

No. 8 (March 1, 2009)

## SACRED WORDS

**When you polish a dusty mirror, it will surely shine like a jewel. Your immature and misguided mind is like a dusty mirror. When you polish your dusty mind, it will become a mirror reflecting the universal truth. Put your firm faith in the Three Treasures (Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha) and let your mind shine day and night. How do you shine your mirror? Just say, “Namu Myo-ho-ren-ge-kyo.”**

*Nichiren – Isso Jobutsu Sho*

### **Time Has Come!**

By Rev. Shokai Kanai

“Time has come!” was a phrase from President Barak Obama’s inauguration speech. I hope he means that time has come for change, change for the better.

Are you ready for change for the better? The quick and easiest way to change yourself is to CLEAN UP your room, house, and yard. When you clean up something, you will feel good. When you feel good, you have already changed. “When I change, the whole world changes” is a phrase I found at Ryoan-ji Temple in Kyoto last year.

Someone told me that if you clean up your toilet bowl every night, money will come in. I practice that often but not every night.

Nichiren Shonin says, “Shine your mind”. How to shine? Chant “Namu Myo-Ho-Ren-Ge-Kyo.” These days, I chant the Odaimoku not only during the services, but also everywhere and anytime vocally or humming.

By chanting the Odaimoku, you will gain many benefits such as cleansing of your bad karma or helping your ancestors attain Buddha-hood. You follow the rules of your communities in order to maintain order which leads to harmony with others. Likewise the Odaimoku is a vow to yourself in which you can harmonize with your mind. You will be able to recall what you’ve forgotten to do, but also be able to influence others to chant because you now have a firmer belief in the sacred title of the Lotus Sutra.

Today, people get angry easily. Anger is the state of Hell. Please chant the Odaimoku before you get mad at someone. If you can do that, then you see that you have changed and have calmed down.

## SPRINGTIME

By Rev. Shoda Douglas Kanai

With the beginning of March, spring is in the air! The sleepy winter is about to turn into new life and energy! Flowers, trees, and grass are just about to bloom! I even saw cherry blossoms already blooming in Hayward, CA on the way to the airport after the Ministers Conference held over the weekend of February 21<sup>st</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup>.

Winter though is not willing to leave so quickly. The groundhog Punxsutawney Phil saw its shadow so legend has it that six more weeks of winter is in store, which means spring will not come early this year. Even in the desert the weather has been fluctuating. I have not seen this much rain in any of the past winters.

As the world turns, the seasons will slowly change from cold winter to a mild spring. The days will get longer. The longer daylight signifies more light and more warmth. Everything around us will emerge from the rest of winter into the growth of spring.

At this time of the vernal equinox stage when the hours of day and night is the same, we Nichiren Buddhist mark this time as "*Higan*" or "arriving at the other shore". This means for us to transcend the illusions of this world in order to reach the world of the Buddha's Pure Land. With the balance of day and night, we may be able to reflect on our faith and increase our knowledge in order to free ourselves from the bonds of suffering and cycles of birth and death. To gain this knowledge we must all make great effort to practice daily chanting, read, recite and copy the Lotus Sutra, and follow the teaching of St. Nichiren. Eventually winter to spring will not exist once we obtain the true insight of the Buddha and attain enlightenment. The cycle of death to rebirth will be broken.

At the vernal equinox is also a time when night can represent the land of the deceased and day the land of the living. With both worlds being equal, both sides can communicate with each other. *Higan* is not just a time to improve ourselves in order for us to "reach the other shore" but also to help the deceased reach the "other shore" as well. We offer flowers, fruits and fragrances to the deceased in order to honor them and show our appreciation to them. Without them we would not be here today.

As told in previous sermons the count of our great-great-great grand parents are numerous. If anyone of them did not exist or did not come in contact with any of our relatives, the chain would be broken, thus we would not exist. We must pay our respects to them by chanting the Lotus Sutra and the Odaimoku so that they too may be saved and can move to the "other shore" and reach Buddha's Pure Land. What better way than to show our gratitude than by giving our deceased relatives our merits gained through our chanting so that their lives may be saved. They have desires, hunger, and thirst as we do. By sharing our food and our drink, they too will be able to enjoy the wonderful flavors

and smell. Once they are full, they will no longer crave these worldly desires and be able to move on towards the Pure Land.

Though real spring has yet to come in many parts of the country, just remember that as the days and night become closer in length, we must remember all our ancestors who have contributed in making who we are. Please place your hands together, bow to them, thank them and chant the Odaimoku to them. I am sure they will be very grateful and in turn will smile upon you from the sides of “the other shore”.

March/April, 2009