

NORTHERN CALIFORNIA STUDY CONFERENCE HELD

Faith is the eternal foundation of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism. Both practice and study arise from faith. Practice and study should serve to deepen and uphold your faith. It will find expression naturally in the course of your efforts in practice and study, and definitely provide the impetus for you to revitalize constantly and to forge ahead toward the goal of kosen-rufu" (*Buddhism in Action*, vol. II, p. 136).

These words by SGI President Daisaku Ikeda provided the foundation and purpose for months of planning, preparation and chanting; resulting in the first study conference sponsored by SGI-USA of San Francisco.

In an effort to revitalize their lives by deepening their faith and understanding of true Buddhism, nearly 300 SGI-USA members from 75 different cities in Northern California gathered at the Doubletree Hotel, overlooking the spectacular San Francisco Bay, in Burlingame for a two-day "studymfest." Study department representatives of the San Francisco regions organized the weekend event. Mark Wilwerth, one of the planners, commented, "We wanted to create a conference similar to those held at the Florida Nature and Culture Center." With the beautiful setting, first-rate accommodations and abundance of meaningful study sessions, the prevailing feeling among those attending was that it was a rejuvenating experience.

Eugene Hirahara, SGI-USA Study Department Leader and Margie Hall, vice study department leader, had flown in from Los Angeles to help conduct the two-day conference, along with SGI-USA Vice General Director and Northwestern Zone Leader Richard Yoshimachi. Assisted by other facilitators from Northern California, a total of twenty different topics were presented each day for discussion.

The schedule was set up so that there were four sessions, with five different topics from which to choose.

As an example, there was a session on Saturday that ran from 10:15–11:25 a.m. During that period, conferees could select one of five topics being held in different meeting rooms including, "What's written on the Gohonzon," Challenging hopelessness and depression through practice," "Death and dying," "Overcoming doubts" and "Sharing Buddhism in modern America."

Other sessions included topics such as "Positive aspects of the Temple Issue," "Nichiren Daishonin's behavior as a human being and lessons for us," "Origins and evolution of Buddhism" and "How to derive maximum benefit from your practice."

In selecting the topics for discussion, SGI-USA members of the San Francisco regions had completed surveys indicating their interests. Organizers then designed the content of the conference based on the input they had received.

Throughout the weekend, it was clear by the ongoing, lively dialogue, whether formally during the study sessions or through casual discussions at lunch and break times, that those gathered had come hungry for study and discussion of Nichiren Daishonin's teachings. Hungry for information and a deeper understanding of the teachings to apply in their lives, because as it was stressed repeatedly during the conference, that Buddhism, including the theory, only exists in action.

This first study conference sponsored by Northern California proved to be as one organizer described it, "a fantastic success." Those attending echoed that sentiment by repeat-

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edly expressing their desire that there be more.

—*TOBIE MARSH*

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