

Pure Land Life

The Pure Land Buddhism of Honen Shonin



SPECIAL 1

Jodoshu restores the unique tradition of Obon in Broome - 1

SPECIAL 2

Report on Panel Theater Workshop & Performances in Hawaii - 3

KAIKYO-KU REPORT

2016 International Kaikyo-ku Report - 5

DID YOU KNOW?

Shōjōke-in, Head Temple in Kyoto - 7

READERS' VOICES

READERS' VOICES - 9



2017 No. 30

Jodoshu restores the unique tradition of Obon in Broome

Rev. Tetsuyu Wilson



The last Obon at the Japanese Cemetery 1969

Broome is located in the north-west of Western Australia. It is about 3,000 km from Brisbane and takes about 4.5 hours to fly there. Today, it's very famous for beautiful cultured pearls but until the mid-1900s, pearl shell was more important. Pearl shell was used for buttons, handles for knives, forks and spoons, belt buckles and inlay for furniture. It was very valuable (about \$400 per ton). In 1883, Broome was established and it became the headquarters of a fleet of pearling luggers. In a very short time Broome supplied 80% of the world's pearl shell. By 1910, there were 400 pearling luggers and about 3,500 people were working on the sea collecting pearl shell. These people came from many different countries. They were Europeans, Malaysians, Fillipinos, Timorese, Chinese, Aboriginal and Japanese.



Bronze statue of Japanese diver on the main street of old Japan Town, Broome, Australia

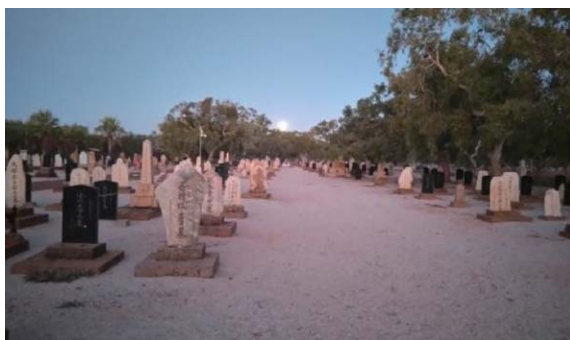
The Japanese who came to Broome were mainly from Taiji, Wakayama Prefecture. Their lives were very hard. They faced cyclones, sharks, beri-beri, ear and chest infections and the bends. Many Japanese divers lost their lives. They were buried in the Japanese Cemetery, which was segregated from the European cemetery. There were also a small number of women and children buried there. In total there are more than 900 graves in the Japanese Cemetery. The tombstones have a variety of shapes and styles because they were erected by friends, co-workers or family. Most were made from local sandstone but there were a few that were made from granite. These were made in Japan and sent to Broome. The first Japanese diver to be buried here was Tanaka Koto in 1893.

Many of the divers married the local women and had families. But when World War II began, the Japanese and their families were taken from Broome and put into internment camps. Then, after the war, these families were separated. The Japanese were sent back to Japan and their wives and children to Broome. It was possible for the divers to return but because of the invention of plastic the pearling industry had declined and so many stayed in Japan. Among the few who stayed in Broome were the Matsumoto family.

In August 2015, I was fortunate in meeting Erica Matsumoto. She is Caucasian and

married the son of a Japanese diver who returned with his family to live in Broome. Her husband was born in the internment camp. Just by chance, I met her at the cemetery when she was cleaning the graves of her husband and his parents. I introduced myself to her and we sat down and talked for a long time about her family's history. Later that day, she introduced me to another Japanese diver and his family. His name is Akira Masuda, who is 81 years old. It was decided that I would do a memorial service for his wife and their deceased children that afternoon. This was the first time that I was able to meet with some of the Japanese community in Broome. I was so happy. On the following day, a small Obon ceremony was held at the Japanese Cemetery with Mr. Masuda, his daughter and the Japanese Consular from Perth. After that we had lunch together and I was able to meet many more people from the Japanese community.

Until the memorial service for Mr. Masuda, I had no idea that the Japanese Cemetery was still being used by the Japanese community. It is being used by a second wave of Japanese divers who came to Broome in the 1950's to work on the cultured pearl farms. Mr. Masuda was one of them and he came in 1955. There were four of them still living last year. But, unfortunately, one died last year in May, 2016. His name is Itsushi Shioji and he was 75 years old. His daughter Maya asked me to perform the funeral service.



