

## **Sunrise at Keishinin**

Keishinin Temple visitors will have the chance to view the sunrise from the summit of Mt. Shichimen. The temple observes a 9:00 p.m. lights-out policy so that guests will be rested enough to be up and ready to venture out before the sun comes up.

The Keishinin monks wake their guests by pounding on large taiko drums at 4:00 or 5:00 a.m., depending on the season. After getting ready, visitors climb the wooden steps (shaped from tree stumps) in front of the temple and pass through the gate at the top. Just beyond the gate is a spacious area with a striking view of Mt. Fuji and the sunrise.

### *Experience Sunrise at Keishinin*

*Goraiko* means “the coming of light.” It is used to describe watching a sunrise from a mountaintop. Combined with the view of Mt. Fuji, Keishinin is a great place to experience *goraiko* and the natural phenomenon known as Diamond Fuji.

### *Diamond Fuji Sunrise*

The Diamond Fuji sunrise at Keishinin happens twice a year, during the spring and autumnal equinoxes. While the exact dates vary each year, the spring equinox normally occurs on March 20 or March 21 and the autumnal equinox on September 22 or September 23.

The Diamond Fuji sunrise happens when the sun rises directly behind Mt. Fuji, illuminating the peak of the mountain and causing it to sparkle like a diamond. This is a rare natural phenomenon and is considered sacred in Nichiren Buddhism. The spring and autumnal equinoxes are special periods for Japanese Buddhists; many people visit the graves of their ancestors and hold memorial services for them.

### *Ray Line Phenomenon*

Another mysterious sunlight phenomenon occurs during the spring and autumnal equinoxes. During the “Ray Line” phenomenon, the sunlight from the Pacific first reaches Tamasaki Shrine in Chiba Prefecture and illuminates the shrine’s red torii gate. That light then passes through Mt. Fuji. Next, the light reaches Keishinin Temple and the Statue of the Shichimen Dragon Goddess, illuminating the statue’s forehead. Finally, the light reaches Izumo Shrine in Shimane Prefecture.

Nichiren followers consider this phenomenon to be evidence that the placement of Keishinin Temple was determined by the gods.

### *Keishinin Morning Religious Service*

After watching the sunrise, visitors are invited to join the morning religious service. The monks chant the mantra *Namu myoho renge kyo* (I take refuge in the Lotus Sutra) and read selections from the Lotus Sutra. In the middle of the ceremony, an altar with a bowl of burning incense is placed before the attendees, a pile of small pieces of incense next to it.

Attendees are encouraged to walk up to the altar and offer a prayer. The steps to do this are as follows:

- 1) First, visitors should stand and wait near the side of the congregation until the person before you walks back to their seat. Attendees usually go up row by row.
- 2)
- 3) Approach the altar. Clasp your hands and bow in front of the altar.
- 4)
- 5) Pinch the incense with the index finger and thumb of your right hand and bring it close to your forehead.
- 6)
- 7) Drop the incense onto the burning pile.
- 8)
- 9) Put your hands together and pray silently.
- 10)
- 11) When finished, bow and head back to your seat.

By making arrangements beforehand and offering a small donation, visitors can have special prayers read aloud by the head priest during the service.