



## **[Keeping “Taking Refuge in the Three Treasures” as our basic theme ]**

Happy New Year!

The curtain for 2015 has risen. I am grateful that we were able to safely welcome the New Year and pray from the bottom of my heart that there be peace on this earth – this world.

I imagine all of you have enthusiastically started the New Year with “This year for sure!” resolutions etched in your heart. Perhaps you were filled with anticipation thinking, “I would like to keep ‘this theme’ in mind for this year!”

Now, as we welcome the New Year, 2015, the President gave us the following guidance:

“As Guidelines for Members’ Practice of the Faith” let us begin “striving for dissemination with the (basic) theme ‘Taking Refuge in the Three Treasures’.”...And “let us walk the bodhisattva way (the path we must walk as human beings), devoting much thought to our basic humanity and to the virtues displayed by Shakyamuni Buddha and our Founder and Cofounder, which include compassion and consideration for others (also designated as cheerfulness and brightness, kindness, and warm-heartedness).”

The President spoke of “Taking Refuge in the Three Treasures” as our basic premise. To take refuge in the Three Treasures, ‘the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha’ is actually the qualification for all Buddhists; it is the basic pillar for those who walk the Buddha Way.

At this time I would like to reflect again by tracing back to 2008, when – to commemorate the 70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of our organization – it was announced that all members would receive both the framed Gohonzon and Dharma Titles of the Founder and Cofounder to be enshrined in their homes.

In the three years since that year, in the “Guidelines for Members’ Practice of the Faith,” the President indicated the following:

1<sup>st</sup> Year: (Enshrinement of Framed Gohonzon and Dharma Titles for all members)

Such immense happiness is attained when we have the Gohonzon enshrined in each home – the basic place of practice to shape our character – and to live with the Gohonzon placed at the center of our lives.

2<sup>nd</sup> Year: (Learning the Dharma)

The significance of this learning is to constantly check whether our heart and mind is in the light of the Dharma (teachings), to live our daily lives in accordance with the teachings, and repeatedly put the teachings we learn into practice. This is indeed the shortcut to comprehending the Dharma.

3<sup>rd</sup> Year: (Cultivating good friends)

“Good friends” are members of the Sangha who hold the same set of values based on the teachings of the Buddha, and aspire toward the same objective of perfecting ourselves. The President stated how important encountering ‘good friends’ · ‘Sangha’ and cultivating one’s character through the practice of polishing one another’ is for walking the Buddha Way.

And on the 4<sup>th</sup> year, the President said, “For the past three years, in the Guidelines for Members’ Practice of Faith, such concepts as \* enshrinement of Gohonzon and Dharma Titles for all





members \* learning the Dharma \* cultivating good friends were put forth. More specifically, they represent the Three Treasures: the Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha. However, it was while I was seeking what is important that this form naturally took shape.” And “Each of these, one by one, is fundamental for Buddhists. (To learn the Dharma) It is by repeatedly learning the Dharma that we will acquire a deeper understanding for the significance of enshrining the Gohonzon and the Dharma Titles and appreciation of good friends.”

This year I would like to, once again, keep in mind whether I have been able to practice Taking Refuge in the Three Treasures as the fundamental pillar for Buddhists, and whether I had put it concretely into practice in my actual life, and then move forward.

Needless to say, to worship the Buddha is at the center of our faith, and thus I would like to think about taking refuge in the Buddha in the light of ‘the Buddha, the Dharma and the Sangha.’ First, by making it possible to have the Gohonzon and the Dharma Titles enshrined for all members, the President was teaching the Buddha’s existence in a concrete and very easy to understand way.

Our faith is based on the teachings of the Lotus Sutra. The Buddha we take refuge, the Eternal Buddha, is the powerful source, which has from infinite past in every part of the universe caused every being to exist (the Great Life Force of the Universe = Truth • Dharma). 2500 years ago, Shakyamuni who was engaged in missionary work embodied Eternal Buddha as one.

This is the Buddha that is being enshrined in each member’s home. When the object in which we take refuge becomes clear, our daily prayers as Buddhists become most basic practice.

