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nomination in Kyoto is named the Hongwanji, the Temple of the Primal Vow. As Jodo Shinshu Buddhists, listening to the meaning of the Hongwan is crucial. Please keep listening to the teaching and asking your temple minister for a more detailed explanation of the Primal Vow for a deeper understanding of the teaching. And even if you cannot have number eighteen as your uniform number, don't worry about it. From the Buddha's side, the Eighteenth Vow Power is always reaching to you. You are grasped and never abandoned.

"Collected Works of Shinran, (abbreviated to CWS)," is available at BCA temples.



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**Number 18 is an Important Number
for Jodo Shinshu Buddhists**

The Primal Vow *Hongwan*

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Number Eighteen is the Best Number

If you were an athlete, what number would you like on your uniform? 23, 24, 32, 33, or 10? You would probably want the same number as your favorite star athlete's, wishing to be like him or her. But for Jodo Shinshu Buddhists, Number 18 is the best number to put on the uniform. The number eighteen is the number of the most important vow of Amida Buddha, which is called the Primal Vow, or Hongwan, in Japanese. Shinran Shonin's teacher, Honen Shonin, called the Primal Vow, "the King Primal Vow," or "the Selected Primal Vow." This special vow assures your birth in the Pure Land. Shinran Shonin also stated, "Once you are grasped by Amida, you will never be abandoned." In sports, if you make a mistake, coaches, teammates, and fans abandon you. It is often said, "Yesterday's winner is today's loser," but in Jodo Shinshu, no matter what you do, you will never be abandoned by Amida Buddha. Star players, normal players, bench players, retired players, and quitters are always accepted without any distinction.

Anyone Can be Accepted by Amida Buddha

The Primal Vow does not discriminate. Regardless of differences in ability, skin color, nationality, gender, age, language, culture, social status, wealth, etc., anyone can attain Buddhahood by the power of the Eighteenth Vow. Since the Eighteenth Vow suggests the realization of the equality of all beings, it is sometimes interpreted as the true and primal wish that all beings share in the deepest part of the heart and mind.

*The Primal Vow is the core
of the teaching of Jodo Shinshu;
therefore the main temple of
our denomination in Kyoto
is named the Hongwanji,
the Temple of the
Primal Vow.*

The 48 Vows of Amida Buddha

In the traditional understanding, the Eighteenth Vow is expressed as Amida Buddha's (or Dharmākara Bodhisattva's) Primal Vow that promises that all beings be born in the Pure Land. In "The Sutra on the Buddha of Immeasurable Life," it is taught that when Amida Buddha was in a stage of bodhisattvahood and was called Dharmākara, he established forty-eight vows in order to liberate all beings from the state of suffering. After taking myriads of ages to complete practices to fulfill the vows, Dharmākara Bodhisattva became Amida Buddha and created the Pure Land, where all beings could be liberated.

The Eighteenth Vow

Among the forty-eight vows, most of the vows mention characteristics of the Pure Land, such as divine abilities of bodhisattvas, devas, and people in the Pure Land. But the Eighteenth Vow states the method by which people

can attain birth in the Pure Land. This is the reason eminent Pure Land masters and Shinran Shonin focused on the Eighteenth Vow. It reads:

"If, when I attain Buddhahood, the sentient beings of the ten quarters, with sincere mind entrusting themselves, aspiring to be born in my land, and saying my Name perhaps even ten times, should not be born there, may I not attain the supreme enlightenment. Excluded are those who commit the five grave offences and those who slander the dharma. (Collected Works of Shinran Vol.1, p.80)"

In summary, this vow refers to the recitation of Namoamidabutsu and the threefold mind (sincere mind, entrusting, and aspiration to be born in the Pure Land), which is expressed as Shinjin, awakening, entrusting or Faith. This is an easy practice for anyone. Rich or poor, foolish or wise, monk or lay, good or bad, young or old, anyone can recite Namoamidabutsu and equally be born in the Pure Land. The trust or faith of the sentient being is changeable; hence Amida Buddha transfers Shinjin to a practitioner, thus assuring birth in the Pure Land.

To learn more about the Eighteenth Vow, reading the following writings of Shinran Shonin and the Glossary of Shin Buddhist Terms from the *Collected Works of Shinran* is helpful: "The True Teaching, Practice, and Realization of the Pure Land Way" (CWS Vol.1, p.93-107) and "Notes on the Inscription on Sacred Scrolls" (CWS Vol.1, p.493-494).

The Primal Vow is the core of the teaching of Jodo Shinshu; therefore the main temple of our de-