

LOS ANGELES BETSUIN

jihō

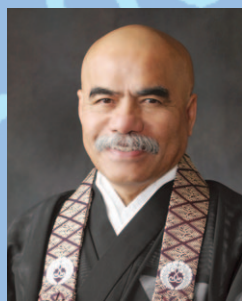
WWW

No. 478

May - June 2023

RIMBAN'S MESSAGE

THOUGHTS ON GOTAN-YE



**Rimbhan William
Briones**

The fundamental principle of Master Shinran in our tradition is not that one should become a priest in the aspiration for buddhahood or that one should renounce family and separate oneself from worldly attachments; it is simply that when, with [the waking of] the one thought-moment of taking refuge [in Amida], Other Power faith is decisively settled, no distinction at all is made between male and female, old and young.¹

As of this writing, in a short five weeks a group of BWA members and I will be in Japan attending the **Commemoration Service of Shinran Shonin's 850th Anniversary of his birth and 800th Year Anniversary of Shinran's Teachings.**

Shinran Shonin was the founder of our Jodo Shinshu tradition. During his lifetime, Shinran had lived a somewhat unassuming life. He claimed to have no disciples and no teachings of his own. All that he had done was to articulate and clarify what he had learned from his teachers. Despite his humble character, Shinran's deep understanding of human nature had drastically changed the course of Buddhism and society in Japan. It is obvious that his life has had a tremendous impact on my life.

During the BCA National Council meeting last month, during a "Zoom" break out workshop with ministers and lay leaders, we were asked to comment on the theme for the workshop, "Nembutsu, Appreciate Every Encounter". The question was posed: Why do you appreciate the Teachings of Jodo Shinshu? I don't think my response was as interesting as the others.

For me, the heart and soul of the Nembutsu teachings is Amida's Primal Vow of the Other Power. This is the most important principle in Jodo Shinshu. Shinnan's understanding of the Primal Vow sets us apart from all Buddhists.

When I became interested in Buddhism about 45 years ago, I didn't know the difference between Sakyamuni Buddha and Amida Buddha, let alone the teachings of Shinran Shonin.

My journey has been a long one: baptized a Roman Catholic as an infant and ordained as a Jodo Shinshu priest at the age of 51. I definitely have learned more about myself— good and bad. I have learned of my shortcomings but I have also come to realize how fortunate I am. I've been so fortunate to have been given the opportunity to study and deepen my understanding of the Nembutsu teaching.

The opening reading is from one of Rennyo Shonin's letters entitled, "On Becoming a Priest in the Aspiration for Buddhahood." For me, Rennyo's letter articulates the spirit and perspective in which Shinran related to the people of his time, and how it continues to be relevant today.

It was out of compassion for all suffering beings that the Bodhisattva Dharmakara established the 48 Vows and became Amida Buddha. Of the 48 Vows the 18th Vow became the most important to Pure Land Buddhists, since it promised birth into Amida's Pure Land for those "sentient beings of the ten quarters, with sincere mind entrusting themselves aspiring to be Born in my land and saying my Name perhaps even ten times."

Many of us, however, find this cosmological story, which took place a several "bazillion" years ago, difficult to accept or understand. For myself, my understanding of the Dharmakara
(continued on page 6)

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THE BENEFIT OF FOLLOWING THE SHIN BUDDHIST PATH

by Rev. Hibiki Murakami



Rev. Hibiki
Murakami

The term **shinjin** is explained as the unquestioning acceptance of Amida Buddha's Primal Vow and the acknowledgment that one is far from nirvana. The essence of shinjin is expressed in the phrase "*two kinds of deep faith (nishujinshin)*." This is emphasized by Shin Buddhist priests as a characteristic of Jodo Shinshu. However, in our daily lives, it is rare when we are willing to admit that we are "foolish." There may not

be many who are in constant turmoil, but it may be that many grapple with their own desires. Even if we attempt to maintain a spirit of humility and flexibility with others, it does not make our desires disappear. Wanting to be seen by others in a certain way, though never expressed outwardly, is also a desire. The problem is that the desire could be lurking deep within us —so deep that we are oblivious to it.

