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## Gojukai - The Oath of Acceptance

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Gojukai is the ceremony during which a person officially joins Nichiren School of Buddhism and becomes a Monk member of the Sangha (our Sangha is the Threefold Lotus Kwoon 'kwoon means school', and our sect is Quantum Life Buddhism).

The word Gojukai literally means, "The Acceptance of the Precepts."

### The Ceremony;

The ceremony begins with the recitation of the first and second meditations of Gongyo. After the meditation section of the second recitation, the Abbot or head monk will turn to the audience and chant hiki-Daimoku. At this point all in attendance will start chanting while new students wishing to take their vows and receive a Gohonzon should line up in one row with their sponsor next to them in the center of the Butsudan room and facing the ordination platform.

Once the line has come to a point of quiet and readiness, The Abbot will chant Hiki-Daimoku once again and with that the chanting will stop.

#### Abbot:

The three treasures of Buddhism are;

1. The Buddha –the eternal state of all phenomena
2. The Dharma –the teaching and method of awakening to this eternal state
3. The Sangha –the unity of all who practice the Dharma

Do you accept the three treasures of Buddhism within all life and phenomena and vow to keep these treasures deep within your heart for the rest of your life?

All in attendance chant Sancho Daimoku (NamuMyoHoRenGeKyo three times.

#### Abbot;

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 murder, 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, Nichiren 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” Nichiren states:

The five characters of Myōhō-Renge-Kyō, 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 and profound precept, he cannot break it, even if he should try. It is therefore called the Precept of the Diamond Chalice.

Shakyamuni Buddha repeated many times throughout his sermons that “There can be no Buddhism without study”. Only through constant study can we deepen our understanding of the Buddhist teaching. Study provides the depth of understanding that motivates our determination and the perceptions to appreciate the teachings and our practice in daily life.

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

The Lotus Sutra states:

It is difficult to keep this sutra. I shall be glad to see anyone who keeps it even for a while. So will all the other Buddhas. He will be praised by the Buddhas. He will be a man of valor, a man of endeavor. He should be considered to have already observed the precepts.  
(Hokekyō, p. 419)

Nichiren states:

Shakyamuni’s practices and the virtues he consequently attained are all contained within the single phrase, Myōhō-Renge-Kyō. If we are strong

and determined in our minds to awaken our Buddha nature in using that phrase, we shall naturally be granted the same benefits as he was. (Gosho, p. 653; MW-1, p. 64)

As these passages indicate, with a determined mind and practice to the Gohonzon, must lead to immeasurable benefits. Furthermore, once one obtains this profound precept through Buddhist practice, it will eventually lead to enlightenment, no matter what obstacles or fortunes may happen. This is true even should the person quit the practice and fall into the evil paths, one will always return to the practice.

The precept of Nichiren School Buddhism is called the “precept of the diamond chalice” (kongo hoki kai). The Great Teacher Dengyo interprets the true entity of all phenomena expounded in the Lotus Sutra as the diamond chalice, which is impossible to break. By embracing the Gohonzon, we observe this single precept, thus manifesting the three properties of the Buddha within ourselves and receiving the benefits of observing all other precepts.

In the Gojukai Ceremony, the recipient vows to sincerely believe Buddha’s teachings and to practice and uphold the Gohonzon of the Three Great Secret Laws, thus abandoning religions and all that obstructs or misrepresents the true Law. Therefore, a person who receives Gojukai should have the pure determination to practice true Buddhism wholeheartedly and to discard objects of prior religious attachments.

In this regard, Nichiren reminds us that although this mandala is the perfect mirror of our real Buddha state, it is a mirror only. As valuable and precious as it is, and invaluable in our daily practice as the object of our human focus, the “Gohonzon”, the representation of all that is the state of Buddha is nowhere other than in our “selves” in this human form.

Nichiren; from *“The Real Aspect of the Gohonzon”*

“Never seek this Gohonzon outside yourself. The Gohonzon exists only within the mortal flesh of us ordinary people who embrace the Lotus Sutra and chant Namu-MyoHo-RenGe-Kyō. The body is the palace of the ninth consciousness, the unchanging reality that reigns over all of life’s functions. To be endowed with the Ten Worlds means that all ten, without a single exception, exist in one world. Because of this it is called a mandala. Mandala is a Sanskrit word that is translated as “perfectly endowed” or “a cluster of blessings.” This Gohonzon also is found only in the two characters for determination. This is what the sutra means when it states that one can “gain entrance through a strong mind of determination alone.”

### **Abbot;**

The “Oath of Acceptance” is the vow that is made to the Three Treasures of True Buddhism. The Abbot or head monk 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 determination to unify with Buddha in this lifetime.

Daimoku started by the Abbot and all in attendance until Abbot stops it with gong.

## The Oath of Acceptance

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At this point the first of all those in attendance who are here to receive a Gohonzon are to walk up the center Aisle to the ordination platform. The recipient should remain standing with hands raised to chest and palms facing upward to receive the Gohonzon. The recipient's hands should be covered with a scarf or cloth to keep the Gohonzon free of any oils or other from touching the Gohonzon. Sponsor, if any should line up next to the recipient for instruction or support. All others wishing to take their vows should follow up behind and remain standing.