Japanese Cemetery in Broome



The last three surviving Japanese divers



Obon ceremony on the evening of the full moon in August 2016

Mr. Shioji's funeral was attended by almost 200 people. After the funeral, everyone gathered at a venue for food and drinks to celebrate his life. It was then that I heard about the discontent that the Japanese community felt towards the Shinju Matsuri.

The Shinju Matsuri is one of the biggest events in Broome. It is held annually in September. It started in 1970 and combined three cultural festivals, Japanese Obon, Malaysian Hari Merdeka and Chinese Hang Seng. By combining these cultural groups, the Broome Town Council wanted to promote Broome and encourage tourism. Unfortunately, for the Japanese, they could no longer celebrate Obon in their unique way. Traditionally, the divers would go to sea for several weeks to collect pearl shell. Then, the ships would return to Broome on the high tide of the full moon in August. After disembarking, they would go to the cemetery and hold an Obon ceremony. After this, they would have

food and drinks and perform Bon dancing.

In 1969, the last Obon was held in the cemetery and an important part of Japanese tradition and history ended. When I heard this story, I was saddened. So, I suggested that I could come to Broome in August and together we could hold an Obon ceremony. Everyone



Graves lit by candle light

agreed with my suggestion. So, I returned to Broome on August 18, the day of the full moon. Obon started at 4:30pm. I was surprised to see so many people attend. There were people from the Japanese community as well as their friends and also some students from the local high school and tourists. After the ceremony, I explained the meaning of Obon and asked everyone to help light candles and place them in front of each grave. As the sun set and it gradually became darker, the graves lit by the candles looked beautiful. It was a very moving sight.

Hereafter, Jodoshu will continue to play an important role in the spiritual lives of the Japanese community of Broome. And, in doing so, we will reach out to the wider community also.

SPECIAL 2

Report on Panel Theater Workshop & Performances in Hawaii

Submitted by Bishop Gensho Hara, Rev. Kanjun Nakano, Rev. Kosen Ishikawa, Rev. John Hara, and Chika Sudo



Performance at a Senior Care Facility on Kauai

For nearly 30 years, the Hawaii Kaikyoku has hosted the Den Den Mushi Panel Theater group from Shukutoku University of Japan. The group comprised of university students in the panel theater club, most of whom are aspiring preschool or elementary school teachers. During their visits to Hawaii, they perform at Jodo Shu temples, senior community centers,

nursing homes, and preschools and elementary schools throughout the state. The performances have been interactive and enjoyable for all audiences as the students animate colorful felt pieces to share stories and songs. However, the main purpose did not contain or promote Buddhist teachings.

In 2016, Hawaii Kaikyoku invited two Jodo Shu panel theater committee members,

Chairperson and Professor Tsukasa Takahashi and Rev. Ryoujun Kouda, who held workshops and performances on Oahu, Kauai, and Maui from February 18–24, 2016. The performances included stories about St. Honen and Buddhism, demonstrating how panel theater can be an effective way to spread the Buddhist teachings in a fun and animated way. These performances were held as an outreach activity of Jodo Shu temples and were well received by audiences throughout the islands.

Feb. 18 Visit Hawaii Jodo Shu Betsuin

Feb 19 Workshop and meeting about performances on islands

Feb 20 Visitation and performance at Senior Care Facility on the island of Kauai. Approximately 20 seniors both of Japanese-American and other ethnicities attended. The oldest participant was 101 years old and enjoyed hearing Japanese folk songs and the lively performance of Rev. Kouda and Professor Takahashi. The performance was organized and translated by Rev. Kosen Ishikawa of Kapaa and Koloa Jodo Missions.

Feb 21 Performance including story about St. Honen at Betsuin Sunday Service. About 36 people attended the service and performance which was organized by Rev. Yuubun Narashiba and Rev. Kanjun Nakano both of the Betsuin. Rev. Kanjun Nakano also translated the story.

Feb 22 Panel Theater workshop for ministers and ministers' wives at Betsuin. Seven ministers throughout the state, 1 ministers' wives and 4 students from Japan's Shukutoku University Den Den Mushi Panel Theater Group attended the workshop. They learned about various elements of panel theater, how to make the panels, how to use them

effectively and how panel theater can be a tool for spreading the Buddhist teaching. The workshop consisted of lectures and demonstrations using stories of Buddhist teachings.

Feb 23 The two panel theater instructors traveled to the island of Maui where they did a performance at Wailuku Jodo Mission. About 20 people attended the public performance of the story of St. Honen. A group of participants who learned about the performance from a newspaper announcement were very enthusiastic about the performance and enjoyed learning about the life and teachings of St. Honen. It proved to be a wonderful opportunity to educate people about Jodo Buddhism. The event was organized by Rev. Cho-on Hara and translated by Chika Sudo.

