

SERVICES COMMEMORATING PERSECUTIONS OF NICHIREN

1 Izu Persecution (May 12)



Nichiren Shonin submitted his Treatise entitled "Rissho Ankoku-ron (Treatise on Spreading Peace Throughout the Country by Establishing the True Dharma)", to the Kamakura Shogunate to take politics under the True Dharma of the Lotus Sutra on July 16, 1260. But the Shogunate, far from accepting his opinion, exiled him to Izu on May 12, 1261. Left on an offshore rock, Nichiren Shonin was saved by Funamori Yasaburo.

2 Matsubagayatsu Persecution (August 27)



On the night of August 27, 1260, just forty-one days after Nichiren Shonin submitted his "Rissho Ankoku-ron" to the Shogunate, mob hostile to Nichiren, an outspoken reformer, attacked his hermitage and set fire to it at Matsubagayatsu section of Kamakura. But according to a legend, a white monkey miraculously appeared before the sleeping priest, leading him to safety.

3 Tatsunokuchi Persecution (September 12)

On September 10, 1271, Nichiren Shonin, who was called by the shogunate, pointed out his prediction of Mongol threat have come true and requested a public debate with other sects. The shogunate, however,



did not listen to him and arrested him on September 12. On the way to Sado Island, where Nichiren Shonin was going to be exiled, they tried to kill him at Tatsunokuchi Beach, an execution ground outside Kamakura. A thunderbolt broke the executioner's sword into pieces, Nichiren Shonin narrowly escaped death.

4 Sado Persecution (October 10)



After the Tatsunokuchi Incident, Nichiren Shonin was detained at Echi, near Kamakura for about a month. Departing Echi on October 10, Nichiren Shonin was exiled to Sado. Being exiled in Sado for four years, Nichiren Shonin deepened this faith as an avatar of Superior Practice (Jogyo) Bodhisattva. He also wrote "Kaimoku-Sho (Open Your Eye to the Lotus Sutra)" and "Kanjin Honzon-Sho A treatise Revealing Spiritual Contemplation and the Most Venerable One)" in Sado, and the Great Mandala on July 8, 1273.

5 Komatsubara Persecution (November 11)



After returning from exile at Izu in 1264, Nichiren Shonin visited his home village in Awa Province to see his sick mother. After she recovered, Kudo Yoshitaka, the Lord of Amatsu, invited Nichiren Shonin to his residence. On their way in the evening of On November 11, Nichiren Shonin and his retainers were attacked by Tojo Kagenobu and his followers at Komatsubara. Nichiren Shonin was injured on his forehead, and his disciple, Kyoninbo and Lord Yoshitaka were killed. A cotton hat is put on Nichiren Shonin's statue from November 11 through Spring Higan (toward the end of March) or Rikkyo Kaishu-e Service commemorating the establishment of Nichiren Buddhism (April 28) to heal the injury on his forehead.



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1. NEW YEAR'S DAY (JANUARY 1)



On January 1st, we go to our temple and attend a service to celebrate the New Year. At this service, we express our respect to the Buddha, Nichiren Shonin and our ancestors. We also pray for world peace, a good harvest, prosperity for the temple, its members and their families throughout the coming year. After the service, we toast with New Year dish and sake (rice wine).

2. SETSUBUN (FEBRUARY 3)

Setsubun literally means 'season-division'. According to the calendar, February 3 is the last day of winter. On that day, we hold a Setsubun Service to pray for our good health and protection against calamity or misfortunes. At the service, toshi-otoko (a man of the year) and yoshi-onna (a woman of the year), who were born in the year with the same animal name as the current year, throw beans to chase out evil spirits from each house and welcome good luck throughout the year.



3. THE BUDDHA'S NIRVANA DAY (FEBRUARY 15)



Sakyamuni Buddha entered into Nirvana on the day of the full moon in February. During His preaching tour, the Buddha ate a meal offered by an earnest lay disciple, Chunda, and became severely ill. Although He continued his journey with His disciples, he was exhausted when He reached Kushinagara. After giving the final instructions to his disciples, the Buddha told Ananda to inform the people of Kushinagara that He would pass away during the coming night. He entered Nirvana on February 15.