### **Abbot:**

1. "Do you faithfully swear to practice the True Teachings of Nichiren school lineage elucidation of the Buddha method throughout your life?"
  - a. 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 Buddha as elucidated by Nichiren and Threefold Lotus School.
2. "Do you faithfully swear to protect the Gohonzon of the Three Great Secret Laws throughout your life?"
  - a. This vow means that we promise to discard all other 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 which is only to be found within ourselves. 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 through Quantum Life Buddhism throughout your life?"
  - a. 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 do this by following the three tenets of Buddhist practice;
    - i. STUDY the sutras first and also everything in life,
    - ii. PRACTICE (chanting and Gongyo), and
    - iii. DETERMINATION.

By answering "I do" the new student-monk 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 (many in body, but one in mind), and to strive for the advancement of Kosen-rufu (arriving at a minimum of 1/3 of the Earth’s population practicing daily the Buddhist method and 1/3 knowing and supporting those who practice, while whatever remains is undecided) at this point, World peace will be achieved.

Once this is done, the head monk or Abbot will tap a new Gohonzon on the top of the head of the new student-monk three times. Each tap has the following significance;

**Abbot:**

This is a Gohonzon. Gohonzon is the root of our practice. With this Gohonzon I will tap you on the head three times while I chant Daimoku. Please chant along with me.

The three taps on the head indicate the wish for you to perceive the Buddha of NamuMyoHoRenGeKyo deep within your heart.

**THE FIRST TAP** indicates that you as an ordinary human being, must renounce all religions and “belief” groups to dedicate your life to the totality of the Buddha’s teachings culminating with the Lotus Sutra and the lineage of scholarship from Buddha through Nāgārjuna, Tien-Tai, Dengyo, and all those in between leading to Nichiren. You must as well discard all heretical teachings, to accept the true law (MyoHoRenGeKyo), the true teacher (Buddha), the true teaching (Dharma) and carry through with your mind of determination, even if you get confused, until you awaken to the truth that ALL common mortals possess the Buddha nature within themselves and their environment.

**THE SECOND TAP** indicates that you as an ordinary human being must dedicate your life to study and practice of the Buddha’s teachings culminating with the Lotus Sutra, avoid committing slander, and accept the THREE GREAT SECRET LAWS:

1. The True Object of Worship (honmon no HONZON), the *Gohonzon*
2. The True Invocation of the Law (honmon no DAIMOKU { *NamuMyoHoRenGeKyo* }) and
3. The True Sanctuary (honmon no KAIDAN). The Butsudan, altar, house of the Gohonzon and by extension your own body and environment.

**THE THIRD TAP** indicates that you as an ordinary human being must pledge to continue to study diligently to strengthen your practice and deepen your conviction through the depth of your understanding to realize your benefits and observe your practice at work in your life as proof of the Buddha’s teachings. Only in this way will you be able to guide others and share your practice with others with confidence.

**Abbot;**

I ask you to make these vows to Gohonzon, and I urge you to please cherish no other faith or distraction than your true commitment of the Lotus Sutra, and end the mistake of clinging to delusions.

Now that you have Gohonzon it is essential that you do Gongyo and Daimoku every morning and Evening. Even if you are just learning and have time obstacles you must do as best you can and chant with a mind toward more fortune and opportunity in your life to practice and gain the benefits thereof.

At this point I place the Gohonzon in the student-monks hands in a scarf or cloth of some sort so as to not allow the Gohonzon to touch the fingers and keep it free from oils or any other defilement. The new student-monk may then be seated.

The Abbot will return to facing the Gohonzon and chant hiki-Daimoku to begin the chanting again and proceed to close the Butsudan. Gongyo will end as led by the Abbot.

At this point, arrangement should be made immediately to enshrine the new Gohonzon in an appropriate altar which should have been prepared ahead of time for this purpose. Remember not to breathe or touch the face of the scroll of Gohonzon while enshrining.

Enshrining entails slowly unrolling the scroll in the Butsudan while all in attendance chant. The altar must be prepared in advance with all the required accessories of a bell, incense burning and collection vessel, white candles, a water cup, and a Butsudan of some kind adequate for the intended Gohonzon to hang without obstacle and close as to protect the Gohonzon from harm.

1. The enshrining person whether it is the new member or the sponsor (usually the sponsor due to the nervousness of the new member), must keep a stick of incense in the lips in order to ensure no breathing upon the scroll.
2. There should be an incense burning reservoir with three incense sticks burning as offering to the new Gohonzon. This is best done immediately after the hanging, and while everyone continues to chant.
3. White candles should be lighted, and three incense sticks (representing the three treasures) should be lighted and placed in the burner as offerings.
4. At this point it is customary to perform an abbreviated Gongyo to commemorate the enshrining.

Congratulations!

NamuMyoHoRenGeKyo

Abbot Sylvain Chamberlain