

2014 JSBTC Day Message

The first recorded assembly of Japanese Buddhists in Canada took place in Vancouver in 1904. Fourteen Buddhists met to request a minister from Nishi Hongwanji (our head temple), in Kyoto, Japan. Rev. Senju Sasaki was appointed to be a *kaikyoshi* (overseas minister) to Canada in 1905. With the minister's arrival, the Buddhists formed the Vancouver Nihon Bukkyo-kai (Japanese Buddhist Association). The Nihon Bukkyo-kai was overseen by the headquarters of the Buddhist Churches of America (BCA) in San Francisco. In 1932, the Canadian body requested its independence. In 1955, a national conference of Japanese Buddhists was held in Toronto, and the Buddhist Churches of Canada (BCC) arose from that meeting. The BCC celebrated its centennial in 2005, and at the National Annual General Meeting in 2007, we decided to change our name to Jodo Shinshu Buddhist Temples of Canada (JSBTC).

When I look back on the history of our organization, it has been one of change. There were many endings and new beginnings. There were many partings and new meetings. The changes have been many. As Buddhists, we know well that this is the nature of Life.

The person who made Shin Buddhism the largest and most influential denomination in Japanese Buddhism is Rennyō (1415-1497), the eighth generation successor to the founder Shinran (1173-1263). He emphasized personal awareness and faith (*shinjin*) in the Jodo Shinshu teaching as being crucial factors in the growth of the tradition. As a consequence of his encouragement, Jodo Shinshu Buddhism became the largest and most influential Japanese Buddhist School. Rennyō stressed that individual, personal awareness was the most crucial factor:

"The prosperity of a religion is not determined by the number of believers it gathers, nor by the impressiveness of its religious rituals. Even if only one person awakens to the compassion of Amida Buddha and experiences true entrusting (*shinjin*), that determines the success of the teaching."

Our temples are a place where people come to hear and learn about the Dharma. According to Rennyō, what is crucial is that each member deepens his or her commitment by deep hearing, open discussion, and applying the teaching to one's daily life.

On this occasion of acknowledging 2014 JSBTC Day, may we rediscover joy by listening to the Dharma as we walk the path of the Nembutsu together.

Namo Amida Butsu

Tatsuya Aoki, Bishop of the Jodo Shinshu Buddhist Temples of Canada

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