4. NICHIREN SHONIN'S BIRTHDAY (FEBRUARY 16)

Our founder, Nichiren Shonin, was born at Kominato in the Province of Awa (in Chiba Prefecture today) on February 16, 1222. His father was called Nukina Shigetada and his mother, Umegiku. He was named Zennichimaro. It is said that several lovely miracles happened at his birth: many white lotus flowers bloomed in the bay, a great number of fish appeared in the sea and a spring of water gushed out in front of their home.



5. HIGAN SERVICE (AROUND MARCH 21 & SEPTEMBER 23, RESPECTIVELY)



The Higan Service is a memorial service for our ancestors held during a week of Higan in March and in September. The fourth day of the Higan week is the equinox day. Higan literally means "the other shore," and the purpose of Higan Service is to send the merit of reciting the Lotus Sutra and chanting odaimoku to the ancestors' spirits on the other shore of enlightenment. We also practice the Buddha's teaching in order to cross the river from this shore of illusions to the other shore of enlightenment by holding Higan Service. Typical practice is called six paramitas: 1) to give alms, 2) to keep precepts, 3) to be patient, 4) to endeavor, 5) to meditate, and 6) to see the truth.

6. THE BUDDHA'S BIRTHDAY (HANAMATSURI; APRIL 8)

About 2,500 years ago, a prince of the Sakya Clan was born on April 8 at Lumbini Garden, located in present-day Nepal near the Indian border. His father, King Suddhodana, and his mother, Queen Maya, named him Siddhartha. It is said that the Buddha stood upon birth, walked seven steps and said, with his right hand raised toward heaven, "In heaven and on earth, I alone am honored." We celebrate the Buddha's birthday by holding the Hanamatsuri (literally flower festival) Service. At the service, we build a miniature hall called hanamido decorated with flowers, place the statue of an infant Buddha pointing to heaven and earth in its center, and pour sweet tea over the statue with a small ladle.



7. RIKKYO KAISHU-E (COMMEMORATION SERVICE OF ESTABLISHMENT OF NICHIREN SHU BUDDHISM: APRIL 28)



On the morning of April 28, 1253, Nichiren Shonin, at the age of 32, was standing on top of a hill named Asahigamori on Mt. Kiyosumi, chanting the odaimoku, Namu Myoho Renge-kyo, for the first time while facing the rising sun over the Pacific Ocean. He vowed to save all people with the Lotus Sutra. From that time onward, Nichiren Shonin, a messenger of the Lotus Sutra, devoted his life to spread the teaching of the Lotus Sutra and the odaimoku. We commemorate this day as the founding day Nichiren Buddhism.

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8. OBON (AUGUST 13 TO 16: JULY IN THE LUNAR CALENDAR)



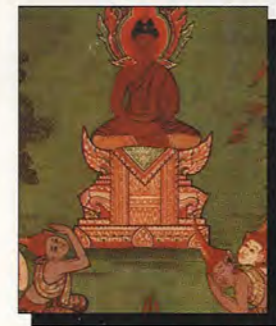
The term obon denotes a memorial service for our ancestors held July 13 to 16. During the obon period, each family welcomes ancestors' souls back home. The origin of the obon service comes from the story of Maudgalyayana and his mother, in which he saved her from the region of hungry spirits by offering merit to her. Nichiren Shonin teaches us that the merit of the obon service extends not only seven generations of ancestors but also all the ancestors.

9. OESHIKI (MEMORIAL SERVICE OF NICHIREN SHONIN: OCTOBER 13)

On the way to a hot spa in Hitachi Province from Mt. Minobu to recover his health, Nichiren Shonin's health declined. He rested at the Ikegami Munenaga's residence in present-day Tokyo and could no longer continue his trip. On the morning of October 13, 1282, at 8:00 a.m., Nichiren Shonin ended his long life of spreading the Lotus Sutra for 60 years. The Oeshiki Service is held to express our gratitude to our Founder.



10. JODO-E (BODHI DAY TO COMMEMORATE THE BUDDHA'S ENLIGHTENMENT: DECEMBER 8)



Prince Siddhartha left his castle in his twenties and traveled all over to seek the truth of life. He found out that various practices he encountered were not the right way, so that he decided to meditate under a tree at Gaya. After seven days of meditation, in the early morning of December 8, the prince attained Enlightenment and became the Buddha, the Enlightened One. The Jode-e Service is held to commemorate the event of attaining Enlightenment by the Buddha.