

A New Year's Greeting and Aspiration!

I extend my most sincere best wishes to you for the New Year! In the New Year, please know that truly we are never alone for Amida Buddha as the Name, Namo Amida Butsu, is always with us. The Gomonshu Koshin Ohtani in his book *"The Buddha's Wish for the World"* shares to people who say *"I am not able to say the Nembutsu naturally and spontaneously. What can I do about it?"* *"I first suggest...to say the Nembutsu casually, as if they were simply saying, "Hello," to Amida Buddha."* *"...think that the heart of Amida Buddha is the heart to save all without exception. This heart of Amida Buddha already exists in the depths of our own hearts."* *"Then learn about Buddhism gradually..."* *"Somewhere along the way, you will discover the Nembutsu is more than just a word of greeting."* *"When you become a person who is able to say the Nembutsu that means you are a person who can sense the presence of Amida Buddha."* *"When you become a person who senses the presence of Amida Buddha in your life, you will say the Nembutsu naturally and spontaneously."* *"...Amida Buddha has been calling out to us from long before. We are always Amida Buddha's deepest concern. When we realize that, we say, "Thank you," with a heart full of gratitude. That is Nembutsu."*

Our theme and slogan for 2012 is "Path of Entrusting: Recite the Nembutsu." For me, the Nembutsu is the Nembutsu of Awareness in which one is aware of the immense Compassion that is Amida Buddha equally surrounding all existence. It is the Nembutsu of Joy in realizing that I too am unconditionally embraced by the Buddha's Great Compassion. And it is the Nembutsu of Gratitude in which reciting "Namo Amida Butsu/I entrust myself to the Buddha of Immeasurable Life and Infinite Light" is a spontaneous expression of my gratitude for being promised Buddhahood/Enlightenment by the Most-Compassionate Amida Buddha.

It is with great anticipation that I greet the New Year in that we will be embarking on the implementation of Honpa Hongwanji Mission of Hawaii's Strategic Plan which addresses many of the challenges and issues we face like providing more support to temples and organizations, PR and Marketing, additional financial resources, ministerial training and including how can we more effectively, clearly and meaningful share and express the Nembutsu Dharma. I ask that you encourage family and invite friends to our temples to listen to the Dharma and may we be active in our community so all lives may be enriched by Wisdom and Compassion.

Finally, together with expressing my appreciation to both ministers and lay, I ask, evermore, for your support, cooperation, participation and commitment as we continue to perpetuate the Buddhist Teachings and move towards becoming an even more open and harmonious Sangha that continues to make a difference in our local and world community. Thank you, Happy New Year and Namo Amida Butsu!

In gassho,
Eric Matsumoto, Bishop