



By the time you read this, the new Senshin Temple cookbook will be out for sale. Thanks to a committee of 12, working over several years, the cookbook entitled "Otoki" is a sight to behold. All proceeds go to the Senshinji Building Fund. "Otoki" means a meal traditionally served to monks by lay people after a service, lecture, sermon, etc. In Jodoshinshu, it refers to a meal made by temple members and served to all who attend special temple services. It also came to include any meal taken by participants after a private family memorial service (Hoji). During the Issei and Nisei period, the otoki was a vegetarian meal. Over the years however, meat dishes have entered into the menu, although the emphasis has remained on vegetarian dishes.

Like most religious traditions, communal eating is an important aspect of temple life. Jodoshinshu is a lay-centered, and therefore strongly commu-

nal organization. Our practice is in daily life and much of our real understanding of the Nembutsu takes place in the context of interacting with our fellow Sangha members. This interaction can sometimes be nerve-wracking and confrontational, but more often than not, it is in the context of a kind of mutually supporting fog where nothing is stated clearly and adamantly but is warm and comforting. Nevertheless, it is not a formal meal but more like *ochazuke* and *tsukemono* at the end of the day. The new cookbook includes many candid photos of Sangha members preparing, serving and eating *otoki*. If one pays attention or reflects on them, it is a practice as powerful and meaningful as any traditional practice in a Buddhist monastery. How do you apply Nembutsu to your daily life? You can't. The Nembutsu is your daily life. The real issue is how deeply and how often do I really experience this. Take a look at the book.

Gassho, Rev. Mas