Feb 24 Performance at Holy Innocent Preschool in Lahaina on the island of Maui. Rev. Ryoujun Koudo and Professor Takahashi performed stories and songs for 35 preschool students. The performance was done in Japanese and translated by Chika Sudo. The children, ages 3-5 enjoyed the performance and the foreign language (the students are native English speakers with no background in Japanese). The performance was arranged by Bishop Gensho Hara of Lahaina Jodo Mission, both Rev. Koudo and Professor Takahashi enjoyed the interaction with the children and received handmade leis and were invited to come back.

We are grateful for the support and assistance of Kaikyo Shinko Kyokai that made the workshop and outreach program possible.

2016 International Kaikyo-ku Report

North America



Bon Segaki Service in Los Angeles

By Rev. Kodo Tanaka
Jodoshu North America
Buddhist Missions

In our Los Angeles temple, the half-year temple cleanup is held two weeks before the Bon Segaki Service. About 30 people including little children volunteered and worked very hard on Sunday, June 26, 2016.

The Bon Segaki Service was observed on Sunday, July 10, 2016, with about 60 people attending. This service is unique because it is an occasion for our congregation to pray for their loved ones by offering *toba* (memorial tablet). This thin and small memorial tablet is portable so that worshippers can take them home and offer them to their home altar. This procedure symbolizes our loved ones' return from the Pure Land to their homes once a year in favor of the O-bon period. Last year, about 120 tablets were offered by our congregation and a special prayer was extended tablet by tablet.

After the service, Mrs. Yukie Shirtcliff delivered a speech in English and shared her thoughts about being a temple member with our congregation. There are many members like her in our temple, who are bilingual and were raised by Japanese-speaking mothers. Mrs. Shirtcliff spoke about her late mother and how she became an active member of our temple. Her story was



Bon Segaki Service

impressive and filled with feelings that most families could relate to.

Luncheon followed the service, where everyone enjoyed a delicious lunch prepared by our Fujinkai ladies. Every time we observe our temple's regular services during the year, the Fujinkai always prepares a delicious lunch for our congregation. The lunchbox contains traditional Japanese cuisine, which is carefully arranged and always well-received by the congregation.



Members enjoying lunch in the social hall

Brazil



Letter from South America

By Rev. Ryoho Sasaki
Jodo Shu South American Missions

The year of 2016 was rather a busy year for all of us here in the Jodo Shu South American Missions. Early February, an entire program on our mission work in Curitiba was aired on a Japanese TV show called *Sekai Naze Sokoni? Nihonjin* showing Rev. Akiyoshi Oeda at work. The show was able to capture the spirit and dedication of our missionary drive, reaching out and supporting the needs of the community we serve. More than beautiful words or spreadsheets, the 45 minutes of this program delivered the true spirit on which the Jodo Shu missionaries have dedicated their lives in order to spread the teachings and the heart of Honen Shonin in their lives.

In early May, Rev Ryoho Sasaki was appointed as the new Bishop (Sokan) for the South American Mission, being the third one to succeed this post since its establishment in 1954. The head of Jodo Shu Chief Abbot Yuishin Ito appointed the new bishop and officiated a small ceremony in Kyoto

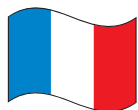


Chief Abbot Ito (seated) with the new Bishop Sasaki

on May 10, 2016. In late August, a small reception was held by the Daijo Shukutoku Gakuen and its director, Rev. Masatoshi Hasegawa and was attended mostly by those who historically were the greatest supporters of the Bishop Ryoshin Hasegawa and Bishop Yomei Sasaki, respectively the first and the second sokans in line. It was symbolically a clear endorsement of confidence for the future of the mission that puts much responsibility on keeping the tradition of transmitting the Nenbutsu teachings of our Master Honen Shonin and improving society with religion, education, and social work.

The horizon that awaits our missions in South America is full of work in both keeping the honor and legacy of our past, as well as facing the challenges in renewing and reinventing itself to update for the times we are living in now. We can assert confidently that we are ready to face these huge tasks, counting with the selfless dedication of our missionaries, community as well as our supporters around the globe.

