

New Year's Message

January 1, 2013

Happy New Year to all of you!

Today is the first day of the year of 2013. For some people New Year's Day is nothing special. It is the same as usual. But the majority of people feel that New Year's Day is something special. It is the beginning of something good or something new will happen. Therefore, people make resolutions. The resolutions solve or settle a problem in the past. Did you make your resolution?

For many people, the resolutions last only for a month or for a few months. You have to make some effort to continue the resolution. We have to make some effort to bring in good fortune. On New Year's Days we pray for good fortune to come. Good fortune will not come unless you make some effort. I would like to share some of my efforts to invite good fortune.

Number 1: Did you notice I wear this brand-new white robe for blessing this morning? Since I was a child, I wore something new on New Year's Days. On New Year's Eve, parents used to place new clothing on a pillow for all eight children. It is similar for American children on Christmas Eve. So I continue to do the same for myself every year. By wearing something new, you will feel different, especially ladies and women, don't you? Men should also do the same. By wearing this robe, I feel like a brand-new priest who has completed the 100 Days *Aragyo* Ascetic Practice just like Rev. Douglas. I feel as I have more power to pray and bless you.

Number 2: Make efforts for you to be a lucky person. When you see a digital watch or clock, you may happen to see a lucky number like 4:44 or 5:55 or 12:00 sharp. When it happens, tell you, "I am lucky!" In the beginning, you have to make an effort to see a clock at the lucky number. If you practice it again and again, it will happen more often. When it happens, tell yourself, "Oh Boy, I am lucky!"

Number 3: When something lucky happen, not only you say, "I am lucky," but also you should appreciate, "Thank you very much!" Appreciation brings forth good fortune. Last Saturday, I was in Ogden, Utah, for a memorial service at a snow covered cemetery. It was sunshine but 28 degree Fahrenheit and six inches snow. It was a little windy and very cold. I hurried to chant very loudly. That voice had to come out of my lower abdomen. Those who do not chant and those who just stood to watch me might feel colder than I.

So I told them, "Go back to your cars after incense offering. I'll talk to you later at the house where we have another service." Later, I told them at the host house, "It was very cold at the cemetery, wasn't it? That means you are still alive. Kay, who was buried under the snow, covered ground, does not feel cold or hot." Everybody laughed. Most people do not appreciate that they are alive. People hardly say, "No wonder I am alive." Think more carefully why I am alive? Why I am here? Why I live?" Without parents, without water, without food, without such and such, I am not alive, or I am not here!" Even if you have a cold or pain, you are still alive! We never heard of a dead body catching cold or having pain.

On this New Year's Day, I wish you to be luckier and more appreciative. Have you ever wonder why Rev. Kanai is doing fine in this small numbers of congregation? Where does the money come from to buy the old house for Kannon Temple?

It is because I am a lucky person to have Kumiko, my children, you, and many followers out of state and out of country. When you offer a donation, I always place the money, checks and receipt at the altar. Every evening I chant for appreciation to the donors and the Gohonzon, Buddha, the Lotus Sutra, and Nichiren Dai'Shonin. In the morning, I chant at first half of the service to pray for the donors' ancestors; and at the last half of the morning ritual, I pray the donors' good health and other material gain. I am a lucky person to do these.

Lastly Number 4: Please chant *Odaimoku*, "Namu Myoho Renge Kyo" always. It extinguishes your sins and bad karma little by little without notice. You do not have to be a Nichiren Shu member, even if you are Jewish, Christian, Mormon, or Islam; you can still chant it. Many people say "I chanted 'Namu Myoho Renge Kyo' many times, bad fortune still continues and bad things happen." It is because that it is a process of cleaning bad karma. Even Nichiren Dai'Shonin who spread *Odaimoku*, faced many persecutions, again and again. He said it was because he had slandered the teachings of the Lotus Sutra in his previous lives and because he intended to clean his followers' bad karma and sins.

These are the reasons why I have good fortune. I will pay for you to have good fortune through this year.