Recently, my Aikido training changed from learning the basic techniques to self-defense. In class, my sensei talked about how to prepare for self-defense. In my group, Aikido Ohana, the purpose of training is not to batter an opponent. The Aikido objective is to learn spirit and techniques to avoid getting involved in a fight or to neutralize the opponent. According to sensei, one of the reasons why a quarrel develops into a fight is because when one's eager mind wishes overpower the opponent, a fight ensues. The uncontrollable fighting spirit is the desire to fight back because the other person has hit you. The ego wants to rid the discomfort that was created. It is difficult to control one's feelings in a tense situation, but if you continue to "hit back" after you are hit, the fight will escalate. Therefore, learning self-defense is not necessarily about punishing your opponent. Sensei emphasized that self-defense is only about protecting yourself, not beating your opponent. If you and those around you are not injured, the purpose of self-defense is achieved. You need not have to put your life at risk. Hearing this, I was truly impressed by the depth of the spirit of Aikido.

Having been practicing less than a year, there are many Aikido techniques I need to learn. But is a strong person one who recklessly fights and risks his own life? Even Musashi Miyamoto mindfully chose his opponents to fight. Ultimately, if the person who remains at the end can be said to be truly strong, then the technique is not the only object to learn. We should recognize our weaknesses and acquire the spirit and skills to cover them.

Next year, our Buddhist Churches of America (BCA) will celebrate the 125th anniversary of its founding in North America. As we celebrate this milestone, the theme is "*The Benefit of Following the Shin Buddhism Path*." I have never thought of Jodo Shinshu in terms of "benefits," but the greatest benefit of my being here is that I have been able to meet people who have lived their lives recognizing the embracement of Amida Buddha's compassion. If we look at Jodo Shinshu from the perspective of the Buddhist path, it can be thought of as a path where one lives with the wish of the Buddha. If we ask ourselves how we want to live our lives, many paths will naturally appear as our life choices. Once you have a clear idea of how you want to live your life, you will naturally find what you want to do.

Also, the word "benefit" can be switched to "merit." For me, merit sounds like taking immediate profit or advantage, but the focus of the benefit is not only the advantage we may receive from now but also we can think of it as containing the happiness that we have been blessed with up to the point where we are now standing. At least here, beneficence is not an expectation of future benefit. I think it is a benefit to be received "now," as we change the way we see the world by realizing how grateful we are for the hand that has been extended to us for our foolishness, which in the past we thought was a weakness.

The world does not change by walking the path of Buddhism. It is our individual selves who change by walking the path. If I change, the world will change with me. The benefit of following the path of Shin Buddhism is that we can see ourselves from the perspective of the compassion of the Buddha.

GOTAN-YE/HATSUMAIRI SERVICE



YOUNG SHINRAN
(MATSUWAKAMARO)

Sunday
May 21
10:00 AM



HATSUMAIRI SERVICE

BETSUIN BOARD PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



Pam Tabata

The Los Angeles Betsuin **Gotan-ye/Hatsumairi Service** will be held on May 21st from 10 am.

Many of us from BCA (Buddhist Churches of America) will be returning from Nishi Hongwanji Kyoto **17th World Buddhist Women's Association Convention**. This event will be in conjunction with the *850th Anniversary of Shinran Shonin's birth*

and the *800th Anniversary of the founding of Jodo Shinshu Buddhism*. Our flight will arrive back home the day before the Gotan-ye/Hatsumairi Service. We'll all, most likely, be exhausted but it will be worthwhile to see everyone at the service. Hatsumairi is a ceremony where a child is presented before the Amida Buddha as their first service. My third grandchild will be participating in this Hatsumairi so it will be even more special.

The BWA World Convention, is held every four years with every other one being held in Japan. The other times the venues rotate amongst Canada, Hawaii, South America and mainland USA.

My first ever BWA convention, which was held at Nishi Hongwanji, Kyoto was spectacular. As a Shin Buddhist here in the US, you are a small minority. Being in Japan and seeing so many Shin Buddhists gathered together, making the building rumble with everyone chanting, was quite an emotional moment for me.

