



PILGRIMAGE TO MOUNT HIEI SEPTEMBER 2011

INCLUDING SHINRAN SHONIN'S 750TH MEMORIAL AT NISHI HONGWANJI



Devotees make their way into the Hongwanji Amida Hall for Morning Service



Lunch in our room prior to the last session of the conference.
Pictured left to right: Craig, Mary and Sue.



The central part of our pilgrimage was a visit to Mount Hiei (*Hieizan-Enryakuji*); and here we were given a special guided tour presented by Rev. Prof. Masahiro Asada (Shaku Eshin), a professor of Tendai Buddhist doctrine at Ryukoku University. He is also a serving priest for the Jodo--shinshu Hongwanji-ha.

Along the way he introduced us to a Tendai priest named Rev. Endo Hoshino (born 1975), a resident priest of Daijo-in temple, of Mudoji-dani, Hieizan. (Pictured left) He is also a serving priest for the Jodo--shinshu Hongwanji-ha.

When this piece was put together, he was the last person to have completed “Sen-nichi Kaiho-gyo”, the Practice of running between all the Halls of Hieizan for one-thousand days. His Practice began in March 2003. He completed the first requisite of 700 days in his fifth year of training and the total of 1,000 days in 2009.

Rev. Prof. Masahiro Asada (seen on the right in the picture above, and far left in the picture below) guides us around the Hall of the Eternal Walking Practice which involves circumambulation of the Hall for a period of ninety days – without sitting or sleeping, constantly chanting the nembutsu. He explained that participants do very occasionally rest with their arms slung over the beams lashed to the columns with rope.



During the Eternal Walking Practice participants occasionally ascend a mountain path to draw water from the well (shown above right). They do not consume it there but carry it back down to the Hall. Rev. Prof. Masahiro Asada tells us that if drops of water happen to splash on to a participant’s skin it is seen to be immediately absorbed.

Following our meeting with the Tendai priest, we bid our farewells and began to make our way down the mountain. We had been walking for about five minutes when the priest passed us on the trail.

The two pictures on the next page show that in just four paces he became a dot on the trail below us.



A few of our party comment on this, only to be told that before setting off, Rev. Endo Hoshino told Rev. Prof. Masahiro Asada that he would intentionally walk slowly to not embarrass us!

If I had not seen this with my own eyes, I would find this difficult to believe.



Shown left to right above: Sue Grantham, Rowena Clack and Craig Holloway participate in the Kikyoshiki Ceremony in the Amida Hall at the Nishi Hongwanji Temple in Kyoto, Japan.