

Shinnyo

Her Holiness Shinso Ito
Head Priest of Shinnyo-en

Her Holiness Shinso Ito is the Head Priest of the Buddhist community Shinnyo-en. As the spiritual leader of close to one million practitioners, Her Holiness has widely promoted the Shinnyo-en belief of harmony and diversity.

Shinso was born in Japan in 1942, the daughter of Shinjo and Tomoji. She began her formal Buddhist training as a child under the care of her parents, who were also her primary spiritual teachers, and eventually became their formal and spiritual successor. She was ordained in the Shinnyo tradition in 1966 and undertook priestly training between 1970 and 1982. In 1984, Shinjo announced Shinso's accomplishment as his disciple and future successor. When Master Ito passed away in 1989, Shinso Ito became his successor. In 1992, Her Holiness was conferred Daisajo, the highest priestly rank in traditional Shingon Buddhism, by the Daigo-ji Shingon Buddhist monastery, the historic temple and U.N. World Heritage Site. She is one of the few women in the world to become a Buddhist master and attain the title of Daisajo. Her Holiness also received an honorary doctorate from Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University in Thailand in 2002 for her long-standing efforts to foster relations with Theravada Buddhism.

While Shinso draws inspiration from Buddhist tradition, she is profoundly aware that the teachings must be meaningful for people living today. She teaches an engaged form of Buddhism, that guides both the individual and Shinnyo-en as a whole. Shinso preserves the spirit of the founders of Shinnyo-en and guides people with her warmth and conviction. Her inspiring message of peace and enlightenment is infused with palpable joy and gentleness.



Besides inheriting Master Shinjo's spirit to forge a Buddhist path accessible to all, Her Holiness has widely promoted activities on an inter-religious and cross-cultural scale to help further efforts towards harmony and diversity. Emphasis is placed on collaborating with people of different religious and cultural backgrounds for Shinnyo-en events around the

world as a means of deepening mutual understanding and working towards building a more peaceful society.

Her Holiness has conducted many services and events with religious representatives of Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, and other faiths of the world.

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Events and Services to Foster Harmony



Officiating at Daigoji

Her Holiness has presided over historic ceremonies at Daigoji in 1997 and 2009. In 1997, she became the first woman in its one thousand year history to act as officiant at a service conducted at the main hall.



Lantern Floating Hawaii

An annual lantern floating event has been held on Memorial Day in Hawaii, U.S.A since 1999. Coinciding with a national holiday dedicated to remembering Americans who died in battle, the ceremony has become a state-wide tradition in Hawaii, where over 40,000 attend and many more view the live broadcast. Many come to share in a moment of comfort, solace, and a mutual sense of lasting peace and hope for all.



Saisho services for peace

A *saisho* ceremony was conducted at La Grande Arche in Paris in 2007. In the following year, another service was conducted at St. Peter's Roman Catholic Church, located in the vicinity of Ground Zero, to offer a prayer of peace. In 2009, the Shinnyo Fire Ceremony was conducted with the theme, Building Bridges, in Berlin. The service was conducted with Jewish, Islamic, and Christian choir groups in prayer for harmony and a more peaceful world.



Shinnyo Fire and Water Ceremony, Kenya

In 2012, the Shinnyo Fire and Water Ceremony was conducted in Kenya, with the participation of neighboring tribes that shared a history of conflict. Together with spiritual leaders gathered from throughout the world, a prayer was offered for mutual efforts towards building harmony and peace.

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Interfaith events

In 2012, 32 spiritual leaders from 14 countries including representatives from Wat Paknam participated in a Shinnyo Fire Ceremony conducted at the Shinnyo-en Ogen Center in Tachikawa, Tokyo. Afterwards, audiences took part in meditation sessions led by representative spiritual leaders.



Shinnyo Lantern Floating for Peace, New York

The first Shinnyo Lantern Floating for Peace, held on Sept. 22, 2013, drew more than 4,000 visitors from around the world – representing all five boroughs of New York City, and countries as far away as Australia, Brazil, France and Japan, to New York City's landmark Central Park. Visitors set afloat paper lanterns with individually-written messages of peace onto a large reflecting pool in honor of people who dedicated their lives to the cause of peace.



Fostering relations through calligraphy

The Vision and Art of Master Ito was held in 2008, exhibiting the founder's Buddhist artworks in three locations in the United States and at two venues in Italy. At one event, Her Holiness performed calligraphy and afterwards led a guided meditation for audiences. Later that same year, she led a cultural exchange through music and calligraphy at the foot of the Giza Pyramid Complex and the Great Sphinx in a peace ceremony with local musicians and Japanese taiko drummers.