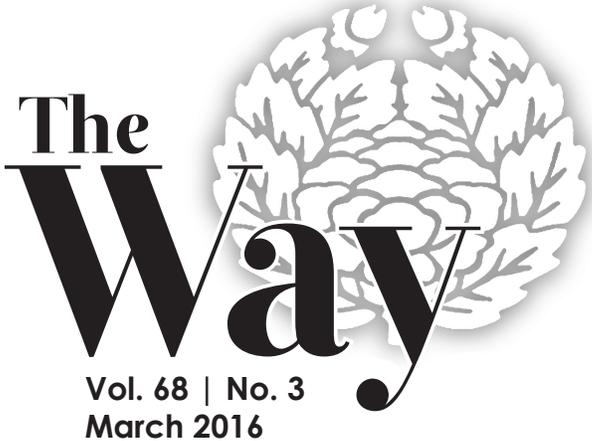


HIGASHI HONGANJI BUDDHIST TEMPLE

505 East Third Street
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HIGASHI HONGANJI BUDDHIST TEMPLE | LOS ANGELES BETSUIN

**TEMPLE
SCHEDULE**

MARCH

27 10:00am Sunday Service
Discussion Group

APRIL

3 10:00am Shotsuki Service
3 1:00pm **LABTF Hanamatsuri
Service**
10 10:00am Sunday Service
10 12:30pm **Rinban Noriaki Ito's
40th Anniversary
Luncheon**
17 10:00am **Hanamatsuri Family
Service**
24 10:00am Sunday Service
Discussion Group
24 10:00am **Hanamtsuri Craft Fair**
30 **NAD Local Retreat (E/J)**

MAY

1 10:00am Shotsuki Service

**LABTF Hanamatsuri
Celebration**

APRIL 3 • 1:00PM • JACCC

**HANAMATSURI
FAMILY SERVICE**

APRIL 17 • 10:00AM

*Hanamatsuri
Craft Fair*

APRIL 24 • 10AM - 3PM • SOCIAL HALL



The Way



Volume 68 | Number 3 | March 2016

HIGASHI HONGANJI BUDDHIST TEMPLE • LOS ANGELES BETSUIN

Thank You with My Last Breath

Rev. Paul Imahara

A while back when I was living in Las Vegas, a young Caucasian man asked me to explain what Buddhism is. My answer was that it is a religion, philosophy, and a way of life. I felt that was not enough so I explained No-self or Selflessness, (*Anatta* in Pali and *Anatman* in Sanskrit). No-self means our “self” is like an onion skin. We like to protect ourselves with many layers of onion skin. If we remove our onion skins one at a time, our names, our backgrounds, families, education, wealth, pride, and so on, what will be left? If we strip ourselves totally naked, our “self” will also disappear. The young man said, “Oh, that’s so scary, I don’t want to hear an explanation like that.” What an honest expression that was.

I did try to explain the meaning of No-self but I wonder if I truly understand the concept? To me, when I strip myself totally naked and look deeper inside of me then, my self-identity will be totally gone. Rather than feel scared, I feel I am one with Amida Tathagata. I am in total comfort. Is this the feeling of Nirvana?

Shinran quotes in Shoshin-ge, page 11 in our Service Book “One attains Nirvana even without destroying the evil passions.” Oh, how comforting these words are to me. Dictionaries will explain the difference between Nirvana and Pure Land but to me they are quite similar or even the same. Nirvana or Pure Land is not out there somewhere but it is within me. It is to accept my life as it is, it is to live my life the best I can here and now. It is to find comfort and happiness within me. Is this easy? I can make it hard but Shinran says just repeat the Nenbutsu. Yes, that I can do with ease.

Many years ago when the Higashi Golf Club was active, one cold early morning when I shared a golf cart with Rinban Saito, after few holes he said

his diaper was cold. I think this is the meaning of No-self. He stripped himself totally naked.

Years later, after Rinban Saito was transferred to the Hawaii Betsuin, when we received notice about his critical condition, Rev. Kawawata immediately flew to Hawaii. Rev. Kawawata always looked up to him as his teacher and he went all the way to Hawaii from West Covina and wanted to be with him in his last moments. I remember asking him if he made it in time to send his teacher off and he said yes but with a sad voice “all he said was *nannimo nai*,” there is nothing more to say. He asked Rinban Saito for some final words that will remain with him, become a part of him but the answer was “*nannimo nai*”. To me, those words “*nannimo nai*” came from the deepest part of Rinban Saito. I feel if a man has deep comfort and gratitude in life, there is nothing more to say. I think I want to be like Saito Sensei in my last moment.

To me, to live my life as it is, is not simple or easy. I am afraid to take myself deep down to no-self, I am afraid to strip myself down to total nakedness, I am afraid to say to others that my diaper is cold. Rinban Saito was not just a wonderful and warm man, he was an awakened person.

I wonder at times why am I drawn to Shinran’s words. Why am I so interested in the Tannisho? With these thoughts, I wanted to meet him. I knew there is a statue of him at the Honzan in Kyoto. Shinran’s statue is enshrined in the *Goeido*, the largest building at the Honzan, the headquarters of Higashi Honganji. When I had a chance to see him up close one time, he did not have a pleasant expression. I wondered why, as I sat in front of him for a while, I started to feel the chill run down my back. As the founder of Jodo Shinshu, couldn’t he have a gentle expression like many

other statues of Bodhisattvas? When I think about it now, I think he saw straight down to my bones that I was trying to hide my foolish side. I couldn’t open myself up and say my diaper is cold.

