



Myohoji Temple

Did You Know? #11

The *Gojukai* Oath of Acceptance

Gojukai is the ceremony during which a person officially joins Nichiren Shoshu and becomes a believer. The word *Gojukai* literally means, “The Acceptance of the Precept.”

In earlier forms of Buddhism, practitioners followed various rules of discipline and behavior called “precepts.” In some forms of Hinayana Buddhism there were 250 precepts for monks and 500 precepts for nuns. In Mahayana Buddhism, some schools followed the ten major and forty-eight minor precepts taught in the “Brahma Net Sutra.” The ten major precepts included prohibitions against stealing, lying, disparaging others, and belittling the Three Treasures. The forty-eight minor precepts included warnings against consuming intoxicants, eating meat or the five kinds of pungent plants, carrying weapons, travelling in dangerous places, and teaching the Dharma for profit.

However, the Daishonin taught that we cannot gain any benefit by following such precepts now, in the Latter Day of the Law. Instead, we uphold the one great Precept of embracing the Dai-Gohonzon of the High Sanctuary. This is the direct path to the attainment of Buddhahood in our present form. The True Buddha called this precept, the “Precept of the Diamond Chalice.” In the Goshō “Teaching, Practice, and Proof” the Daishonin states:

The five characters of Myoho-Renge-Kyo, the heart of the Essential Teaching of the Lotus Sutra, contain all the benefits amassed by the beneficial practices and meritorious deeds of all the Buddhas throughout the past, present and future. Then, how can this phrase not include the benefits obtained by observing all the Buddha’s precepts? Once the practitioner embraces this perfectly endowed mystic precept, he cannot break it, even if he should try. It is therefore called the Precept of the Diamond Chalice. (*Shinpen*; p. 1109; MW-4; p.129)

The Great Teacher Dengyo compared the principle of the true entity of all phenomena expounded in the Lotus Sutra to a diamond chalice, which is impossible to break. By observing the single precept of embracing the Gohonzon, we receive the benefit of embracing all other good precepts.

Gojukai is the Ceremony where the new believer accepts this “Precept of the Diamond Chalice” and vows to practice throughout his or her life. The spirit of upholding this precept of Nichiren Shoshu is expressed through the “Oath of Acceptance” taken by the new practitioner during *Gojukai*.

The “Oath of Acceptance” is the vow that is made to the Three Treasures of True Buddhism. The priest asks three questions, and all participants make their vow by answering “I do” to each question. This constitutes their entry onto the pure path of faith:

The Oath of Acceptance

1. “Do you faithfully swear to practice the True Teachings of Nichiren Daishonin throughout your life?”

This vow means that we promise to renounce all other religious laws, masters, and doctrines. We swear that, from this day forward, we will practice only the pure teachings of Nichiren Shoshu.

2. “Do you faithfully swear to protect the Gohonzon of the Three Great Secret Laws throughout your life?”

This vow means that we promise to discard all other religious objects of worship and to uphold the Dai-Gohonzon of the High Sanctuary of the Essential Teaching as the one and only True Object of Worship. We swear to protect the Gohonzon with our life, and to revere it as the enlightened life of the True Buddha.

3. “Do you faithfully swear to keep the Precept of Nichiren Shoshu throughout your life?”

This vow means that we promise to continue our practice to the Gohonzon for the remainder of our lives. It includes the promise to do our best to “practice for ourselves” (*jigyō*), and to “practice for the sake of others” (*keta*). We are therefore making the determination to never miss Gongyo and to do shakubuku. This Precept also contains the principle of practicing honestly and living our daily life honestly.

By answering “I do” the new believer accepts the Precept and makes a determination to uphold the teachings of True Buddhism. At the same time, all other members present also answer “I do.” This renews their commitment to practice together with the new members in *itai doshin*, and to strive for the advancement of Kosen-rufu.