

WE MUST MAKE ENORMOUS STRIDES

GUIDANCE FROM SIXTY-EIGHTH HIGH PRIEST NICHINYO SHONIN • ON THE OCCASION OF THE JANUARY KOSEN-RUFU SHODAI CEREMONY• JANUARY 1, 2023 • RECEPTION HALL, HEAD TEMPLE TAISEKIJI

On the first day of the early spring of the 771st anniversary of the establishment of true Buddhism, I wish you a Happy New Year!

By participating in the first Kosen-rufu Shodai Ceremony of "The Year of Vibrant Shakubuku," I believe you have welcomed the new year, feeling refreshed, and have renewed your pledge to make further efforts in your practice.

This, "The Year of Vibrant Shakubuku," is the significant time in which all of us should build a solid structure based on unity between the priesthood and laity in the spirit of many in body, one in mind (*itai doshin*), and deploy great shakubuku activities in order to repay our debt of gratitude to the three treasures. With these efforts, we must make enormous strides toward the achievement of the propagation of the true Law throughout the entire world.

Today, chaotic conditions are manifesting not only in Japan, but also throughout the rest of the world. This is causing confusion and disorder everywhere, due to the novel coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. We must, once again, reaffirm the Daishonin's will conveyed in his *Rissho ankoku-ron* (On Securing the Peace of the Land Through the Propagation of True Buddhism). Then, each of us must be convinced of the vast and boundless benefits of the mystic Law (*Myoho*), and devote ourselves to the practice for oneself and others. Now is the time for us to courageously perform the shakubuku of refuting heresy and revealing the truth, aiming toward true world peace and the realization of the Buddha land.

The Daishonin teaches the following in the Gosho, "The Opening of the Eyes" ("*Kaimoku-sho*"):

The relationship between the methods of shoju and shakubuku are like water and fire. Fire abhors water, while water detests fire. The practitioner of shoju despises the method of shakubuku, while those who conduct shakubuku grieve over the method of shoju. When ignorant and impious men are rampant throughout the nation, shoju comes first as described in the Peaceful Practices (*Anrakugyo*; fourteenth) chapter of the Lotus Sutra. When cunning, evil men and slanderers of the Law thrive, shakubuku should take precedence, as taught in the Bodhisattva Never Disparaging (*Fukyo*; twentieth) chapter of the Lotus Sutra. It can be likened to using cold water when it is hot, and fire when it is cold. Plants and trees are kindred to the sun. They suffer from pain during the cold winter. Water is subordinate to the moon. It loses its original nature when it is hot.

Shoju and shakubuku are the two methods of propagation in the Latter Day of the Law. This is because there are two types of countries; countries ignorant of Buddhism and countries that slander Buddhism. You must understand which of these two types corresponds to present-day Japan.

(*Gosho*, p. 575)

Now, in the Latter Day of the Law, is precisely the time "when cunning, evil men and slanderers of the Law thrive." At such a time, it is essential that we use the method of shakubuku, not shoju. Taking this guidance to heart, everyone in each chapter and organization must renew his or her resolve, and single-mindedly conduct shakubuku with the spirit of many in body, one in mind.

I offer my sincere prayers that each one of you will keep this in mind and devote yourself to perform shakubuku, aiming toward the achievement of the propagation of the true Law throughout the entire world. This is the appropriate action for "The Year of Vibrant Shakubuku."

NICHIREN SHOSHU MONTHLY APRIL 2023