There is one other memory that I have spoken about many times. The Hiroshima BWA delegates invited our delegation to a dinner following the convention. They were such gracious and hospitable ladies. My inability to communicate with them in Japanese did not diminish their wonderful smiles and thoughtfulness. I was ever so grateful for that opportunity and experience.

Years later, in 2015, as the LA Betsuin BWA president, I attended the convention in Calgary, Canada and, again, the Hiroshima BWA delegates invited us to dinner at a Chinese restaurant. I was given a couple of hours to come up with a speech and give it to Mrs. Iwohara to translate. I was so nervous, not wanting to embarrass our BWA ladies, that I made myself sick. But...I had to go to the dinner. Again, the kindness and thoughtfulness of the Hiroshima ladies was heartfelt and appreciated.

When we returned from the world convention in San Francisco in 2019, we were finally able to reciprocate the hospitality and a busload of Hiroshima delegates came to the LA Betsuin. It was an honor to host this group and others.

BETSUIN CALENDAR OF EVENTS

MAY

- 07 Regular Service 10:00 am
- 14 Mothers' Day Service 10:00 am
Boy Scout Pancake Breakfast (see page 9)
Eitaikyo Shotsuki Hoyo 1:00 pm
- 21 Gotan-ye / Hatsumairi Service 10:00 am
- 28 Memorial Day Sunday Service 10:00 am
- 29 Memorial Day Hakamairi

JUNE

- 04 Graduation Recognition Service 10:00 am
Family Fun Day (following service)
- 11 Regular Service 10:00 am
Eitaikyo Shotsuki Hoyo 1:00 pm
- 18 Fathers' Day Service 10:00 am
- 25 Attendance Award Service 10:00 am

JULY

- 02 Regular Service 10:00 am
- 04 Independence Day (Temple closed)
- 7/8 Obon Festival and Odori

In order to access any of these services via Zoom, contact the Betsuin for information:

213-680-9130 or

NishiDharmaCenter@gmail.com



With the upcoming convention in Kyoto, I look forward to making new friends and perhaps seeing old friends. I cannot tell you how grateful I am to be given these many opportunities.

In gassho

DID YOU KNOW?

by Eiko Masuyama

Nishi Hongwanji Archives and Library

Archives: A place where public [temple] records are kept.

Library: A collection of books [Buddhist books with emphasis on Jodoshinshu and temple history related books]; a room/building that has such a collection.

There has always been a library at the Los Angeles Hompa Hongwanji Buddhist Temple. At Central Avenue temple site, it was in the basement, a small, dark room, north of the chapel. For the move, in 1969, to current First Street site, the books were boxed, tied up in bundles, and taken to the small room between the old *nokotsudo* (columbarium) and the ministers' offices, across from the *onajjin* (altar) area. Most books were placed on the shelves lining the north and south walls, and some remained tied up in bundles. There are signs that Rev G Gibbs (1994-2001) attempted to categorize the English titles, giving them labels with identifying letters and numbers, though no list appears anywhere. The room appears to have been used as an office for one of the ministers, during the time (prior to 2000), when there were six or seven ministers assigned to the temple.

Around year 2000, when thoughts were beginning to focus on the upcoming 100th anniversary of the temple in 2005, I was asked to handle the publicity, including a booklet, for the celebration. To publicize the centennial, articles about the history of the LA Betsuin were regularly placed in the Betsuin JIHO, "Did you know?..." column. A call went out for memories and old photos/documents/memorabilia. It wasn't long before items began appearing from the membership, past/present and local/afar. The furthest came from Nebraska. Others were discovered in old temple file cabinets in the library, office, downstair rooms and from the basement. The library was declared to be shared space with the newly found materials. An old file cabinet, a couple of donated book cases, a table/desk/chairs, and empty library shelves became the center for old and newly discovered materials pertaining to the history of the temple. Hence, the beginning of the Nishi Archives.

