

Mother's Day

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Happy Mother's Day!

Some of you are not mothers but all of us have or had a mother or mothers. The founder of Buddhism, Siddhartha Gautama, lost his mother soon after his birth. So her sister raised him. Her name was Maha-prajapati. Her name appears in Chapter 1 and 13 of the Lotus Sutra.

The young prince Siddhartha missed his real mother so much and wondered why the mother passed away? Why does death come to all living beings? Why do they get sick and why do they become old? Why they die? Why the weak are always victimized by the strong. Is there any way to be free from sickness, old age, and death? To solve these questions were the origin of Buddhism. At the age of 35 the prince found the fact of the cycle of birth, growing, old age, and death for not only human beings but also all material things. The Lotus Sutra reveals the Eternal Life that means everything exists while it is constantly changing its forms. A simple example is the cycle of the element of water; the water changes to vapor, cloud, rain, and come back to water.

Let's go back to the subject of the mother. The founder of Nichiren Buddhism, Zen'nichimaro left his home for study at Kiyosumi Temple at the age of 12. His mother missed him so much and came to visit him at the temple one day. However the son refused to meet her, because it was an obstacle for him to think about his mother until his completion of study to find out what is true teaching of the Buddha. Besides that the temple was considered as a sacred place, and the women were prohibited to enter the land of the sacred area at that era. I apologize that women were so often victimized by men; the women were mistreated for many centuries around the world.

However, after twenty years of study, Zen'nichimaro changed his name to Nichiren returned his home. He reached the conclusion that the Lotus Sutra is the only real teaching of the Sakyamuni Buddha who revealed the reality of all things. Nichiren made his parents as his first disciples. Buddhist priests, men and women, must keep their hair short or shaved. So Nichiren cut his mother's long hair and carried the hair with him as an amulet all his life till his death at the age of 60.

Even after his death, one of his disciples engraved the statue of Nichiren Shonin and enshrined it at Ikegami Honmonji Temple in Tokyo. The statue's right hand holds his mother's hair.

Nichiren Shonin wrote many essays and sent them to his disciples. One of them is "Hoon-Jo." "Those who learn and practice the teachings of the Buddha should never forget the kindness of their parents, masters, and sovereign." We often say, "When I wish to return my favor received my parents, they are dead." However Buddhists still can return our favor to our dead parents. Many religions scare you, "If you do not believe in God, you will fall into hell." Don't worry! We, Buddhists are able to save those who fell into hell by holding memorial services even many decades later after our ancestors' death.

Nichiren says in Ho-on Sho, “The Namu Myoho Renge Kyo has the merit of curing the religious blindness of all people and blocks the way to hell.” If you are afraid to fall into hell, please chant “Mamu Myoho Renge Kyo.” It will save not only your deceased mother, but also your family and all living beings.

Last week a Kumiko’s friend called her and said, “My daughter’s family was at near the goal line of Boston Marathon, but they left a few minutes before the bomb blast. It was because my daughter is chanting “Namu Myoho Renge Kyo” always although she is not a Nichiren member.” It does not matter you are a member or not, just chant it. You will receive some sort of merit and your family will also receive the benefit.

Let us show our appreciation to our mothers by chanting Odaimoku three times.