

the four Heavenly Kings are inscribed, as well as the names of other Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, and protective deities who listen to the Buddha's preaching.

The Great Mandala also represents the ten realms of Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, Pratyekabuddhas, Sravakas, heavenly beings, human beings, anger, animals, hungry spirit, and hell, and it shows that every being of the ten realms attains enlightenment.

Q When I enter a Nichiren Shii temple, I see the Gohonzon enshrined with statues. Why is that?

A Nichiren Shu temples enshrine statues of Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, and protective deities at the altar in order to provide a more visual representation of the Great Mandala. It is simply a different way of representing the Great Mandala. Wherever the Gohonzon is enshrined, it is a place of the Eternal Buddha's Pure World and a place to practice.

Q Who can receive the Great Mandala (Gohonzon)?

A The Great Mandala is very important for Nichiren Buddhists who are able to make a direct connection with the Original Buddha. So receiving the Great Mandala should be approached with reverence. Nichiren Shōnin did not present it to those who were confused in their beliefs or did not have faith in the Lotus Sutra, even if they had been his supporters or followers. If one wishes to receive the Great Mandala, there is a specific time period and a process which must be completed prior to bestowal of the Great Mandala.

Q Is there a ceremony to receive the Great Mandala?

A When one receives the Great Mandala, one becomes a member of Nichiren Shu and participates in the initiation ceremony, indicating a willingness to serve the Three Treasures of Buddha, Dharma (the Lotus Sutra) and Sangha (community). A minister will perform an eye-opening ceremony for the Great Mandala to consecrate it. For more information, please contact a minister of a Nichiren Buddhist Temple, Church or Sangha near you.



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**Enshrining
the Gohonzon**



**The Nichiren Buddhist
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1 Q Nichiren Shu members have the Gohonzon enshrined in their homes. What exactly is the Gohonzon?

A The Gohonzon represents the most venerable one in whom we Nichiren Shu Buddhists place faith and show devotion. The Gohonzon represents the Original and Eternal Buddha who attained enlightenment in the remotest past. He is the original Buddha. All other Buddhas in the past, present, and future are his manifestations. The historical Sakyamuni Buddha, born in India 2,500 years ago, is also a manifestation of the Original Buddha. We use the term Original Sakyamuni Buddha to refer to the eternal Buddha, because the enlightenment of the Original Sakyamuni Buddha extends from the remotest past to the constant future without limitation. He has been our great benefactor and teacher leading us to Buddhahood since the remotest past.

2 Q What does the word "Go-honzon" mean?

A Go is an honorific prefix. The two characters which make up the term of Honzon (ゴホン) come from several concepts:

- (1) The Most Venerable One whom we respect and rely on as the basis of our practice (ゴホフ -Konpon Sonsho);
- (2) the Most Venerable One being respected since the remotest past (ゴホム -Honrai Sonsho);
- (3) Honorable and eternal aspect of the Most Venerable One (ゴホウ -Hon'nu Sonsho). Taken together then, Honzon (ゴホン) means or refers to the Most Venerable One.

3 Q How does Nichiren Shonin represent Gohonzon?

A As thought of in Nichiren Shu, the Gohonzon represents or is a manifestation of the Eternal Sakyamuni Buddha. Nichiren Shonin inscribed the Eternal Buddha's Pure World on a piece of paper for the first time as the Great Mandala. He stated, "I inscribed my life in sumi (black carbon ink)." (Reply to Lord Kyo-oh)



4 Q When did Nichiren Shonin inscribe the Great Mandala?

A Nichiren Shonin inscribed the Great Mandala on July 8, 1271 (8th year of Bun'ei) during his exile on Sado

Island. He was the first to reveal that the Great Mandala was revealed in the Latter age of Degeneration after thousands two hundred and twenty some years after the passing of the historical Sakyamuni Buddha. Nichiren Shonin presented the Great Mandala to his disciples and followers as "a symbol of spreading the Lotus Sutra." ("Reply to Nun Nichinyo")

5 Q What is inscribed on the Great Mandala?

A The Great Mandala depicts the world of the Buddha's enlightenment. It is the form of the Eternal Buddha who has been preaching the Lotus Sutra tirelessly from the remote past to the present time, and also into the future. It also shows the Pure Land which is described in the Lotus Sutra where we receive the merits of the Eternal Buddha Sakyamuni which is the Locus Sutra. "Namu Myoho Renge Kyo" is inscribed down the center of the Great Mandala in the calligraphic style of Nichiren Shonin. On the left as one is facing the Great Mandala, is "Sakyamuni Butsu (Buddha Sakyamuni)," and on the right is "Tall Nyorai (Buddha Many Treasures)". On the right of Tall Nyorai, are the names of "Jogyo (Bodhisattva Superior-Practice)" and "Muhengyo (Bodhisattva Limitless-Practice). On the left of Sakyamuni Butsu, the names of "Jogyo (Bodhisattva Pure-Practice)" and "Anryugyo (Bodhisattva Steadily-Established-Practice)" are inscribed. These are the Four great Bodhisattvas who arose from under the earth and are the leaders of all bodhisattvas. On the four corners of the Great Mandala, The names of