---to be continued

* * * * *

IREI: National Monument for the WWII Japanese American Incarceration

The name of the project was inspired by **Ireito**, a monument — a distinct white obelisk in the cemetery, built by incarcerated at the Manzanar concentration camp to remember those who had died during incarceration. The Ireito was formally dedicated at an Obon Service on August,



Backside of Ireito Monument, Manzanar Concentration Camp cemetery, with Rev S Nagatomi, calligrapher, dedicated during Obon Service, August, 1943; photo taken during postwar pilgrimage, says "Built by the Japanese of Manzanar, August 1943"

1943 at the Manzanar cemetery by Rev Shinjo Nagatomi (LA Betsuin minister, 1934-1936) whose calligraphy *I-Rei-To* 慰零塔 (Consoling Spirits Tower) reflects his belief that reciting the names of the departed and chanting sutras in front of the tower would bring comfort to the spirits of the departed and those left behind.

The Irei Monument Project includes over 125,000 names compiled by a team of researchers led by project director, **Rev., Dr. Duncan Ryuken Williams*** and produced under the guidance of project's creative director, Sunyoung Lee, together with a team of artists and designers.

Funding for the creating of the project has come, primarily, from the Mellon Foundation and the USC Ito Center. The initiative to enhance Ireizo through the collaboration with Densho is supplemented by support from the Japanese American Confinement Sites (JACS) Grant Program.

"We are drawing on Japanese and Japanese American cultural traditions of honoring elders and ancestors, not simply through building monuments of remembrance, but monuments to repair the racial

(continued on page 5)

(KNOW? - continued from page 4)

karma of America.”

—Duncan Ryuken Williams, Irei Monument Director/Soto Zen Buddhist priest/ USC Shinzo Ito Center Director

The *Irei*: National Monument for the WWII Japanese American Incarceration is a multi-faceted project that seeks to address the attempted erasure of those individuals of Japanese ancestry who experienced wartime incarceration by memorializing their names.

This is the first time a comprehensive list of the over 125,000 persons of Japanese ancestry, who were unjustly imprisoned in U.S. Army, Department of Justice and War Relocation Authority (WRA) camps, has been successfully compiled – and thus, the first time it has been possible to properly memorialize each incarcerated as distinct individuals instead of a generalized community. By placing their names front and center, the Irei National Monument Project seeks to expand and re-envision what a monument is through three distinct, but interlinking elements: a sacred book of names as monument (*Ireicho*), a website monument (*Ireizo*) and light sculpture monuments (*Ireihi*).

Ireicho: The Book of Names

The idea of a book as a monument is inspired by the Japanese tradition of *kakocho*, (literally, “The Book of the Past”), a book of names typically placed on a Buddhist temple altar. This book is brought out for memorial services, when the names of those to be remembered are chanted. Following a ceremonial installation of the book on September 24, 2022 at the Japanese American National Museum, the *Ireicho* monument will be on display at the museum for a year. The public is invited to view and acknowledge the names in the *Ireicho* by placing a Japanese *hanko* (stamp) underneath the name of each individual in the book. If the goal of honoring the 125,000 names is not reached by the end of the year-long campaign, the *Ireicho* may be displayed at other locations until every single individual is acknowledged.

Learn more about the Irei Monument project at:

<https://ireizo.com>

To stamp and memorialize names of relatives/friends, reservations (15 minute slots) are necessary. The following link will allow you to make your reservations:

<https://9644p.blackbaudhosting.com/9644p/The-Irei-cho-A-Sacred-Book-of-Names>

* *Rev., Dr. Duncan Williams will be the guest speaker at the Southern District Mini Seminar Tri-Temple June 10, at the Los Angeles Betsuin.*

* * * * *

Thank you to: **Cindy Oda** and **Misao Tomita**, family of the late Agnes Nakamura and late Itono Nakamura for donations of panoramas of YBA activities of the 1930s and large framed print of meeting of Shinran and Bennen. Donations of four books written by the late Rev K Norimoto (aka Nomoto, Ippei) by **Mrs. Toshiko Norimoto**. Jr Matrons and Matron photos, and photo album of 1978 World BWA Conference in Sao Paulo, Brazil that were taken by the late Helen Adler, was donated by **Michael Richards**. Donation of Jr Matrons, Matrons, and BWA photos of late Amy Miyakawa, was donated by **Sharon Nishi**. “Thank you” to: **Glen Tao** for a flash drive with video of LAHHBT 50th Anniversary Service, 2019. **Pam Tabata** for photos and memorabilia belonging to the late Helen Takata. The family of late Rev John Doami (LA Betsuin minister 1965-1969) for books from his collection.

