

Preparatory Event for the 2023 Celebrations at the Shinshū Honbyō
750th Anniversary of the Establishment of the Honbyō

Message from Abbot Chōyū Ōtani

On this occasion of the Preparatory Event for the 2023 Celebrations at the Shinshū Honbyō and 750th Anniversary of the Establishment of the Honbyō, I wish to offer my greetings to all of you.

Today, we are taking an important step to the bicentennial celebrations in 2023 by holding the Preparatory Event together with all of you around the world through the livestreaming on the internet. I express my deepest gratitude for this remarkable opportunity.

For more than one year, we have been confronted with a number of challenges and difficulties caused by the novel coronavirus pandemic. Many people lost their lives or their loved ones to the disease. I express my heartfelt condolences to those of you who have suffered from the illness.

There is still no end in sight to the novel coronavirus which has raged throughout the world. The disease has marked a major global turning point because of its devastation. It is at this time of crisis that we find ourselves at an important phase in the preparation for the 2023 Celebrations.

In Japan, the administration of the vaccine for Covid-19 has finally begun. I sincerely hope that the whole nation will put all of its energy into the vaccination effort. This will enable us to put an end to the pandemic so we no longer have to be afraid of infection.

Today's Preparatory Event has provided each of us with an important opportunity to reconfirm our commitment to the observance of the major celebrations. If Shinran Shōnin had not been born into this world and had not dedicated his entire life to seeking the truth, and if he had not written his major work, *Kyōgyōshinshō*, we would never have had a chance to receive the teaching of the *nenbutsu*. In addition, without the Shōnin's effort in clarifying the teaching of Jōdo Shinshū, we may not have been able to find our direction in life.

As the Bishop Tajima stated at the beginning of this event, June 11 of this year will mark the 40th anniversary of the creation of the newly amended Constitution of the Shinshū Ōtani-ha. The new Constitution is the product of the long history of the *Dōbōkai* movement and the series of crises in our denomination. In clear terms it states, "We vow to expound the spirit of the foundation of our religious community and its significance in the present world, and to fulfill the responsibility we bear for the society we are a part of." As one of those who have been fortunate to be able to observe such events of profound significance, I pledge to devote all of my energy towards the realization of the vow as stated in the Constitution.

I receive today's crises as the window of opportunity for propagating the Right Dharma and rediscovering the true meaning of having been born as a human being. Through listening to the teaching of the *nenbutsu* and reflecting upon myself while living in these difficult times, I sincerely hope that I can serve to share the importance of this teaching with as many people as possible so that we can prepare to observe the 2023 Celebrations together with people around the world.

Since I was appointed as Abbot last year, it has been my wish that we could all join together, though the internet has allowed us to livestream our services. It is my heartfelt wish that we can see each other again on your next visit to the Shinshū Honbyō so that we may be able to listen to the teachings together.

In conclusion, I express my heartfelt appreciation for your attendance today.

Abbot Chōyū Ōtani (Shaku Shūnyo)