

THE JOY AND POWER OF PRAYER

The following is an excerpt from SGI President Ikeda's book Learn-ing From the Goshō: The Eternal Teachings of Nichiren Daishonin, pp. 85–93.

IN Nichiren Daishonin's day, some carried out the practice of reading the Lotus Sutra in its entirety. The Daishonin indicates, however, that this is not necessary. He says that chanting the daimoku, or title of the sutra, once is the same as reading the entire sutra once, and that chanting a thousand daimoku is the same as reading the sutra a thousand times.

The important thing is to continue the practice of chanting daimoku throughout our lives. The amount of daimoku we chant each day will naturally vary somewhat over time. That's perfectly all right.

Chanting daimoku is a teaching that is "easy to embrace and easy to practice." Anyone can perform it. It can be done anytime and anywhere. It is the most highly refined and simplified method of practice. As such, it is the perfect Buddhist teaching for not only the twenty-first century but for the twenty-second, thirtieth and fiftieth centuries, and for the ten thousand years and more of the Latter Day of the Law—for all eternity.

The practice of chanting daimoku embodies the Buddha's ardent and heartfelt wish to lead all people to happiness. A practice that only certain people can carry out goes against the Buddha's spirit.

Daimoku is like light. As the Daishonin says, "A candle can light up a place that has been dark for billions of years." Similarly, the moment we offer prayers based on daimoku, the darkness in our lives vanishes. This is the principle of the simultaneity of cause and effect. At that very instant, in the depths of our lives, our prayer has been answered.

The inherent cause (*nyo ze in*) of a deep prayer simultaneously produces a latent effect (*nyo ze ka*). While it takes time for this effect to become manifest, in the depths of our lives, our prayers are immediately realized. So at that moment light shines forth. The lotus flower (*renge*), in blooming and seeding at the same time, illustrates this principle of simultaneity of cause and effect.

Therefore, it is important that we offer prayers with great confidence. The powers of the Buddha and the Law are activated in direct proportion to the strength of our faith and practice. Strong faith is like a high voltage—it turns on a brilliant light in our lives.

Prayers are invisible, but if we pray steadfastly they will definitely effect clear results in our lives and surroundings in time. This is the principle of the true entity of all phenomena. Faith means having confidence in this invisible realm. Those who impatiently pursue only visible gains, who put on airs, or who are caught up in vanity and formalism will definitely become deadlocked.

Daimoku is also like fire. When you burn the firewood of earthly desires, then the fire of happiness—that is, of enlightenment—burns brightly. Sufferings thus become the raw material for constructing happiness. For a person with strong faith, sufferings function to enable him or her to become happier still.

Prayers based on the Mystic Law are not abstract. They are a concrete reality in our lives. To offer prayers is to conduct a dialogue, an exchange, with the universe. When we pray, we embrace the universe with our lives, our determination. Prayer is a struggle to expand our lives.

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So prayer is not a feeble consolation; it is a powerful, unyielding conviction. And prayer must become manifest in action. To put it another way, if our prayers are in earnest, they will definitely give rise to action.

Prayer becomes manifest in action, and action has to be backed up by prayer. Only then can we elicit a response from the Buddhist gods and all Buddhas. Those who pray and take action for kosen-rufu are the Buddha's emissaries. They cannot fail to realize lives in which all desires are fulfilled.

Even if we have so much happiness that we wish for a little suffering, our happiness continues to increase by leaps and bounds—like a kite that soars ever higher. That is the proof of attaining Buddhahood. Moreover, if we succeed in firmly establishing the world of Buddha-hood in this lifetime, it will be ours eternally. □