France



HANA MATSURI

By Rev. Koryu Koso
Jodo Shu European Buddhism Center

Once more, under a beautiful spring sun, European Buddhism Center association gathered in the famous garden of Acclimation and more particularly in Kiso house in order to celebrate Hanamatsuri. During this time, it is also the occasion and the opportunity to initiate and share to people and visitors some of Japanese Buddhist culture.

The garden of Acclimation is a famous and typical garden, where Parisian people like to gather and spend

some good time during weekend.

This house is located within this famous garden, but it is actually here from such a long time. This little Kiso house has been built during the end of the nineteen century. This house has the particularity of been very authentic; in the sens that this house kept all these daily objects of this century. Indeed, we can also observe and admire the typical carpentry of that time, until an exceptional loom visible from outside. In an other part of this little house is located a Buddhism and Shintoism altar.

In order to prepare this ceremony, we all cleaned this house from inside to outside. Some flowers made of paper by the members of the Association were sprinkled as well as in the entrance as the house dedicated to Buddha. Some tea was also prepared.

Reverend Koso explain this history of this Hanamatsuri, and also the history of the Buddha's birth followed by the reason why we put tea on the baby Buddha.

The ceremony continued with a celebration and with a flower offering to the Buddha. Everyone moved towards the altar in order to pour some tea the baby Buddha.

It was touching to see the children volunteer and curious to take part in this ceremony. At the end, everyone shared a homemade cup of tea.

The ceremony ended with a speech of the actual responsible of this house. She precised that the intial owner should be very grateful and glad to see her house like that today.

This day finished with a charity auction with every Buddhism symbol: origami, books for kids, little objets.

This first anniversary party of Buddha in France was a truly bonding time, that everyone will keep in his memory. We truly hope that every year it will be the same!



Hana Matsuri in the Kiso House

Shōjōke-in, Head Temple in Kyoto

By Rev. Shinri Hara



The Main Hall, Daiden (Miei-dō)

In addition to the grand head temple Chion-in and head temples Konkai Kōmyō-ji and Chion-ji, Kyoto has another lesser known Jodo Shu head temple (*daihonzan*) called Shōjōke-in. Its name, meaning the “temple hall of the pure lotus,” came from the idea of a place of practice that is as pure as the lotus flowers growing in the Pure Land. The origin of the temple can be traced back to the year 860, when the Emperor Seiwa requested the Tendai master Ennin to establish a temple on the grounds of the Imperial Palace, where various forms of Buddhism could be practiced by members of the Imperial family. In 1175, after our founder Hōnen Shōnin began teaching Nenbutsu practice, the retired emperor Goshirakawa invited Hōnen Shōnin to the temple to hear his teachings. Later, the emperors Takakura and Gotoba also



Illustrated Tale of the Weeping Fudō, Scene of King Enma bowing to Fudō in hell

received teachings from Hōnen Shōnin, who in time was appointed to Shōjōke-in. During the latter part of the 16th century, the temple was relocated to its current location outside the walls of the Kyoto Imperial Palace.

Nestled quietly across the street, on the northeastern side, of the palace, the temple grounds today consists of a main hall, an Amida Hall, a large and small abbot's quarters, a Fudō Hall, a Jizō Hall, an office building, a bell tower, and two large gates. Shōjōke-in today continues to be a place of practice and prayer. Throughout the year, the temple holds the usual observances and trains students from the Jodo Shu-affiliated university, Bukkyō Daigaku. However, Shōjōke-in is distinctive in that it also observes a *goma*

or esoteric Buddhist ritual, commonly seen in the Shingon sect of Buddhism, offered to the wrathful-looking, esoteric deity Fudō Myō in the Fudō Hall on the 28th of every month. The reason for this unusual practice has to do with a famous medieval Japanese picture scroll owned by the temple known as the *Illustrated Tale of the Weeping Fudō*. The story relates of how the *onmyōji* or divination master Abe no Seimei informed the Buddhist master Chikō, who had become ill, that someone needed to take his place in order to recover. The disciple Shōkū took on the illness for his master but when he prayed Fudō for help from the agony of his pain, the deity shed tears of compassion for him and went to hell in the disciple's place. The King of Hell, Enma, however, moved by Fudō's compassion, prostrates in front of Fudō and sends him back to the living world.