Shinran opened himself up with total nakedness. I feel this is where I am attracted. He calls himself the foolish being or evil person, why? He says we are like a pebbles, broken roof tiles, and worthless small stones. When we feel worthless and useless as bits of broken tiles, Amida’s vow reaches us. When we put ourselves in the meditative world of nenbutsu, the unsaveable are saved, the pebbles and broken tiles change into gold. Shinran expressed this working of Amida’s vow as inconceivable light. It is expressed as “I take refuge in the Light that surpasses all thoughts,” the second line of Shoshin-ge in our service book. This Light is beyond description, explanation and conceptual understanding.

I have no idea when and how my life will end. There is nothing certain in my future. But one thing I want to do is end my life with “thank you.” I don’t know if I will be in a condition to say those words but if I live my life to the fullest now with daily thank you, at my last breath, even in coma I feel it will come out as thank you and there is nothing else to say, *nannimo nai*.

Through the meditative world of nenbutsu I receive comfort and contentment. Just live my life simply, as it is.

Namu Amida Butsu



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www.hhbt-la.org

and “like” us on facebook at
<http://www.facebook.com/hhbt.la>



Betsuin News



Eitaikyo Service & New Year Luncheon

Our 2016 Eitaikyo brought out many of our family and friends to join us in remembering our temple members who have passed away. At our Eitaikyo Service, Bishop Noriaki Ito gave a Dharma Talk in English and Rev. Ryoko Osa spoke in Japanese.

After service, we headed to Monterey Park for our 111th Annual New Year Luncheon and Annual General meeting at the Quiet Cannon. We opened the afternoon with greetings from our Board President, Mr. David Ikeda and Rinban Noriaki Ito. David Ikeda opened the general meeting. A Betsuin report, temple financial report, and the election of 2016 Board of Directors were presented by Rev. Peter Hata, Craig Harada, and Gary Kanemoto, respectively.

Rinban Ito and David Ikeda presented Susan Kashiwabara with a plaque and gift to commemorate 20 years of service as a staff member of Higashi Honganji. In addition, Leslie Nicho was presented with a plaque and gift to commemorate her 30 years of service as a staff member of Lumbini Child Development Center. Other presentations were made by Rinban Ito and David Ikeda to temple volunteers to honor their hard work over the course of the past year.

The Otani Gakuen performed a performed and invited us to sing along to Sakura Sakura, Tiny Bubbles, and That's What Friends are For. The festive selection of songs made the event feel warm and lively.

Our emcee, Mr. Shin Ito, took an

opportunity to share old photos to honor the temple's 40th anniversary in its current location on 3rd Street in Little Tokyo. Afterward, he led us in a game using questions about the temple and general trivia about the 1970s, forty years ago. The questions were true or false and participants designated their answers by holding up an "X" or "O" with their arms. Once there was only one person standing at each table, the winning representatives from each table went to the front of the room for a final round. The last two contestants were Avery Tamura and Kisa Ito with Kisa narrowly beating Avery out on the last question. Prizes were given to Kisa's whole team at the end of the game. After the game, there was a slideshow documenting highlights of 2015.

We want to send a special thank you to Mr. Shin Ito for acting as Master of Ceremonies during the luncheon and YABA for hosting the luncheon. Thank you to Elaine Harada and Sharilynn Jung for donating the gifts for members over age 80 in addition to the beautiful floral centerpieces. Thank you to Lisa Shimamoto, Irene Ota, Becky Sato, Elaine Harada, Sharilynn Jung, Janet Ito, Susan Kashiwabara, and Mika Ito for donating raffle prizes. Thank you to the Lumbini staff and our many members and friends for volunteering to set up and clean up after the luncheon. Without the help of so many generous members and friends we could not have enjoyed such a delightful luncheon.

Hanamatsuri Family Service

Our Hanamatsuri Family Service will take place on Sunday, April 17, 2016. Please join us as we celebrate the Buddha's birth with sweet tea offerings and reflections on the occasion of Hanamatsuri.

The flowers to decorate our beautiful Hanamido will be donated by temple affiliated flower distributors and will be decorated by members of our own Bombu Taiko group.

We encourage you to join us for this festive occasion to celebrate the Buddha's birthday.

Hanamatsuri Craft Fair

Calling all craft vendors! On Sunday, April 24th from 10am to 3pm, we will have our Hanamatsuri Craft Fair at the Betsuin! We are looking for vendors who make and sell craft items and would like to be a part of our Craft Fair. For more information or to get a vendor application, please contact the temple office at 213-626-4200 or email info@hhbt-la.org. Vendor applications are due March 25th.



SUBMISSION DEADLINE!

Submissions for *The Way* are due the 10th of each month for the following month's issue. Articles and announcements for our May Issue are due April 10th, 2016. Submissions may be subject to printing restrictions and staff approval. Thank you and we look forward to hearing from you!



LABTF Hanamatsuri Celebration

In celebration of the Buddha's birthday, the annual Los Angeles Buddhist Temple Federation's Hanamatsuri will take place on Sunday, April 3, 2016, at 1:00 pm at the Japanese American Cultural Community Center (JACCC). This year's theme is, "Sutra: Thread of Life," and refers both to the Sanskrit meaning of "sutra" as a "thread" stitching together the Buddha's sermons written on palm leaves, and to the Buddha's teachings themselves which bind us all together through generations and across cultures. In addition, there is a special emphasis on the ties that bind families, and in conjunction with this, the theme of the children's art contest and exhibition is "Family."

Following a colorful service performed by ministers of the eight member temples, a special feature of the afternoon will be a performance of the children's play "Miracle Cats," and an audio/visual presentation on the "Thread of Life" theme itself. We encourage you to bring your children to this year's celebration.

For more information, please call the temple office (213) 626-4200 or the Long Beach Buddhist Church which is directing the program this year, at (562) 426-4014. We hope to see you all there.

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