

Bo Jikyo Ji

Obon Service at the Seattle Nichiren Buddhist Church
July 13, 2014 (3:00 p.m.)

Today we held the Obon Mass Memorial Service. I chose to read “Bo Jikyo Ji” for Nichiren Shonin’s writing. Nichiren wrote and sent this letter to Jonin Toki after Jonin brought his mother’s ashes to Minobu and asked Nichiren Dai’Shonin to hold a memorial service for his mother. I would like to explain how Lord Toki was devoted to his mother and Nichiren Shonin, and how Nichiren Shonin trusted and appreciated Jonin Toki and his mother through this letter.

“Bo” means to forget, “Jikyo” means a personalized service book, and “Ji” means regard. So “Bo Jikyo Ji” was named when Lord Toki forgot to take his service book home with him after seeing his mother’s vision at the altar where Buddha Sakyamuni and the Mandala Gohonzon were enshrined. He was so excited that he realized his mother became a Buddha after Nichiren Shonin prayed for her that he forgot his service book.

In this letter Nichiren Shonin joked that Lord Toki was the most forgettable person in Japan because he had left his precious service book at Minobu. Nichiren also praised Toki by writing in this letter that Jonin Toki also became a Buddha because all parts of his body are from his parents; thus, when his mother became a Buddha he also became a Buddha.

Jonin Toki was one of the earlier followers of Nichiren Daishonin. He probably met his master, Nichiren in a boat to cross the bay from Chiba to Kamakura when Nichiren was 21 years old. Because of the

small size of the boat and the couple hours it took to travel the distance, they might have had a long discussion on the Lotus Sutra. Jonin Toki was a land lord of Ichikawa, Chiba Prefecture and supported Nichiren physically and financially all his life. His mother also supported Nichiren Shonin by sending food and clothing.

When Lord Toki's mother passed away, he wrapped the container holding the ashes, which was about the size of a one foot cubic box, with a white cloth, then wrapped it again with a larger white cloth in order to hang it from his neck and carried his mother's ashes with his hands from Ichikawa to Minobu. It might have taken five to six days on foot. It was the first ashes brought to Minobu. Nichiren Shonin placed it at the altar where the Manadala Gohonzon and a small statue of Buddha Sakyamuni were enshrined. During their chanting and prayer, Toki saw a vision of his mother together with the Buddha; therefore, he was so pleased and was rejoiced to see his mother again. Because he was so excited, he had forgotten his service book.

About a few years later, Abutsu-bo's son also brought his father's ashes to Minobu and asked Nichiren Shonin to pray for him. Abutsu-Bo is a samurai warrior who tried to kill Nichiren at Tsukahara in Sado Island because Nichiren criticized Abutsu-bo's faith in Nenbutsu. However he could not kill the defenseless Nichiren without finding the reasons behind Nichiren's point of view on the Nembutsu denomination. After listening to Nichiren, Abutso-bo found his master and served Nichiren together with his wife until the Kamakura

Government pardoned Nichiren. Nichiren named Abutsu-Bo's wife, Sen-nichi-Ama, meaning a nun who served for One Thousand Days.

Hearing Nichiren Shonin was living at Mt. Minobu, Abutsu-Bo travelled from Sado Island to Mt. Minobu crossing ocean, rivers, climbing steep mountains up and down on foot, sleeping in the wilderness for a month or so and visited his master three times, even until he aged up to his 90s. It was his faithful devotion to Nichiren Dai'Shonin. Therefore, his son brought his father's ashes to Minobu.

(Showing pictures) This is the place where Nichiren Dai'Shonin lived at Mt. Minobu during his last nine years before his death. And this picture is called "Go-Byosho" where Nichiren Dai'Shonin's ashes are placed under this monument. In the same area, ashes of Jonin Toki's mother and Abutsu-bo's father are buried.

Since then, thousands and thousands of people have brought their parents' or spouses' ashes who were very devoted Nichiren Shu to Minobusan Kuon-ji Temple. One of the temple buildings at Minobusan is a mausoleum for enshrining those ashes. If you are interested in placing your parents' or your own ashes there, please let me know, as I have some information. In fact I was asked to get the information from one of you here.