word appears all over in Mahayana Buddhist tradition. For example, Bodhi-Dharma, a famous founder of Zen Buddhism, once described in his dialogue (*Memoirs of Eminent Monks in Tang Dynasty*, chapter 16) that "while sitting in the Zazen (leg-crossed) posture, consider yourself becoming like a solid wall. Once you become comfortable to do so, you reach the mental state of no-self and no-others. After that, do not relocate yourself (your residence), nor follow other teachings. Follow the nature and live quietly. Do not conduct something special. By doing so, you will enter a state of *Anjin*."

REV. KAZ NAKATA



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Rev. Nakagawa, continued

Touch them with thy right hand now, bring harmony into our life, and bring the rhythm of eternal hope by all means.

Namu Amita Ābhah

Our actions are our only true belongings.
We cannot escape the consequences of our actions.
Our actions are the ground on which we stand.



<https://www.facebook.com/fresnoethicscenter/videos/1066896143708431/>

Rev. Kaz, continued

You might watch how to do Zazen meditation first. Zen monks usually do their Zazen sitting facing a wall. My devout Zen monk friends are sitting all day long, except while eating, sleeping, and getting phone calls. I consider myself as a devout Jodo Shinshu minister, but I do not think I can keep up practice like Zazen all day and every day. Then you may wonder that how Jodo Shinshu understand *Anjin*.

The word, *Anjin* appears in one of our Jodo Shinshu Seven Masters, Shandao's publication (*Raisan*). It states that the action of entrusting one's whole heart for wishing to live a life of *Sukhavati* (utmost calmness). When we encounter uncertainty, we feel anxiety because we cannot know what is going on. The historical Buddha clearly states that our life is uncertain, more precisely our life is unpredictable. Once we fully understand and accept life's uncertainty and unpredictability as they are, we reach the mental state of *Sukhavati*. We, however, should not blindly believe his word. It does not mean he is wrong. We should make sure whether his word makes sense. After passing our test, his word becomes trustful for us. At that moment, we say we can entrust our whole heart to his word.

Commonly, conventional religion does not have this process. God's word is absolutely right and genuine, so people should not challenge or doubt it. I think it is one of the big differences between religion and Buddhism.

In the 8th century, at the age of 28 years and after spending 20 plus years in monastic life, Shandao encountered the teachings of *Sukhavati*. I am sure that he tested its validity because the encounter was a life changing moment. If I were him, I would not blindly believe it. How about you? Do you just simply accept and believe whatever other people say, if their saying may change the course of your life? After Shandao tested the teaching, he entrusted his whole heart to the teaching, wishing to live a life of *Sukhavati*. He was a great poet and left many chanting texts for us. We can feel his passion for the teaching from his masterpieces such as *Junirai*.

Living a life of *Sukhavati* does not mean we are going to live elsewhere. The word, *Sukhavati* is an idiom, and it consists of two words. One is *sukha*, and the other is *avati*.

Continued, right column

Rev. Kaz, continued

Sukha means utmost calmness, and *avati* can be understood as leading something or someone to a certain mental state or place. Based on these translations, *sukha-avati* means the teaching leads us to the mental state of utmost calmness. Live a life of utmost calmness here and now, is an appropriate understanding.

Our Jodo Shinshu teaching encourages us to be aware of the life's interdependence. We are narrow minded, thinking that we make a living by ourselves, but our life is sustained by numerous others. When we were small, we were not able to do many things on our own. Many adults helped us grow until we gradually started doing things by ourselves. Do you remember all of your school teachers? Do you remember your classmates and playmates? All of them are a part of your life, and you are a part of their life. Some or many of these adults, teachers and friends had been passed away and you might have attended their funerals.

Just recently, my grandmother-in law (my wife's grandmother) passed away and I talked about her during our Aug 16th Sunday streaming service. If she did not exist, my wife would not either. My wife and I can enjoy our lives with three girls, because we had our grandmother. We really appreciated her generosity and support while we shared life and time with her. The loss of our loved ones made me become more deeply aware of my own life's interdependence, and it made me think about the natural cycle of life and death. Sooner or later, we must leave our loved ones. What we can do until the last day of our life? I just try to fully enjoy and mindfully live each day. Such way of living leads me to *Sukhavati*, utmost calmness. I assume Shandao encountered many life threatening events such as pandemics, epidemics, wars, and extreme weather. The vaccination technique was developed only some two hundred years ago. Many people died in 8th century due to many unknown causes. Under such hardship of living human life, Shandao appreciated the teaching and expressed his utmost calmness and happiness in his chanting notes.

Although we are in the pandemic right now, I do not feel any anxiety. I feel I am alright no matter which direction my life goes. Our Jodo Shinshu teaching makes me think and live positively and optimistically, so that I can continue to enjoy a life of utmost calmness.

I am sure that you have more time to read now. If you are looking for books to reduce or manage your anxiety, please read two books by our Nishi Hongwanji former Monshu Koshin Ohtani, "*The Buddha's Call to Awaken*" and "*The Buddha's Wish for the World*." The first chapter of "*The Buddha's Call*" is entitled "Living in an Age of Uncertainty" in which he explains the Buddha's core teaching "life's uncertainty." I am sure that these books will help you to understand Jodo Shinshu teaching more clearly.

Gassho

