

The 25th Monshu of Jodo Shinshu Hongwanji-ha, Shaku Sennyo,

OHTANI Kojun

Message

Succession of the Jodo Shinshu Tradition



Today, according to my predecessor, Sokunyo Monshu's wishes, I was inaugurated into the posts of Hongwanji *jushoku*, resident priest and Monshu of the Jodo Shinshu Hongwanji-ha institution.

On this occasion, I would like to extend my deep gratitude to him for his many years of nurturing and guidance. At the same time, I acknowledge the monumental responsibility of succeeding the Jodo Shinshu tradition and am resolute in carrying out my duties to the best of my ability.

The teaching on how we are saved by Amida Tathagata's Primal Vow was set forth by Sakyamuni Buddha, and it was transmitted by the seven Pure Land masters to Shinran Shonin, who clarified it into the Dharma of Jodo Shinshu.

That tradition has been passed down to us through the efforts of successive Monshu of Hongwanji, fellow Jodo Shinshu followers, and many people who have supported their work until today. In inheriting this illustrious tradition, I will exert every effort to convey the Dharma of Jodo Shinshu to the future.

Looking back on the past, there were occasions during which the Hongwanji institution addressed some issues in ways that contradicted the Jodo Shinshu teaching, sometimes by not questioning or doubting some common practices that were accepted in the society during a certain era, and sometimes by having to make harsh decisions in order to enable the Hongwanji to survive. Learning from such history, we must constantly keep a careful eye on social conditions and ourselves so that we will never again indiscriminately accept common, popular behavior and tendencies of a particular time nor return to the kind of society that would compel us to make painfully bitter decisions again.

In reflecting on the present circumstances of our organization, it is significantly important to consider how we can approach and reach out to persons who have never had any contact with a Buddhist temple, as well as those who are already involved with one. The nembutsu teaching that is based on Amida Buddha's Primal Vow remains unchanged, regardless of the changing times and society. However, the methods for transmitting and sharing it needs to evolve and adapt according to social changes. Now is the time for our Hongwanji institution to utilize our collective wisdom and knowledge for considering approaches to convey the Buddha Dharma to our contemporaries today.

There are also other numerous issues and problems that we must deal with, such as, "What is the most appropriate and effective manner we can offer support to the many victims and disaster-stricken locations of the East Japan Great Earthquake to facilitate their recovery?"

Let us always keep in mind the venerable words, *jishin kyo ninshin*, "secure our own entrusting heart to the Dharma, guiding others to the same path" as we cope with the various problems and hardships of the contemporary world, walking together towards realizing a society in which everyone is equally respected.

June 6, 2014

Shaku Sennyō
OHTANI Kojun
Monshu
Jodo Shinshu Hongwanji-ha

The 24th Monshu of Jodo Shinshu Hongwanji-ha, Shaku Sokunyo,
OHTANI Koshin

Message on Retirement



I would like to announce that as of today, June 5, 2014, I am retiring from the posts of Hongwanji *jushoku*, the resident priest and Monshu of the Jodo Shinshu Hongwanji-ha institution and entrust them to Shimmon, the Heir-Apparent Monshu and Hongwanji *jushoku*.

It has been thirty-seven years and two months since I was inaugurated into these posts, succeeding my predecessor in the Jodo Shinshu tradition on April 1, 1977. I would like to say that the credit for my being able to carry out the duties until today all should go to the Buddha and masters for their guidance, as well as the continuous support, understanding, and cooperation that I have received from all individuals and concerned parties, both within the Hongwanji organization and from the general public. I would like to extend my heartfelt gratitude to all of you.

During my tenure, thanks to everyone's efforts, the Hongwanji was able to undertake the restoration of the Amida-do Hall, the 400th Memorial for Kennyo Shonin, the 500th Memorial for Rennyo Shonin, the great restoration of the Goeido Hall, and the 750th Memorial for Shinran Shonin. In addition, several decades ago we were able to acquire the parcel of land on the north side of the Hongwanji precinct, and we have been able to utilize it for a wide range of activities. Furthermore, we have been able to develop and promote our equality awareness campaign that was named the Core Program, as well as initiate a variety of activities and projects. The circle of the

nembutsu teaching has continued to expand and the recitation of Namo Amida Butsu can be heard in various places in the world. Fortunately, I was enabled to confirm these facts for myself by hearing the voices of my fellow nembutsu followers during my official visits to every district of the Hongwanji institution. For this, I am truly grateful to everyone.

Compared with my predecessor, Shonyo Shonin's turbulent fifty years, which included the period of World War II, my thirty-seven year tenure can be described as rather calm. During those years, however, domestically speaking, there were a number of natural and human-made disasters that took place one after another, and due to the exaggerated priority placed on economic profit and status, issues concerning people's mental health and well-being have become more critical. Worldwide concerns include serious issues such as armed conflicts, economic inequality, global climate change, and proliferation of nuclear materials. Among them are ones that directly concern humanity's existence. Unfortunately, amidst this, it is with regret that we, Jodo Shinshu Buddhists are not able to say that we have satisfactorily demonstrated our ability to cope with these issues.

Our sangha has a glorious tradition of upholding and transmitting the Dharma from person to person. It is my hope that we will keep this wonderful custom despite of the current social fluctuations, and discover diverse potentialities in the teaching and tradition of Jodo Shinshu so that we can share them with as many people as possible and together follow the path toward realizing a society in which everyone is mutually accepted and respected. In order to realize that, I believe it is important to bring out the individuality and conditions of each person and generation, paying special attention to the young generations who possess the sensibility and ability to implement concepts.

My successor, Shimmon Kojun, worked at Tsukiji Hongwanji in Tokyo as an on-site leader of the temple for five years and nine months. It is for certain that this experience has allowed him to expand his knowledge. Upon accepting his new responsibilities, he will be obliged to maintain the Jodo Shinshu tradition while considering the organization in its entirety by constantly attending not only to the Hongwanji institution, but also the whole religious society. I would like to sincerely request that you continue to provide your warm assistance to the new Monshu.

As for myself, I will be turning seventy in a little more than a year. Although nobody knows what the future holds, it is my intent to continue revering the Buddha Dharma as taught us by our Founder, being conscious that I am always embraced in the unwavering working of Amida Tathagata's Primal Vow, and will carry out my duties as a Jodo Shinshu priest for as long as I am able to the best of my ability.

June 5, 2014

Shaku Sokunyo
OHTANI Koshin
Monshu
Jodo Shinshu Hongwanji-ha