* * * * *

Looking for: Sony P6-120mps Video 8 Tape Player. Do you have one? We need to view and verify donated tapes. Please call the Betsuin office and leave message for Eiko in Archives. The connector to play/hear reel to reel tape was located... Thank you, **Bruce Hatakeyama**.



OHIGAN SERVICE MINISTERS
I-r front: Rev. Seikan Fukuma, Rimban William Briones, Rev. Nobuo Miyaji back: Rev. Hibiki Murakami

MATTHEW HAYASHI EARNS BOY SCOUT SANGHA AWARD



Matthew Hayashi with his Sangha Award certificate from his final instructor, Rev. Murakami.

Matthew Hayashi, son of Grant and Sheryl Hayashi, was recently presented with the BCA Boy Scout Sangha Award. To earn this award, Matthew needed to complete 72 hours of instruction over the course of what was suppose to be the required two years. Due to the pandemic, however, Matthew’s progress was delayed. He started in 2019 with Rev. Nakata, then Rimban Briones, and finally, with Rev. Murakami and culminated with receiving his award in 2023.

The National Buddhist Committee on Scouting is recognized by and authorized to administer the Buddhist religious awards for the Boy Scouts of America and Girl Scouts of the United States of America. This Scouting committee is comprised of laypersons and ministerial advisors sponsored by the Buddhist Churches of America.

(Rimban - continued from page 1)

is that he is a mythical hero. His story represents the deepest aspirations of all humanity that, some day, all of us will be free from suffering. Amida is a symbol of reality and points to our interdependence to all things and the need to share with others.

When the Dharmakara made his vows, he said, if, when he becomes Buddha and if all beings do not experience the same realization, then he would not accept Buddhahood. The Dharmakara, points out that salvation is not for himself alone. Jodo Shinshu, as the way to enlightenment must include others and work on their behalf, or else there can be no meaning to the Vow.

This, I take to heart. Amida's Primal Vow does not discriminate between the young and old, good and evil, the rich and poor, gay and straight, Japanese and American, Black and White. ... If it doesn't include them, there can be no meaning to Amida's salvation.

It is within Amida's Primal Vow we become aware of the intimate interconnectedness with others. To realize this interdependence, is to have a deep and abiding sense of responsibility for and concern for our fellow human beings.

So, if Jodo Shinshu is to survive in America, we must teach and experience Jodo Shinshu within an American context. As Jodo Shinshu Buddhist, our primary concern is our own personal awaking to this spiritual truth of interdependency. I believe we must think for ourselves and act accordingly, based on our own personal experience and spiritual insights. When we taste the reality of Amida's Primal Vow, one cannot help but share the awareness and joy that comes from the teachings.

I truly believe that Jodo Shinshu has a universal message to share. It is a world religion with the potentiality to bring insight and wisdom to a suffering humanity, transcending national and cultural boundaries.

Today, we are fortunate to be able to receive the benefits of Shinran's insight and understanding. Gotanye is a time to acknowledge his unique contribution and an opportunity for us to rejoice in the same peace of mind

Namo Amida Butsu

1 "Rennyō: The Second Founder of Shin Buddhism," Minor and Ann Rogers

BETSUIN

VEHICLE DONATION



**Donate any vehicle:
car, truck,
motorcycle, or boat**



BETSUIN PHOTOS



Surf & Turf plate: Poached salmon (foil), grilled beef, goma green beans, tsukemono, blueberries, and gohan. Not shown, manju dessert.



Cindy Nakamura and Ron Nakamura bagging the orders.



Many hands packing the Surf and Turf plates.



Grant Hayashi, the "gohan guy."



The "gyoza guys" pan frying gyoza on the flat top.



