



The Light – Hikari

3611 Forestry Ave. South, Lethbridge, Alberta T1K 3L5

Rev. Izumi Cellphone: (403) 382-7024, 345-4143 (home)

June 2003

Greeting from the Minister's Office

Chinooks in Alberta are well known. It is a warm and usually strong wind blowing from the South West over the Rocky Mountain during severe winters in Alberta. Since I have moved to southern Alberta in November last year I experienced several such occasions. During the night, Chinooks blow and heavily piled snow on the ground and icicles hanging from eaves are melted away and I see brown colored grasses everywhere the next morning. No snow and no ice!

Every time the Chinooks blow I remember a Japanese poem written by Shinran Shonin:

Obstructions of karmic evil turn into virtues

It is like relation of ice and water;

The more the ice, the more the water;

The more the obstructions, the more the virtues.

The ice represents my life that is based on self-centeredness. The ice kills and hurts living things. It does not nurture anything. So does my self-centered life. The water that represents the life of Buddha filled with wisdom and compassion does not reject anything. For example, water in round balls will become round. It will become square when it is in square balls. The Buddha

accepts me as I am and turns my self-centered life into a Buddha-centered life and thereby makes my birth in Buddha's land possible. How wonderful it is! Indeed, Buddha's life nurtures all living beings into enlightenment. How grateful it is! The late spring is here in Alberta!

Y. Izumi

Prayer and Jodo Shinshu

People often pray for the well being of their own family, prosperity of their business or passing their child's exam etc. Especially when we are in danger or someone in serious sickness, people tend to pray to gods or Buddhas saying, "Please help me!" or "Please help my loved one!" It may be a natural behaviour of human beings. There is an old Japanese saying, "a drowning man will clutch at a straw." However, once on the shore, people pray no more. This again may be human behavior.

If this is the meaning of prayer, we, Jodo Shinshu followers, do not pray. Because we know that we are in the great compassionate Vow of Amida Buddha who is always and constantly working for our spiritual liberation. Therefore, Jodo Shinshu is often called "religion without prayer". Petitionary prayer is not needed for people whose life is centered by Buddha's Vow. On the other hand, self-centered life creates and

The Light - *Hikari*

June 2003

deepens the depth of delusion and repeats petitionary prayer.

We are not liberated by our “self-centered” prayer but rather liberated by the compassionate Vow of Amida Buddha. Accordingly, there is no prayer in Jodo Shinshu. Shinran Shonin wrote:

*Although I take refuge in the Pure Land way,
It is hard to have a true and sincere mind
This self is false and insincere
I completely lack a pure mind.*

When we lack a pure mind, our prayer will become petitionary prayer or prayer for worldly benefits that Shinran Shonin strongly rejected. He wrote:

*Practicers who pray for worldly benefits, Although they may perform chiefly the saying of Buddha's Name, Are also termed people of mixed praxis:
In rejecting such practice, it is taught that not one in a thousand affairs birth.*

It does not mean, however, that Shinran Shonin never used the word “prayer” in any sense. In his letter to his followers, he wrote:

I hope that everyone will, deeply entrusting themselves to the nembutsu and firmly embracing prayers [for the peace of the world] in their hearts, together say the nembutsu.... if all people who say the nembutsu do so not with thoughts of themselves, but for the sake of the imperial court and for the sake of the people of the country.

This kind of prayer can often be found in the life of nembutsu and is considered as “the benefit of constant working of the great compassion” which is the natural consequence of those who entrust themselves to Amida Buddha. He wrote in another letter:

While holding the nembutsu in your heart and saying it always, please pray for the present life and also the next life of those who slander it (the nembutsu)....If you simply pray for the people in society who are in error and desire to lead them into Amida's Vow, it will be a response out of gratitude for the Buddha's benevolence.

When we talk about the meaning of 'prayer' we must understand that Shinran Shonin did not pray to gods and buddhas for his own desires and benefits but rather wished all sentient beings be happy and in peace. He recited the nembutsu, Namo Amida Butsu in deep gratitude to Amida Buddha whose sole concern is to liberate all beings from the life of delusion to enlightenment. In Gassho,

**Y. Izumi, Minister (Kaikyoshi),
Buddhist Federation of Alberta**

.....

How can we hand down Buddha's teaching to the next generation?

1. have a Butsudan or Buddha's image at home.
2. have and carry a nenju.
3. bow our head to the Buddha.
4. go to temple and listen to the dharma.

The Light - *Hikari*

June 2003

Obituaries: We express our heartfelt sympathy to those who have lost loved ones

Mr. Tona Ohama
April 29, 2003 90 years old

Please send to "The Light - *Hikari*" any events and activities of your temple that anyone can participate

Reverend Izumi's Summer Schedule			
June	01-Jun-03	Rosemary	
	08-Jun-03	Honpa Shotsuki	Taber Shotsuki & Bowling
	15-Jun-03	Lethbridge Shotsuki & Picnic	Raymond
	22-Jun-03	Honpa	
	29-Jun-03	Coaldale Shotsuki	
July	06-Jul-03	Honpa Obon	
	13-Jul-03	Magrath Hakamairi & Raymond Obon	
	20-Jul-03	Rainier/Bessano/Brooks Hakamairi & Brooks Obon	
	27-Jul-03	Coaldale Obon	
August	03-Aug-03	Bow Island Hakamairi & Taber Obon	
	10-Aug-03	Vacation	
	17-Aug-03	Mt. View Hakamairi & Lethbridge Obon	

Newsletter: Rev. Y. Izumi
Japanese Section: Akira Terashima
Layout: David Major

Buddhist Federation of Alberta

President: Jim Tsukishima
Vice President: David Major
Treasurer: Robert Takaguchi
Secretary: Sylvia Oishi