

Presence at the Butsudan

I want to suggest a brief mental exercise as preparation for Daimoku and or Gongyo to incorporate into our practice. Over the years of my research and practice, I have had the fortune of many questions asked of me for guidance and method in the practice of the Dharma. One that persists is that of one's attitude, state of mind, or simply what thoughts one should hold when engaging with our Nichiren Mandala.

Remembering how our dedicated practice contains many conceptual disciplines and elements can be overwhelming and add tension to our approach from the start. So, I want to suggest a calming set of thoughts to prepare our minds for the tremendous expectations we enter into our presence at our altars before we even start.

The first thought I want to call into mind is the stories of the Lotus Sutra. More specifically is the chapter of the "Treasure Tower". To visualize ourselves as one of the participants in the audience of this amazing event, floating up into the sky along with all the attendees and the Buddhas etc. The Treasure Tower opening and presented before us with the Buddhas Shakyamuni and Tahoe greeting us. Now breathe this in for a moment. In this moment let yourself reveal that you are here, and that in this moment you are breathing, present, and safe. All issues of "the day" or work or relations etc. are not here, not exigent, and not permanent. All thought is occurring in moments that belie their impermanence and that all life is changing as it moves through you. That you are okay, nothing required or imposed upon you in this moment. Let the tensions of thought exit your mind and your body to be replaced with considered calm.

Breath. In this relaxed state we can look upon the Treasure Tower with deep appreciation and anticipation. With this attitude we can begin our Chanting, our Recitation, with (NaMu) a dedicated mind of opened consciousness (the GoHonzon mind). In this mind we can flow with the cosmos of energy that is the Buddha experience unencumbered by the resistance of the Samsaric mind.

Love and respect,

NaMuMyoHoRenGeKyo

Sifu Sylvain Chamberlain