

EDITORIAL: Strengthening Our Faith Is Our Responsibility

There are four powers of the Mystic Law that empower us to receive benefit: the power of the Buddha, of the Law, of practice and of faith. The powers of the Buddha and the Law are inherent within the Gohonzon, while individually we are the key to the powers of practice and faith. To the extent that we bring forth these powers, we tap into the powers of the Buddha and the Law.

That's one reason why the importance of faith is stressed repeatedly. Nichiren Daishonin writes in "The Real Aspect of the Gohonzon": "The Gohonzon is found in faith alone. As the sutra states, 'Only with faith can one enter Buddhahood'" (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 1, p. 213).

One factor in establishing and strengthening our faith is study. Another is experiencing actual proof — benefits — in our lives. As we learn, through study, to apply this philosophy in our daily lives, and as we witness, through benefits, its validity, our confidence — our faith — takes root and grows.

But at some point, our continued growth in this philosophy may require, so to speak, a leap of faith; that is, a proactive approach to faith. That means making a conscious effort to trust in the Mystic Law, in our Buddha nature. We choose to have faith in the Gohonzon. "I choose to believe in the Law," we can say. "I choose to live according to the Buddhist principles."

Rather than waiting passively for the Law to prove its power to us over and over again, we can remind ourselves that this is our faith, this is what we have chosen to believe in.

This is especially significant in those moments when we have so many problems that doubting the Gohonzon may seem like common sense. Doubts and worries are not proof that the Law doesn't work but are proof of the existence of our fundamental darkness.

It is up to us whether we indulge in our fundamental darkness or persevere in our practice and use Nichiren Daishonin's teachings to take control. That one phrase — persevere in our practice — describes the process of building and nurturing strong faith.

While doubts and worries arise without any effort on our part, strengthening our faith requires conscious effort. Strong faith does not come without concerted effort. It is earned, not given. It is our responsibility to develop. It is up to us to learn how to make the practice work, to derive the most we can from it. We should not expect that our leaders or the organization will develop our faith for us.

When we encounter a difficult problem for which there seems to be no solution, we can pray to the Gohonzon with the determination: "I will overcome this problem. The power of Buddhism, my power, is unlimited. I will not be defeated."

In his writing "The Strategy of the Lotus Sutra," Nichiren Daishonin encourages us that "faith alone is what really matters.... Employ the strategy of the Lotus Sutra.... The heart of strategy...derives from the Mystic Law. A coward cannot have any of his prayers answered."

He also explains here that we should have self-reliant faith when he says, "No matter how earnestly Nichiren prays for you, if you lack faith, it will be like trying to set fire to wet tinder" (MW-1, 246).

As we consciously strive to strengthen our faith, it will eventually become part of our attitude — the confidence that no problem can defeat us.

Because we choose not to be defeated.

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