Wooden image of Hōnen Shōnin

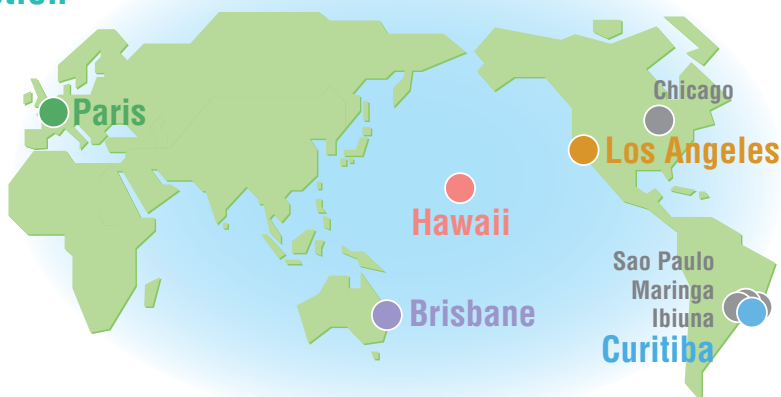


Amida Buddha (center) flanked by Seishi and Kannon by Puyue

Due to its connection with members of the Imperial family and later with the Tokugawa government, Shōjōke-in acquired many other important works such as a National Treasure-designated set of three hanging scrolls of Amida Buddha with his bodhisattva attendants Kannon on the right and Seishi on the left by the twelfth-century Chinese painter Puyue.

Although today Shōjōke-in has a relatively small temple ground, if you are ever in Kyoto during one of its observances, it is a wonderful place to visit.

The READERS' Voice section introduces members from Jodo Shu temples around the world.



HAWAII

Kathy Ibara

President of Wailuku Jodo Mission



Q: What brought you to the temple?

A: I was with Gary (my late husband) and Alvin (his best friend) when they were drinking beer. I said to them, "we have a house, money, material stuff, but something is missing. We drink for a reason and maybe that reason is something that it is missing in our spiritual need. We need to give back to fill our spiritual need. Buddhist services were only once a month for about 30-45 minutes to learn and grow. The two men agreed and we decided to go to the temple each month.

Q: What made you continue to come to the temple?

A: I like the Buddhist teachings. It's a way of learning about ourselves and a way to look inside our mind and soul. Buddhism teaches me how to become a better person and how to deal with our life. Every day I am busy with work or

other things, but when I go to Sunday Service or Obetsuji, I can get relaxed and find peace of mind.

Q: How does the Buddhist teaching help you in your daily life?

A: It makes my life simple so I can deal with everything I have to face on a daily basis so I don't get lost anymore. To help me at work I keep a copy of the Buddhist teachings in my desk so when something unfair or upsetting happens, I take time and read it. It calms my mind and I can be a bigger person.

Q: What made you decide to take the responsibility as the Kyodan President?

A: People wanted and talked about changes but nothing was happening, so I decided to act upon it. In order for things to change, we have to act on it, so I decided to take the role of the Kyodan President. I believe if you can be a leader and set a good example, then people will follow.

Q: What would you like to see at the temple in the future?

A: I would like to see more people come and worship here. Not just to participate, but to worship and to follow the teachings. Through prayer, you gain strength and that's why you can face reality and deal with whatever comes to you.

AUSTRALIA

Jarrold Ryder

Member of Jodoshu Buddhist Community of Australia



I recently visited Japan and was privileged to visit Zojoji temple in Tokyo and was fascinated with the visit. Upon my return to Australia, I was interested in learning

more about Buddhism and learned about the Pure Land School. I have enjoyed reading the Triple Sutras, and had no previous experience of Pure Land Buddhism. I was interested to learn about Amitabha Buddha. I have found the Four Noble Truths and the Eightfold Path to be a powerful way to look at life and keep things in balance, and this has benefited my relationships with other people. The prayer services at Amida-ji are very beautiful and remind me of the temples in Japan. I think it is good that people from other cultures are learning more about Buddhism and finding context for their lives.

FRANCE

Hisako Tanaka

**Member of the Jodo Shu European
Buddhism Center, Paris**



It has been more than 30 years that I lived in Paris, exercising the job of an independent tailor made. I was truly dedicated to my work, and my whole life was about my job. But the disaster of Japan during March 2011 took me away from my cocoon.

In 2012, I mingled into the association of the Kiso's

house located in the Garden of Acclimatation in Boulogne. This association was dedicated to children who had been touched by this disaster. One day in March 2013, I was cleaning this house in order to prepare the Hana Matsuri gathering. During that day, I met for Rev. Koso, who was in charge this group, for the first time. He showed me the way to clean the ground in a very specific way which he did in his native temple in Nanao. It was so different from the way I learned in school a long time ago. It was really dynamic!