At the time, we received many guidance from the President. The one which left a deep impression on me was when he said: “The home is the basic place of practice to shape our character. To have Eternal Buddha enshrined in each family, to live our lives with the altar at the center, instills great happiness. Of course this is the case for adults, but it will also leave a definitive impression on shaping the character of the youth.” And “when we kneel in front of the Eternal Buddha, we will become aware of the Buddha’s teachings and will repeatedly live our lives seeing things from the Buddha’s viewpoint. Husband and wife, parents and children, brothers and sisters, and neighbors all start to mutually respect one another’s lives and put their palms together.”

Whenever I recall this deeply significant guidance, my heart is completely filled with so much gratitude. My heart is once again full of joy. What wonderful concept! I actually feel the depth of importance to enshrine the Eternal Buddha in even just one more house. Families full of warmth are born when there is faith with the altar at its center.

When we keep in our hearts, the concrete ways to Take Refuge in the Three Treasures specified by the President, we can set our theme for this year. To aspire to perfect our own character while we practice doing our best for others, and truly revere many people we encounter.....

Gassho  
New York Church Minister  
Etsuko Fujita

### ***NY Branch topics discussed in December***

President’s Dharma Guidance for December

“The Heart and Mind of Putting Our Hands Together Reverently”

“Looking at the Self with Humility”

“...when we put our hands together reverently, our hearts and minds become one with the gods and the buddhas and we are able to realize that we ourselves are caused to live thanks to everything in the universe.”

Rev. Fujita’s Commentary

On one occasion, President Niwano gave us the following guidance: “We start with good manners (*rei*) and end with good manners (*rei*). Etiquette is important. The Japanese Martial Arts starts with greetings and ends with greetings. This is a harmonious world. To greet one another has many significance. It connects to respecting the person in front of us; it also connects to being grateful.



Within our grateful heart, there is always a harmonious world. Where gratitude is displayed, a harmonious world comes to light. Wherever there is harmony, there is gratitude.  
 To show reverence and respect, connects to thankfulness and gratitude.  
 To be grateful to receive life as a human being. Ultimately that is where we should be. To gain self-awareness of our own value as we live and are caused to live. To be living, itself, is valuable. To have been given life is precious. To have received life as a human being is difficult. We have received a precious life.  
 When we become aware of our own dignity, we will be able to realize the dignity of others and respect them .



11/26 Thanksgiving Dinner



12/8 Enlightenment Day



12/10 Memorial Svc for Co-Founder & Monthly Memorial svc



# SCHEDULE FOR NEW YORK BRANCH

## January 2015

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
				<b>1</b> New Year's Day Service	<b>2</b> closed	<b>3</b> Closed Dharma Practices at home
<b>4</b> 1pm Memorial Svc for Founder President Niwano New Year Dharma guidance	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b> The First Day of Hoza	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b> Memorial Ser- vice For Co-Founder	<b>10</b> Closed Dharma Practices at home
<b>11</b> 1PM Sunday Service New Year Guidance Haza	<b>12</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>14</b> 10AM Monthly Memorial Service	<b>15</b> The Eternal Buddha Shakamuni Day 10am Steering Committee	<b>16</b>	<b>17</b> Closed Dharma Practices at home  Ft. Myer
<b>18</b> 1PM Sunday Service Study Session (E,J)  Ft. Myer	<b>19</b> Martin Luther King Day	<b>20</b> 2-4PM Branch Leader Meeting  6pm Meditation	<b>21</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>23</b> Special Prac- tice of the L.S. Chanting 9am Japanese 7pm English Innumerable Meanings	<b>24</b> 1pm (E,J)  C.1,2 Lotus sutra
<b>25</b> 1pm (E,J)  C.3,4 Lotus Sutra	<b>26</b> 9am Japanese 7pm English  C.5,6,7 Lotus Sutra	<b>27</b> 9am Japanese 7pm English  C.8,9,10,11 Lotus Sutra	<b>28</b> 9am Japanese 7pm English  C.12,13,14,15 Lotus Sutra	<b>29</b> 9am Japanese 7pm English  C.16,17,18,19 Lotus Sutra	<b>30</b> 9am Japanese 7pm English  C.20,21,22,23,2 4 Lotus Sutra	<b>31</b> 1pm (E,J)  C.25,26,27,28 Lotus Sutra
<b>2/1</b> 1pm (E,J) Sutra of Meditation on the Bodhisattva  Setsubun-e	2/2	2/3				