

## ***Setsubun Service***

Feb. 3.2013

We have already celebrated the New Year on January 1 and 6th at this temple. But according to the Chinese Luna Calendar New Year's Day is February 10, so many hotels and casinos in Las Vegas decorated with Chinese traditional festival ornaments.

According to another Japanese calendar, today, February 3 or *Setsubun* 節分 is the day before spring; therefore, February 3 tends to hold the same sort of significance of New Year's Eve.

It was always thought that the change of season means an outbreak of evil spirits, often manifesting themselves in disease, crop failure, and financial troubles. In Japan, Shinto shrines and Buddhist temples hold exorcism ceremonies by throwing soybeans called *mamemaki*. Why do we use soy beans? This is because nutritionally high soybeans are said to contain a vital life force, and believed to have sacred power. They are called "Lucky Beans". The beans 豆 are pronounced "ma" and "me" in Japanese. The first **ma-** means negative influence or demon; the second **-me** means to get rid of or to remove something bad.

The implication in the word **mame** is that by throwing the spiritually powerful beans at the negative influence or evil thoughts, we are banishing vengeful spirits or lingering harm from the past year and also asking for safety and good health in the New Year.

Roasted soybeans were used for *Setsubun* because if the soybeans were not roasted, the negative energy might start to sprout, which was considered inauspicious, as it meant that the beans which were thrown to eliminate any bad luck or trouble that had occurred in the past year would now be producing growth in the New Year. So we use the roasted soybeans. These roasted soybeans we use have been donated by the Las Vegas Mutual Trading Company every year for the last six years. With these good conducts, the company will be prosperous.

*Mame-maki* or the Soybeans Throwing Festival is a playful and enjoyable symbolic ritual. It used to be that the man or woman born with the same Chinese zodiac sign as the present year (2013 is the Year of Snake) would throw the beans. At our temple, we have Mrs. O'Donnell who was born in the Year of Snake. We will playfully toss the beans and shout "*Oniwa Soto! Fuku*

*wa Uchi!*” or “Demons out! Good Luck In!” This will have the effect of expelling demons and inviting in good luck for all of us here.

After the beans are thrown, you are supposed to eat the same number of beans as your age, plus one for extra luck. This will keep you healthy for the New Year. For those who can't eat a large number of beans because of advanced age or dental problem, the same beneficial effects can be achieved by placing three beans in a cup of hot water with some flavored kelp and pickled plum. Then, you must drink all the water. This drink is called “Lucky Tea” because the beans are called “Lucky Beans.”

Now it is the time for the joyful *Setsubun Mamemaki*:

*“Oniwa Soto! Fuku wa Uchi!”*

“Demons out! Good Luck In!”