Since that particular moment, I often participate in this group and really like to recite the prayers. When I heard my voice with everyone else, resonating in the space, I truly felt peaceful and happy. This is what I call serenity and I would like to sincerely thank you for these meetings.

NORTH AMERICA

Mrs. Yukie Shirtcliff

**Member of Jodoshu
North America, Los Angeles**

My daughter, Michelle, and I started regularly attending the Jodo Shu Temple in Los Angeles after my mother passed away. I realized a few things about the temple: First and foremost is that our family was not the only ones missing my mother after she passed away. She is missed also by the Jodo Shu family that she was a part of. We have also

observed how much work is needed to make this temple a success.

I remember Dr. Glenn Webb mentioned at some of his lectures that the Buddhist followers remember our loved ones that we have lost over the years. "Obon" is one of these occasions that we all remember those family members who that are no longer with us. While my mom was still alive, Michelle and I attended services occasionally when my mom asked us to. Now, I am hoping she will be happy that Michelle and I are supporting the temple that she so dearly loved and supported.



SOUTH AMERICA

Mr. Akira Yoshii and family

**Members of Curitiba
Nippakuji Temple, Brazil**

We met Mr. Akira Yoshii first when he attended the Caropolis *toronagashi* or floating lantern ceremony in October 2009. Since then, he started to attend events held at Curitiba Nippakuji with his family, for instance, the monthly Nenbutsu-ko gathering. The following year, his father, Mr. Takashi, has passed away and all the funeral ceremony was carried by our Nippakuji Temple. Afterwards, his family formally attended all the memorial services prescribed in the calendar, besides the yearly visit to the home altar, called *tanaqyo*.

Mr Yoshii owns a company in the industrial automation business, and his wife Mrs. Iolanda works as a bank clerk. The couple has 3 children. Denis, 27, the eldest, works with his father

in the family business. Midori, 20, is in college majoring in architecture. Andre, 11, is in school and roots madly for the Santos Football Club. Both Denis and Midori have experienced in living in Japan as exchange students.

This is a family that actively supports its temple, participating in the ceremonies, fund-raising drives, youth camps and many other initiatives in order to make a welcoming environment for anyone who is seeking refuge through the practice of Nenbutsu under Master Honen Shonin's heart.



“What about yours?”

Rev. Kodo Tanaka



Hello, everyone! I am excited to have this opportunity to deliver a sermon in English to our Jodo Shu congregation all over the world. I hope many of you are already familiar with the Pure Land Buddhism of Honen Shonin, the founding master of Jodo Shu. It is simple as that you lead your life with Nenbutsu (recitations of *Namu Amida Butsu*) with firm belief that even a single utterance of Nenbutsu is as meritorious as to assure our birth in the Pure Land of Amida Buddha at the end of our lives. Though it may sound simple and easy to do, don't you feel sometimes it is easier said than done?

Did you know Hiroki Kuroda, who played 7 seasons in the MLB? He played for the Dodgers and the Yankees and was a great starter. I came across his interview on YouTube, which was very moving. When he came to New York, he was surprised at how much Yankees fans love their team. According to him, Yankee fans and the New York press go to the stadium not just to enjoy the ballgame but to watch the Yankees win. He was nervous but hopeful that he could take his responsibility as a starter and be a success throughout that season. However, his performance was not as good as expected and many times he had to leave the pitchers plate early

in the game. Fans and the press criticized him like a storm. The pressure laid on him seemed too heavy to handle. No matter how seriously he tried to improve his skills, he continued to be knocked down and was deeply distressed. Remembering those days, he said that if there was a balcony in his high-rise condo, he might have thrown himself off from there. While his struggle was ongoing, one night before the game he was going to pitch, the mental trainer of the team threw the following question at him: “What would you do if this is the last game of your career?”

The NBA legend Michael Jordan is known to have asked himself the same question before a game. This question from the trainer cleared the clouds in Kuroda's mind. “This could be my last game, last inning, or last pitch of my career.” From that night, his performance became remarkable and he won 16 games in that season. He described the success of his MLB career was an unexpected result led by the simple continuation of devotion to each game before him with this resolution in mind, “There's no tomorrow. This is my last game, last inning, and last pitch.”

This resolution has me thinking about the same question thrown at me, “What about yours?” “What would you do if this is the last service you attend? Or this is your last *Namu Amida Butsu* you are going to say in your life? What would you do?” It hit me like a hammer that Kuroda's story is applicable to the spirit of reciting *Namu Amida Butsu*.

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