

No. 17 (September, 2010)

## SACRED WORDS

**Vast sea of evil karma is created from illusion to the truth. If I embrace the desire to repent my sins and sit erect in observance of the true aspects of life. I will see that the offenses of mankind are just as frost and dew which dissipate in the warm rays of the sun.**

*The Sutra of Meditation on the Bodhisattva Universal Virtue*

### Repentance

Rev. Shokai Kanai

“Repentance is the mysterious medicine which cures illness. It is the Sacred Dharma to change one’s fate. If we wish to cure terrible disease or transform evil karma, then we should repent our sins.” I read this prayer of Repentance which starts with the above sentences every morning during my morning chanting for myself and for the members who have asked me to pray. The attendees at the monthly Blessing Ceremony held every first Sunday also read the entire Prayer of Repentance.

The meaning of the sutra quoted above is “our evil karma is vast like the ocean that we have created from illusion to the truth.” According to the sutra, repentance is not enough of an apology. You must display your Buddha nature that you possess by nurturing and practicing the teachings of the Lotus Sutra and observe the true aspects of life; then, “your evil karma will disappear as frost and dew which dissipate in the warm rays of the sun.”

Many years ago a woman proudly mentioned to me that she had never done any wrong; therefore, she had nothing to repent. Is that really so? An obstinate person insists that he or she is right, so there is no repentance or reflection. But I still read the Prayer of Repentance for myself and to these people who cannot see their faults. They too, will need to repent their bad karma.

We may not do anything wrong; however, our daily lives depend on countless people’s favor in providing food, clothing and shelter, so we are a hindrance without knowing it. In court and religion it is said that wrong doing is less penalized if he or she admits to the offense because there is reflection or regret. On the other hand if he or she does not acknowledge the wrong doing, the sin/punishment is heavier.

For example, he or she may have been a child who despised one’s parents, a disciple who disgraces one’s master, a subject who defies the sovereign, a husband who

oppresses his wife, a wife who conquers her husband, siblings who erect walls of disharmony between each others, scheme to take advantage of another's misfortune, break a promise, speak ill of others, act immorally, behave violently, kill, or steal.

These sins are not only our own but our family's or our fellow human beings or sins from our past lives. If we can realize these sins, we may be able to repent them, but if we do not, the sins may accumulate and become vast like the ocean.

For ordinary people it may be hard to sit erect in observance of the true aspects of life. So besides reading the Prayer of Repentance, I also say, "Pardon me. Please excuse me. Thank you very much. I love you. Namu Myoho Renge Kyo." People blame others, while others in turn also blames the next person. There is no solution with this attitude. If you change your attitude, others will eventually change their attitude as well. You excuse yourself and also excuse others.

Please try to say, "Pardon me. Please excuse me. Thank you very much. I love you. Namu Myoho Renge Kyo." Don't you feel better?

## **Wisdom**

**Rev. Douglas Shoda Kanai**

Now that September has arrived, many of the children are getting back to school, some acceptingly, others begrudgingly. Summertime and playtime are now over and it is time to study again. As we grow older we slowly learn various topics such as history, math and science. Some may feel that this is a waste of time, that some subjects are useless in the real world. Do I really need to know what the American flag colors mean? What use is reading Shakespeare? Who cares where the country Malawi is? Though specifically these subjects will not aid with daily tasks at work, it does make you a well rounded person.

Some have the knack of retaining what is commonly referred to as "useless knowledge". I do not feel that knowledge is useless. Yes, during trivia games, "useless knowledge" will come in handy, but that knowledge had to come from somewhere, either by studying, reading or listening. This knowledge that is in your head helps guide you in making well informed decisions. You have myriads of examples and results from past experience and from old stories to base judgment on. The more you learn, the more you retain the more background information you have. This is called wisdom. By being "all-knowing" you command respect through your intelligence. This command could also be used negatively and hurt others. I hope you do not use superior intelligence to harm.

Studying vast knowledge is not enough. Religious study is important as well. The Lotus Sutra is one of the most difficult sutras that the Buddhas expounded. It is not for everyone, though the message is. Chanting of just the Odaimoku is not enough. St. Nichren created the Odaimoku as an expedient so that everyone has a common starting point in understanding the Lotus Sutra. Once you open the pages and begin reading, many wonderful passages and explanations begin to appear. There are many fanciful stories that help bring the True Dharma to light. As you continue to read, the true message begins to appear. You may not understand the first time you read, but as you continually read and re-read and ask questions to your minister, your strength in faith becomes stronger. A eureka moment may occur; it has for me many times as I read and re-read the Lotus Sutra. Understanding becomes clearer. Each moment builds upon your knowledge which leads to you gaining Buddha wisdom.

Yes, the Lotus Sutra is extremely difficult, but as we persevere and find the meaning contained within the sutra, we get the feeling of accomplishment, a feeling of joy and peace. This is the wisdom being passed down by the Buddha to you, which will eventually lead you into becoming a Buddha. All subjects are not useless; we must continue to learn new topics and ideas every year. This will strengthen your brain power so that you can absorb even more topics and start to see things in a different light, see things just as they are.

**September/October, 2010**

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**(Coming Soong)**