

**EXERTING OURSELVES
BRAVELY AND VIGOROUSLY
NEW YEAR'S ADDRESS
The Year of Vibrant Shakubuku
High Priest Nichinyo Shonin
January 1, 2023**

As we welcome the New Year, the 771st year since the establishment of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism, I am very pleased that all Nichiren Shoshu priests and lay believers are greeting the New Year with a spirit of renewal and resolving to further advance in their practice with a fresh determination.

The slogan for this year is "The Year of Vibrant Shakubuku." It is a very important year for us. Based on the spirit of repaying our debt of gratitude owed to the three treasures of true Buddhism, we should vibrantly advance toward achieving kosen-rufu through our further dedication to practice with our utmost efforts, in the unity of many in body, one in mind between the priesthood and laity.

Due to the current chaotic situation throughout the world caused by the novel coronavirus pandemic that is still spreading over Japan and other countries, I strongly feel that all of us should maintain firm determination and unshakable conviction. And in order to overcome this adversity, we must resolutely do shakubuku in the spirit of the *Rissho ankoku-ron* (On Securing the Peace of the Land through the Propagation of True Buddhism).

Nichiren Daishonin states in the *Rissho ankoku-ron* (On Securing the Peace of the Land through the Propagation of True Buddhism) as follows:

When I, with my limited knowledge, read the sutras, I find that all people have gone against the correct Law and become wholly devoted to evil doctrines. This is why all the guardian deities have abandoned this country and sages have left this land, not to return. Seizing this opportunity, devils and demons rush in, bringing disasters and calamities. This is most fearful. We must speak out! (Gosho, p. 234; *The Gosho of Nichiren Daishonin*, Vol. 2, p. 3)

We should know that today's fundamental source of the novel coronavirus pandemic is indeed, in the light of Buddhism, the poison of slander due to heretical teachings, as stated, "all people have gone against the correct Law and become wholly devoted to evil doctrines." And with ever-stronger faith we must exert ourselves bravely and vigorously in the practice of shakubuku — the practice of refuting heresy and revealing the truth.

Thus, Nichiren Daishonin states in *On Practicing according to the Buddha's Teachings* (Nyosetsu shugyo-sho) as follows:

The fifth Five-hundred-year Period, which corresponds to the beginning of the Latter Day of the Law, is the time when the pure and perfect teaching of the single truth of the Lotus Sutra is to be propagated throughout the world. This is the age of conflict, when the pure Law will become obscured and lost, and the Lotus Sutra and pre-Lotus Sutra teachings are confused. When there are enemies, you should take up a sword, stave, and bows and arrows. When there are no enemies, you do not need such weapons. In the present time of the Latter Day of the Law, the pre-Lotus Sutra teachings are the enemies of the Lotus Sutra. When the teaching of the one vehicle of Buddhahood is spread, all the pre-Lotus Sutra teachings become its enemies. When the Lotus Sutra and pre-Lotus Sutra teachings are confused, you first should refute the pre-Lotus Sutra teachings using the true Mahayana. Of the two practices of shoju and shakubuku, this is called shakubuku, based on the Lotus Sutra. Tiantai's statement, "The Lotus Sutra is the teaching of shakubuku, the refutation of the provisional doctrines" is, indeed, based on reason.

If you exert yourself now in shoju, by carrying out the four peaceful practices, will it not be the same as sowing seeds in the winter and expecting to harvest in the spring? When a rooster crows at dawn, it is helpful. But if it crows in the evening, it is disquieting.

It is nonsense to seclude yourself in the mountains without refuting the enemies of the Lotus Sutra and carry out the practice of shoju at a time when the Lotus Sutra and pre-Lotus Sutra teachings are confused. You only will lose the opportunity to practice the Lotus Sutra. Now, in the Latter Day of the Law, who is correctly carrying out the practice of shakubuku exactly as taught in the Lotus Sutra? 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. This will certainly provoke the appearance of the three powerful enemies.

I hope that, upholding this passage, all of you, the Nichiren Shoshu believers in every Hokkeko organization, will make the absolute determination and conviction to refute heresy and reveal the truth. And I hope that you will courageously and widely do shakubuku with the solid unity of many in body, one in mind, aiming toward the realization of kosen-rufu throughout the entire world, as stated, "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."

I would like to conclude my New Year's address with my heartfelt hope that all of you will devotedly practice as stated above and achieve your attainment of Buddhahood in this lifetime.

NICHIREN SHOSHU MONTHLY FEBRUARY 2023