

## 2019 Jodo Shinshu Buddhist Temples of Canada Day - Socho's Message



“Those who are born first, guide those who come later, and those who are born later, join those who were born before them. This is so that the Boundless Ocean of birth-and-death may be exhausted.”

(In “*Passages on the Land of Happiness*”, by master Tao-ch’o [562-645])

I would like to express my most sincere appreciation to all the Jodo Shinshu Temples of Canada (JSBTC), ministers, ministers’ assistants, national board of directors, and all temple members and non-members for keeping our organization active and accessible. Through observations at the local temples and the national organization, it is very clear that all of the ministers and national board of directors across Canada are working tirelessly for the sake of our temples, for all the members, and for the community at large. May I ask you for your continued support for our ministers and directors.

We had three candidates from Canada, Dr. Roland Ikuta (Lethbridge), Jeff Hains (Lethbridge), and Tanis Morre (Winnipeg), successfully completed their Tokudo ordination at Nishi Hongwanji on July 15<sup>th</sup>, 2019. They will be assisting their sensei and the temples to propagate Jodo Shinshu in Canada.

On this annual observance of the Jodo Shinshu Day, I would like to share a story of the famous physicist Albert Einstein, who was invited to Japan in the fall of 1922. He was interested in Buddhism and paid a visit to Reverend Jokan Chikazumi, a Jodo Shinshu minister. Einstein asked him about the Buddha Dharma, especially the heart of the Buddha (“Buddha-mind”). It is said that Rev. Chikazumi told him the story of *Ubasuteyama* (the old custom of abandoning old people, usually women, deep in the mountains). A young man was hurrying along a mountain path carrying his aged mother on his back. Along the trail deep in the mountains, the mother was breaking off tree twigs and dropping them on the path. She was marking the path with a trail of twigs. The young man thought that his mother was leaving a trail of twigs so that she could later make her way out of the mountains. When they arrived at their destination, the son, bidding his mother farewell, was about to leave when she said, “Since I didn’t want you to become lost, I left a trail of twigs for you. Follow it as you make your way back home.” It is said that when the young man heard this, he didn’t have the heart to leave her there and so once again put her on his back and carried her home down the mountain.



For whom is the trail of broken twigs? It is for my child who is hurrying on his way to abandon his parent. This fable reflects the feelings that the aged mother held in her heart. We can clearly see that they were not meant to reproach him for taking her deep into the mountains to abandon her; but rather it was her own abandoning of her “self”, and that as a mother, her sole concern was the safety of her child. Although her son was intending to abandon her, she was receptive and accepting of him, completely as he was. Rev. Chikazumi told Einstein that this commiseration is likened to the Buddha’s compassion. Einstein, when he came to know that according to the Buddha- Dharma, the heart of the Buddha does not pass judgment on whether something is good or evil, he was elated to have encountered this kind of religion for the first time, and said that in order for us to realize true peace that is free of conflict, we must learn from this. I feel that Jodo Shinshu will continue to provide important religious values, not to mention relevance, to society in general.

In gassho,

Tatsuya Aoki

