

## ***Mandala Gohonzon as the Eteranal Buddha***

February 17, 2013

At Seattle Nichiren Buddhist Church

Happy Great Nirvana for Sakyamuni Buddha and Happy Birthday to Nichiren Dai'Shonin! Today we are cerebrating Great Nirvana of Sakyamuni Buddha. When Buddhists say, "Great Nirvana," it means the end of physical life of the historical Buddha that happened on February 15, some 2500 years ago in India. When Buddhists say just "Nirvana," it means the Enlightenment not only for the historical Sakyamuni Buddha but also anyone including us.

Although the year and the place are different, next day after Buddha's death, Nichiren was born at Awa, Kominato, Japan in 1222. For some fanatic Nichiren followers, Nichiren was rebirth of Sakyamuni Buddha because he was born next day after the Buddha's death.

Of course the historical Buddha is dead, but the Lotus Sutra teaches us the existence of the Eternal Buddha. There are many Buddha statues like a baby Buddha, a skinny and bone Buddha just before his Enlightenment, a preaching Buddha, and a laying down Nirvana Buddha. The Eternal Buddha exists at any place and at any time, but he is not a physical being. He transcends time and place.

So the Eternal Buddha is unformed, invisible, and untouchable. How can you express the eternal Buddha in a physical form? Let make it easier: for example we know that wind exists. Wind is not physical just like air. Wind is blowing. How can you express it in a drawing? You may draw a picture of the tree branches bending toward one direction, or a piece of paper is flying in the sky.

Nichiren Dai'Shonin expressed the existence of the Eternal Buddha on *the Mandala Gohonzon* of the Ten Realms. Do you know what the ten realms are? They are the ten different stages of our mind. They are the state of anger, greediness, instinct like the animal, fight like a gang, an ordinary person, joyfulness, a good listener, a scholar, a Bodhisattva, and a Buddha. Even the Buddha has mind of anger, but he does not show nor act. Even a murderer has a Buddha nature, but he or she never acts like a Buddha.

Have you ever angry? Have you ever been greedy? Have you ever been kind to other? Have you ever volunteered without any expectation? All of us have such ten stages of mind. When we chant the *Odaimoku*, "Namu Myoho Renge Kyo;" we are alike Buddhas. When you chant more, help others, and teach others what Buddhism is; you are alike a Buddha. So the Eternal Buddha is here when we chant the *Odaimoku* in front of the *Gohonzon*.

I think that all of you, members of the Seattle Nichiren Buddhist Church, received a letter requesting your general donation toward mending the original *Mandala Gohonzon* of this church that was brought to this church by the founder Rev. Ryucho Oka, in 1916 almost 100 years ago.

The *Gohonzon* was written by the former Archbishop Nichibyo Asahina who came to the United States one hundred years ago to Los Angeles. That *Gohonzon* you may have seen a copy of it together with the letter from the church was used to hang behind the statues in the shrine till recently.

When Professor Annaka of Rissho University, Tokyo, visited this church for research history of the church a few years ago, he found the historical valuable *Gohonzon* but it was damaged quite a bit. Therefore, he took it to Japan for estimating the price of mending.

Venerable Ryusho Matsuda sent a donation request letter to all former resident ministers who are still alive to make donation toward it. So I sent my check to him recently. Please support for this project of mending the historical valuable *Gohonzon* before the 100 Anniversary of this church comes.

Nichiren Shonin says in *Shoho Jisso Sho*, (P. 84 of Nichiren-Shu Service Book, DHARMA). “Have faith in the Great *Mandala Gohonzon*, the Most Venerable One in the entire world. Earnestly endeavor to strengthen your faith, so that you may be blessed with the protective power of Sakyamuni Buddha.”

On the *Mandala Gohonzon* the names of the ten different stages of people are written. All people who have the ten different stages of mind become united and harmonized with the ray of Namu Myoho Renge Kyo; therefore, the *Mandala Gohonzon* also indicates the Buddha Land.

Nichiren also says in *Kanjin Honzon Sho*, (P. 110 of Nichiren-Shu Service Book, DHARMA) “When the Eternal Buddha was revealed in the Lotus Sutra, this world becomes the Eternal Buddha Land. It transcends the four periods of cosmic change of birth, old age, decease, and void. Sakyamuni Buddha has never died in the past, nor will he be born in the future. He exists forever throughout the past, present, and future. All those who receive his guidance are one with this Eternal Buddha.”

What he means is that we are also eternal through many birth and death. Therefore we read at the end of *Kaikyo-ge* or Verses for Opening the Sutra, “This sutra is the most wonderful and most excellent taught by the Buddhas of the past, present, and future. May we meet and receive it, birth after birth, world after world.”

Many of you were born and raised as a member of Nichiren Shu Religion or even though you were raised in other religion and joined into this church later, it was because you had practiced the Lotus Sutra in the past. After you die, you will be born again to chant O’Daimoku. You are guaranteed to be saved with the Lotus Sutra. Please continue to strengthen your faith, so that you will soon realize that you are already blessed with the Eternal Buddha and also you are receiving guidance from the Eternal Buddha.