

Message from Abbot Chōyū Ōtani Abbot Succession Ceremony

Hello everyone. I am Chōyū Ōtani and this year, I assumed the responsibility to serve as the 26th Abbot of the Shinshū Ōtani-ha.

Today, we are gathered together, not only with you here in attendance, but also with our fellow seekers around the world to observe the Abbot Succession Ceremony before the image of our spiritual forebear Shinran Shōnin. It is with deep emotion that I express my profound gratitude for having been given this opportunity to participate in this important and solemn event.

I was born in Japan but moved to Brazil at the age of one together with my family when my father, the late Associate Abbot Chōkyō Ōtani, assumed the position of an overseas minister to help with the propagation of Buddhism in that country. Since then, I grew up always inspired by our fellow seekers who worked hard to preserve the tradition of Shinran Shōnin's teaching by faithfully conducting *Hōonkō* and other services. They continued to listen to the teachings despite tremendous challenges they faced just to live day by day. I reflect upon the fact that I have been able to encounter the teaching that has been passed on to me through countless generations of our predecessors. It is they who have brought me here to stand on the same path they had walked, and I am simply overwhelmed by the profound inconceivability of the working of karmic causes and conditions. I have somehow been able to fulfill my responsibilities to this day, made possible through meeting so many wonderful people who have given me the strength to carry on. I take this opportunity to express my deepest appreciation to all of you who have supported me.

When we turn our eyes to the present world at hand, it is evident that there is nothing more essential for us human beings other than to realize a world where all beings can live together in true harmony. It requires mutual respect beyond differences of nationality, ethnicity, language, and culture. I understand that my duty is to contribute to the realization of such a world where we can treat each other with true respect and trust. I believe I can approach this goal by learning the teaching of the all-embracing spirit of Amida Buddha's Original Vow, doing my best to realize it in my own life, and sharing my understanding with people everywhere to the best of my abilities.

On this occasion, I have renewed my commitment to take over this important role the Former Abbot Chōken Ōtani had fulfilled, and to devote myself to sharing the spirit of *Namu Amida Butsu* with people all over the world and working to realize a community based on the spirit of the words of Shinran, "across the four seas, we are all brothers and sisters." In closing, I humbly ask for your continued support and guidance, as well as the sustained commitment to listen to and learn from the Dharma together.

Chōyū Ōtani (Shaku Shūnyo)