Cub Scout moms and Cubbies serving tea to "dining-in" guests.



House band, ABASonics entertain the dining-in guests.



Sara Kamiya delivering drive-through take-out orders.



**BCA SOUTHERN DISTRICT
OBON SCHEDULE**

<u>June 10</u>	Arizona Saturday only
<u>June 17</u>	Sun Valley Saturday only
<u>June 24</u>	West Covina Saturday only Las Vegas Saturday only
<u>June 24 & 25</u>	San Fernando
<u>July 1</u>	Senshin Saturday only
<u>JULY 8 & 9</u>	L.A. BETSUIN
<u>July 15 & 16</u>	OCBC Venice
<u>July 22 & 23</u>	Pasadena Sunday only Vista WLA
<u>July 29 & 30</u>	San Diego Saturday only Higashi Saturday/Camarillo
<u>August 5 & 6</u>	Gardena



OBON
**BON ODORI
& CARNIVAL**
JULY 8 & 9

IN MEMORIAM

The Nishi Betsuin extends its deepest condolences to the families of the following members who have recently passed away. May the family members find solace and comfort in the Nembutsu.
--Namo Amida Butsu

January 16 - March 16

January 2023	9 Yaeko Mochizuki
16 Sharon Naomi Nishimura	15 Roy Toshiyuki Tanamachi
19 Sumiye Takeuchi	20 Rosa Kioko Endo
23 Takako Terada	24 Barbara Yooko Matsumoto
26 Alice Akiko Fujimoto	28 Edward Teruyoshi Nishi
26 Dr. Taro Yokoyama	
29 Ron Hisaharu Okayama	
29 Kiyoko Tomita	March 2023
31 Ayao Shinozaki	1 Catherine Naomi Tanaka
	3 Mabel Nobuko Furuto
February 2023	7 Kumpei Sakaniwa
6 Shigeiko Nakai	12 Clint Manabu Kamada
7 Miyo Kunitake	

**BON ODORI
PRACTICE DATES**



JUNE: 20,22,27,29
7:00-8:30 pm

JULY: 2 (following 10 am service) **5** (7:00-8:30 pm)

Call temple in June
for information: 213-680-9130

2023 MEMBERSHIP

Valid from January 1 through December 31, 2023

\$250 FOR EACH ADULT FAMILY MEMBER

CHECKS ARE PAYABLE TO:
L.A. HONPA HONGWANJI BUDDHIST TEMPLE

Betsuin Jiho

Editor-in-Chief: Rimban William Briones
English Editor: Elaine Fukumoto
Photos: Koichi Sayano Glen Tao



NISHI SCOUTS BSA TROOP 738 ANNUAL PANCAKE BREAKFAST



TAKE-OUT / DINE-IN

Celebrate Mother's Day at Nishi!

Date: Sunday, May 14, 2023

Time: 8AM – 10AM

Location: Nishi Kaikan

Donation: \$12.00/plate

Includes: pancakes, eggs, sausage links, fresh strawberries, syrup, coffee, juice, or milk

Strawberry baskets sold at the door

Orders due and paid by May 6, 2023, or until sold out.



*pancakes shown are not actual size

No tickets will be sold; please use this pre-order form.

Please print and return with payment to:

L.A. Homba Hongwanji Buddhist Temple
815 E. 1st Street
Los Angeles, CA 90012
Attn: Scouts BSA Troop 738

Cash or checks payable to:

LAHHBT

Please write "Scouts BSA Troop 738" on memo line

QUESTIONS: Christina Safranek
nishitroop738@gmail.com

Name (person picking up, phone # & email)	In support of: (insert name of Boy Scout or Cub Scout)	Order type (circle one)	Pick-up time (circle one)*	Qty at \$12 ea.
		To-go	8:00-8:30am 8:30-9:00am	
		Dine-in	9:00-9:30am 9:30-10:00am	

*Please arrive at your scheduled time for pick-up.

Thank you for supporting our Troop!
All proceeds go towards Troop 738 activities and campouts.

SUBTOTAL _____

DONATION _____

AMT ENCLOSED _____